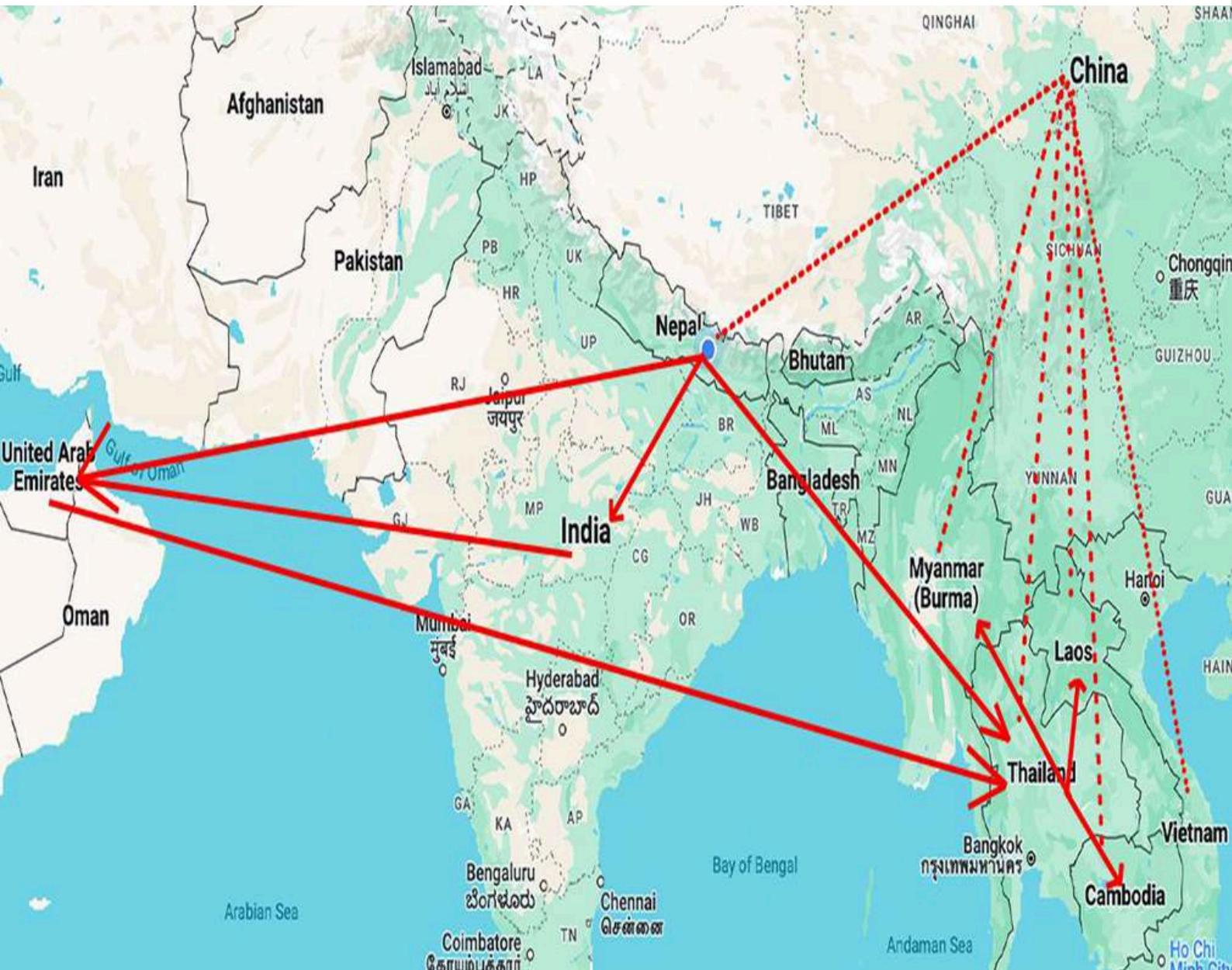


THE DMN NEWS



**UNCOVERING NEPALI-
CHINESE TRAFFICKING NEXUS
THAT TRAPS NEPALI YOUTHS
IN DARK WEB**

At least two are still missing. Hundreds more enslaved by Chinese gangs. How Nepalis are offered lucrative jobs in Southeast Asia and then handed over to Chinese nationals who abuse them sexually or use them for online fraud as 'cyber-slave'.

Siromani Dhungana

Ram Kumar Shahi

Kathmandu: Nepali and Chinese traffickers are trapping Nepali youths and holding them hostage in Southeast Asian countries, forcing them to engage in online scams and financial frauds, multiple sources confirmed with The DMN News. Nepali youths are first lured with promises of lucrative IT-related jobs, and once they reach Southeast Asian countries, they are tortured and forced into cyber frauds, financial scams, and cyber sex activities. If they refuse, they are enslaved and held hostage by Chinese gangs.

