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Rights and Risks Analysis Group

C-3/441, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058, India
Website: www.rightsrisks.org; Email: suhaschakma@rightsrisks.org
Mob:9810893440

18 May 2020

Shri Narendra Modi
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India
South Block, Raisina Hill
New Delhi-110011

Subject: Request of interventions against putting Indian and foreign national Buddhist monks at Bodhgaya, Bihar at risks of being infected with COVID-19 by turning the monasteries already inhabited by monks, their caretakers and devotees into quarantine centres by the Government of Bihar for returnees of the Vande Bharat Mission

Honourable Prime Minister,

I am writing to seek Your Honour's interventions against putting Indian and foreign national Buddhist monks at Bodhgaya, Bihar at risks of being infected by COVID-19 following notification of the Government of Bihar to turn the monasteries already inhabited by monks, their caretakers and devotees into quarantine centres for returnees of the Vande Bharat Mission from Bihar.

The State Government of Bihar vide Circular No. 3751 dated 11.05.20 directed all Buddhist Temples/Monasteries and Buddhist Institutions of Bodhgaya, Gaya to turn them into quarantine centres for 21 days stay of the Indian nationals arriving from abroad. The Gaya International airport will receive at least six flights during the second phase of Vande Bharat Mission between May 18 and May 24 and the first flight, AI-0112, is likely to arrive today evening.

In all the Buddhist monasteries, already Buddhist monks, both Indian nationals and foreign nationals, are currently residing along with the caretakers and devotees. These Buddhist monasteries often operate with single kitchen, extremely inadequate sanitation services/cleaning and no housekeeping services as required under the Guidelines for Quarantine Facilities of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The list of Buddhist monasteries listed by the State Authorities (**ANNEXURE-1**) as quarantine centres shows that Korea Temple has only four rooms but it already has monks/caretakers and quarantining any persons "who are believed to have been exposed to infection" in this monastery amounts to putting the monks/caretakers who have not been infected as yet at serious risks of infections thereby violating the Guidelines for Quarantine Facilities and defeating the purpose of quarantine.

Acquiring the Buddhist monasteries would have made sense if they were empty. However, in all monasteries, resident Buddhist monks, caretakers and devotees reside. In exceptional cases, a few rooms in a temple may not be occupied but all other rooms are occupied by monks, caretakers and devotees. As everything is in a compound of the temple, there is no possibility for ensuring social distancing and other safety protocols. Further, these monasteries are not like hotels.

As International Buddhist Council in its letter (ANNEXURE-2) which represents all the Buddhist temples & institutions at Bodhgaya to Chief Minister Nitish Kumar on 16 May 2020 while opposing the notification stated, *“since a complete lockdown was imposed w.e.f. 22nd March 2020 in Gaya- Bodhgaya with all establishments including Temples/Monasteries/ Institutions and even the Mahabodhi Temple closing its gates as precautionary measures. And since then strict precautionary measures are being taken by one and all. As a result there was not a single case in Bodhgaya. Allowing these people is a matter of great risk, and it would be meaningless of our having taken precautionary measures all these days.”*

The decision to turn these monasteries already being inhabited by monks, caretakers and devotees is simply illogical - if a COVID-19 patient can be quarantined in a Buddhist temple with four rooms where there are already monks and caretakers, there is no reason as to why the same person cannot be quarantined in his/her house.

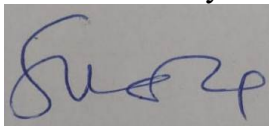
The Buddhist temples notified as quarantine centres include temples from various countries such as Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Taiwan, Bangladesh etc where foreign national monks and devotees also reside. If any of these foreign national monks are infected, their diplomatic missions shall have to be notified by the Ministry of External Affairs including the reasons for their infections which would be an embarrassment that India must avoid.

The Rights and Risks Analysis Group (RRAG) therefore immediately calls upon Your Honour to immediately intervene with the State Government of Bihar to revoke the order notifying the Buddhist monasteries into quarantine centres for returnees of the Vande Bharat mission.

Looking forward to Your Honour’s kind interventions.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely



Suhas Chakma
Director

Encl: As above.

