

Report of the 10th Student Himalayan Exercise Tour, March 2022

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The SHET-10 team on the Seti Khola in Pokhara with the Annapurna Range far back

The 10th Student Himalayan Field Exercise Tour was conducted for 17 days from March 3rd to 19th in the west-central Nepal Himalaya. Nepal was identified as the level 3 of the danger against the infection to COVID-19 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (recommend not to visit what ever the business is), and so sincere examination was needed whether to carry out the tour or not.

In making detailed survey on related matters, it was found that the number of newly affected people in Nepal was further less than Japan, i.e. 1/56 based on data of Feb. 17th, and that the recommendation by the Foreign Affairs was based on older data and obviously has no meaning. I also collected data from Nepal including that of Japan Embassy in Kathmandu and found that Nepal as well as the Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic its ordinary condition and people are living as usual with no problem. Based on

the above, I decided to carry out the exercise tour and disclosed the decision on Feb. 20th.

The program of the SHET-10 was first advertised in May 2021 on the homepage of the Gondwana Institute for Geology and Environment (GIGE), presented at two academic society meetings as posters in August and September. In October, advertisement of recruiting participants to the SHET-10 was distributed to people who were related to the SHET program by e-mail as well as sent to geoscience-related laboratories/departments of 72 universities throughout Japan, requesting to post the advertisement bill on the board of the department.

Those hoping to participate or to know details of the tour appeared during August to December and reached nearly 15 students, and students who registered to the participation by paying necessary fee were counted 9. Further a Chinese student from the Ocean University of China in Qindhao who were supported by the International Association for Gondwana Research (IAGR) registered. However due to a pandemic by the new type virus of COVID-19 in January and February, 5 among them cancelled by the end of February, and so, the remaining 5 Japanese students were settled as the participants of the 10th SHET. In early March a teacher and a student from the Department of Geology, Tri-Chandra Campus, Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu (TU) were identified to participate the tour and thus the SHET-10 team composed of two teachers and 6 students including two Nepalese and 6 Japanese was settled.

On the 2nd March the Japanese team members received the PCR examination and all of them were found to be negative.

In the late night of the 3rd March, the SHET-10 team departed Japan for Nepal via Singapore. On the 4th March, at the Singapore airport as well as the Kathmandu airport, there was a check on the international certificate of the PCR examination result. However, there was no antigen test within 24 hours and no hotel quarantine of 5 days after arriving Nepal that were announced by the Department of Immigration of Nepal. If the latter rule would have been imposed on us, the SHET-10 would have been impossible to carry out. However, we have had got many information from Nepal side that the quarantine have never been actually done in Kathmandu.

On the 5th March in the morning, we held the pre-tour seminar at the Tri-Chandra

Campus. In the afternoon, SHET-10 students were escorted by TU students to Swayanbunath Temple, and in the evening, a friendship dinner meeting was held in the town where 5 TU staff and 8 SHET-10 team members attended.

From 6th to 15th the team traveled the course Kathmandu - Pokhara - Kalopani - Muktinath- Kagbeni - Kalopani - Tatopani - Pokhara - Tansen - Lumbini - Mugling – Kathmandu, that was almost the same as every year so far. Geoscientific exercise during the tour was also almost the same as before except the following 3 points.

- 1) There were so many large mountain slope collapses, possibly reflecting the fact that we did not visit in these two years, 2) The good and large STDS outcrop that we could observe in past several years disappeared due to the road construction, and 3) We could identify the changing point from U-valley to V-valley of the Kaligandaki valley that it should be at around Lete, and that the wide Kaligandaki valley above Lete should reflect the fact that the U-valley there were completely buried by recent fluvial debris.

On the 16th March, students worked to prepared for their presentation in the morning, and in the afternoon, a summary seminar was held at the Tri-Chandra Campus, where several TU teachers and students also joined.



Interim encouraging dinner party at Lan Hua, Pokhara, on the 11th March.

All SHET-10 students gave their presentation in English, that was their first experience of the English presentation in their lives. In the evening a farewell dinner party was held at a Japanese restaurant in Thamel where 5 TU teachers joined along with SHET-10 team members.



Happy students who were just released from their hotel rooms, March 22nd.

On the 17th, we received the PCR examination at the HAMS Hospital who provided us the certificate using the Japanese government form. On the 18th, SHET-10 students were escorted by TU students for a full day city tour, and in the late night the team departed for Japan from the Kathmandu airport. It should be noted that the landing in Japan was followed by so troublesome and strict checks, and then after we were quarantined for 3 days in a hotel. After the antigen test on the 22nd, all of us got the freedom to get out of the hotel and the SHET-10 team dispersed with a full of cheers.

The account of the SHET-10 was very severe due to the high airfare compared with

ordinary years as well as additional expenses such as PCR tests. Necessary expenses for the tour in Nepal were raised compared with that of ordinary years. Thus, the participation fee for a student was estimated to be considerably higher than 200000 JPY, which was the promised maximum amount for the participants. To reduce the participation fee for students, I decided to start the crowdfunding (public collection of charity through internet) with the title: Student Himalaya (<https://readyfor.jp/projects/88329>). Those who are interested in this, please try to visit the above site.

We would like to sincerely thank to 5 academic societies of Nepal and Japan who gave us nominal support to the program, to IAGR and GIGE who kindly financially supported us, to Diplomat Treks and Expeditions Co., Pokhara who sincerely worked on the logistics of the SHET-10 in Nepal, and to all those who noticed the program with warm heart and encouraged us for the success of the exercise tour.