The DMN News has learnt that scores of Nepali youths are currently

enslaved in Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos in Chinese-operated companies. Of those, the whereabouts of two youths, in their 20s, have remained unknown.

After 15 harrowing days of mental, physical, and sexual abuse, Prasana seized an opportunity to escape. Prasana, somehow, managed to come in contact with NRN Cambodia, and was able to return to Nepal on October 20, 2020.

Growing up, **Raju Tamang**, a Dhading local, always dreamt of having a well-off life, as he had always seen his family struggle to make ends meet. Desperate for a job, Tamang met a local agent who promised him a lucrative position abroad in the IT sector. Tamang got excited and had no second thoughts when he received the offer. With a visit visa arranged by the agent, he landed in Thailand and then reached Myanmar. For a few months, he remained in contact with his family members. However, Tamang has been missing since May 6, 2023.

Like Tamang, **Puran Bahadur Gurung** of Nuwakot was born and raised in a lower-middle-class family. Convinced by local agents of a lucrative IT job, Gurung, with their help, reached Thailand on February 15, 2019. Two days after his arrival, his whereabouts became unknown.

Nepal Police, on June 16, 2024, issued a yellow notice through International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) for their search. However, police have received no clue about their whereabouts yet.

The nexus of Nepali and Chinese traffickers preys on educated but unemployed Nepali youths interested in working in the IT field. Once these traffickers successfully deceive the youths and bring them to Southeast Asian countries, they extort, torture, abuse, and hold them hostage, forcing them to engage in illegal cyber activities, said the victims who have managed to escape.

The Chinese cyber traffickers, according to police, are using two routes to traffic Nepali youths. First, from Nepal to Thailand to the destination countries like Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos. And another, from Nepal to India to destination countries .

After The DMN News published a story on how **Nepali women are trafficked to China for forced prostitution and labor exploitation**, a few victims, who fell prey to Nepali-Chinese nexus and reached Southeast Asian countries, shared their horrific stories.

In an eastern part of Nepal, in Morang, **Prasana** was living a simple life with her three daughters, raising pigs to make her ends meet. Despite financial challenges, she found joy in her daughters, and the small community she called her home. One day, Prasana received a friend request on Facebook from a man named Kishan Rai. Rai, whose profile picture exuded success, quickly became her acquaintance. But little did she know her life was about to take a dramatic turn.

The guy she met online told her that she deserved a better life—one that is far from the pig farm. During their conversation, he always spoke of Cambodia. “I was told I could earn Rs 300,000 a month. His words painted a picture of a brighter future,” she said.

Rai assured her that she would need to bear the initial travel costs, including a visa fee, of Rs 450,000, but promised that she would earn Rs 100,000 right after reaching Cambodia. Rai even guaranteed that his men would take care of her upon arrival. If

the job wasn't as promised or if she had to return home due to any difficulties, he vowed to return all the money, with interest.

In December 2019, Rai called Prasana, asking her to come to Kathmandu with her passport and photos to start the visa process. Believing him, she traveled to Kathmandu and stayed in a hotel arranged by Rai near Gongabu bus park. The next day, Kisan took her passport, photos, and Rs 250,000 in cash. When she returned to Morang, Rai demanded an additional Rs 2,00,000, which Prasana sent through New IME Money Transfer at Itahari.

A week later, Kisan informed Prasana that her documents and flight tickets were ready. She was called back to Kathmandu and stayed in another hotel in Chappal Karkhana. However, she was twice turned back from the Tribhuvan International Airport Immigration Office due to insufficient documents.

Undeterred, Kisan and his group took her to Cambodia through a convoluted route via the Manipur border to Myanmar and then from

Thailand to Phnom Penh, the Cambodian capital.

Initially, Prasana was made to work in a shop, cooking and feeding as many as 14 people. Realizing this wasn't the job she was promised, she protested. Kedar Rai, who received her in Cambodia, assured her that a better job awaited. Instead, she was taken to another part of the city and forced to work in a house with four Chinese men. There, her nightmare began. She was subjected to all household chores and became a victim of their sexual exploitation. Locked in the house, her pleas to return home were ignored. "If I declined to have sex with them, they would force me," she recounted with tears in her eyes.

After 15 harrowing days of mental, physical, and sexual abuse, Prasana seized an opportunity to escape. Prasana, somehow, managed to come in contact with NRN Cambodia, and was able to return to Nepal on October 20, 2020.

In February 2021, **Aslesha**, who was consulting with her friends about foreign employment opportunities, came in contact with an agent, who claimed he had already sent hundreds of youths to Cambodia.

The agent informed her about an opportunity with an Indian company in Cambodia that was looking for a computer operator. To secure this position, Aslesha was told she needed to pay a total of Rs 380,000. The agent promised that she would earn between USD 900 and 1000 per month working in Cambodia.

As requested by the agent, Aslesha paid the total amount of Rs 380,000 in three installments. Eager for a better career in Cambodia, she handed over her passport and photos to the agent in March.

On April 9, 2022, the agent informed Aslesha that her passport, along with a UAE visit visa, plane tickets, hotel bookings, and other documents, was ready. The next day, on April 10, Aslesha arrived at Sharjah Airport. There, she was met by a Nepali national named Ram, who took her to his place.

She stayed with Ram for four days before traveling to Cambodia via Singapore. Aslesha landed at Phnom Penh Airport, where she was met by a Bangladeshi national named Mithu Ahmed. Mithu handed Aslesha over to an unknown individual. She was then transported to Sihanoukville, a Cambodian city, after a 7-8 hour bus journey.

In Sihanoukville, Aslesha was taken to a Chinese company, where a Chinese national conducted her interview. She was informed that she had cleared the interview and would now need to communicate with men from the United States, Canada, and Europe. “I was asked to text men on Facebook,

Instagram, dating apps, Telegram, and Helloworld. They instructed me to share intimate stories with them. After exciting them, I was asked to lure them into investing in cryptocurrency, forex trading, and MT5,” she shared. When the men she talked to invested as instructed, she would have to block them on social media platforms. This went on for four months, and when she resisted, the Chinese men physically and mentally tortured her. Only then she got to know she was sold by the Nepali agent to the Chinese nexus for USD 3550.

Aslesha was able to come to contact with the Nepali Embassy in Thailand, and she was successfully rescued to Nepal on September 22, 2022.

Both Prasana and Aslesha have already filed a case against the involved Nepal agents in human trafficking.



According to the Nepal Police, a total of eight similar cases have been filed at the Anti-Human Trafficking Bureau (AHTB) in the last fiscal year alone. At least 53 accused Nepali-Chinese traffickers—41 men and 12 women—are still on the run.

We have received information that Nepali youths are being lured and sent to Cambodia, Myanmar, and Laos, where Chinese men engage them in illegal activities by holding them hostage,” said Gautam Mishra, Superintendent of Police (SP) and spokesperson at AHTB. “These cases are just the tip of the iceberg. Police believe that there are many more hidden cases, as many victims do not dare to report incidents out of fear of losing the expenses incurred to reach third countries and due to fear of attacks from traffickers.

Generally, victims approach police only when they go through extreme torture and inhuman treatment, Mishra told The DMN News.

Our general investigation trend is that we focus on what appears only on the surface, said Rajendra Singh Bhandari, a former additional inspector general (AIG) of Nepal Police. “Reported cases should be taken as an indication to analyze how the networks are operating. The real situation might be even worse and complicated in any type of organized crime.”

“The state must take proactive measures to control transnational and organized forms of crimes,” he said. The cyber-slavery networks clearly show three major points of crimes: Point of origin, transit point and destination point, he said. “What makes the crime more complicated is that the kingpin behind the crime plan and design plot in another country while using the land of other countries.”

Of late, involvement of Chinese nationals in such organized crimes have become one of the major concerns in Nepal, he told The DMN News. “In this situation, Nepal should enable its surveillance mechanism to control possible crimes and crack down the existing networks.”

Nepal Police should also enhance its qualities to combat transnational crimes, according to him. “Police liaison teams should be mobilized in the country where such crimes are planned and designed,” he said. He also opined that the government together with other stakeholders must launch massive social awareness programs to protect people from falling as victims of cyber-slavery and other emerging trends of trafficking.”

Involvement of Chinese in cross border cyber crimes has become a growing concern in Nepal.

On 23 December 2019, as many as 122 Chinese nationals were arrested on suspicion of running extortion rackets from Nepal using social media and other online platforms. The Nepal Police had suspected the group to be involved in swindling money from rich people, running an illegal online gambling, and operating illicit Hundi schemes, among others.

The government had on 8 January deported all 122 Chinese nationals.

The arrested should be investigated according to Nepali laws as they were arrested in Nepal, said Hemanta Malla Thakuri, a former Deputy Inspector General of Nepal Police. “The decision to deport all arrested without proper investigation also indicates the government’s position to remain quiet or not to hurt China”

In March 2024, Nepal government had rescued at least 13 Nepalis who were trafficked to Myanmar under the guise of IT-related jobs.

Police believe that there are many more hidden cases, as many victims do not dare to report incidents out of fear of losing the expenses incurred to reach third countries and due to fear of attacks from traffickers.

***All names of the victims have been changed for their safety, and to protect their identities.**

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