ANNEXURE 1: BUDDHIST MONASTERIES LISTED AS QUARANTINE CENTRES

परिशिष्ट- 'ग'							
विदेश से आने वाले भारतीय नागरिकों को आवासन हेतु चिन्हित मोनास्ट्री की सूची।							
क्रम सं०	होटल/गेस्टहाउस/मोनास्ट्री का नाम	पता	होटल/गेस्ट हाऊस /मोनास्ट्री के प्रबंधक का नाम	प्रबंधक का मो०नं०	मोनास्ट्री में कमरों की संख्या		कुल कमरों की संख्या
					AC	Non AC	
Temple /Monastery/ Institution							
1	Maha Bodhi Society Of India		Ven. H.Wimaladhamma Thero	2200742, 9934480103			-
2	All India Bhikkhu Sangha		Bhikkhu Pragyadeep/Ven. Dr. Dharmmaviriyo Mahathero	2201199, 9934611480 9470852078			26
3	Amitabh Meditation Centre (Drikung Charitable Society)		True Lhamo/Phurba Dorje	2200214, 9939994993			-
4	Ananda Vihara (Anandamitra Memorial Trust)						-
5	Asian Buddhist Cultural Centre		S.T Ananda	2200478, 9162855847			17
6	Bangladesh Buddhist Monastery		Dr. Kalyan Priya Bhikkhu / Karuna Jyoti Bhikkhu	2200226, 9931711066			30
7	Buddhist Thai Bharat Society		Ven. Dr. Buddhyno /Maha kritipan / A.C Lama	2200257 2200845, 9430840444			-
8	Bodhidruma Intenational Buddhist Sangha Trust		Sugata Bhikkhu	22001679, 9955837534 8083379623			-
9	Burmese Vihara		U Nyanienda/Chullu	2200721, 9931273034			50
10	Buddhagaya Bana Vihara & meditation Centre		Rajib Chakma	6950158, 9006638001			10
11	Bhante Vishuddhanand Bodhi, Mahuabad						-
12	Buddha Dhamma Sangha		Ven Aswaject/ Brajesh Kumar	2200191, 9934768420			-
13	Mahabodhi Chinese Temple		Ven Guang Tong	2200669 2200769, 9934421628 9709551661			45
14	Chakma Buddhist Foundation Bodhgaya		Ven Priyapal Bhikkhu	2200298, 9386332257			11
15	Cambodian Buddhist Monastery		Ven Menpiset/ Ven Thong Saren	2200882, 9871848264			35

क्रम सं०	होटल/गेस्टहाउस/मोनास्ट्री का नाम	पता	होटल/गेस्ट हाऊस /मोनास्ट्री के प्रबंधक का नाम	प्रबंधक का मो०नं०	मोनास्ट्री में कमरों की संख्या		कुल कमरों की संख्या
					AC	Non AC	
16	Daijokyo Buddhist Temple		Mr. Kiran Lama	2200747 2200407, 9430839711			22
17	Druk Ngawang Thubten Choeling		Ven Tsering Penjor	2200653, 9934221063			-
18	Fo Guang Shan Institute Of Buddhist Studies		Ven Miao Ru	2201215, 9835827771 09831046327 09471092552			30
19	Gadhen Phelgayling Charitable Trust		P.T Thapkey/ tenzin kunchok	2200722 9430569420 8084444021			42
20	Great Holy Land Monastery		Ven Dr. Zawana	2200671, 9973454503			40
21	International Meditation Centre		Ven Dr. Varasambodhi Bhikkhu	2200707, 9955819226			60
22	Indo-San Nipponji (Japanese Temple)		Mr. Lobsang	2200743 2200740,			-
23	Kagyupa Monlam International Trust		Ven Lama Chodak				10
24	Khuva Boonchum Tai Temple		Ven. Kelananda / Ven nandabhasa	2201010 2201655 7277871763 9801405228			25
25	Karma Temple		Ms Dadon / Lama Topchen	2200724 2200795, 9431280812 9430200476			20
26	Korea Temple						4
27	Lin Son Monastery		Ven Thich Tri Han/ Ven Thich Tri Thuong	9006638380			20
28	Maha Bodhi Meditation Centre		Sandalankara Bhikkhu/ Teza Manpaung	2201208, 9934669185			-
29	Maitri Charitable Trust		Adriana Ferranti	2200841, 9431224367 9871961052			-
30	Nyingma Monlam Chenmo International Foundation		Mr. Bhu Tsering	2200818 2200696, 9431224815			229
31	Nepali Tamang Buddhist Temple		Lama Tshering Tamang/ R Tamang	7250575165 9002458686			22

क्रम सं०	होटल/गेस्टहाउस/मोनास्ट्री का नाम	पता	होटल/गेस्ट हाऊस /मोनास्ट्री के प्रबंधक का नाम	प्रबंधक का मो०नं०	मोनास्ट्री में कमरों की संख्या		कुल कमरों की संख्या
					AC	Non AC	
32	Panchasila Vihara		Rev. L. Anuruddha	9931878798			-
33	Penor Rinpoche Charity Foundation		Ven. Tenzin Dorji	2201063, 9199933258 9546496366			-
34	Royal Wat Thai		Rev P.C Chandasiri/ Phramahapirun	2200470, 9931222114 9934290091			10
35	Royal Bhutanese Temple		Phub Gyeltshen/ Dorji Wangdi	2200710, 9006638114 9431207747			8
36	Root Institute for Wisdom & Culture		Ven. Thubten Ladron/David Illan	2200714 2200548, 294144833			-
37	Ratana Bodhi Vihara		Ven Thamhapat ven Dr, Tiloka	9939994994			15
38	Shechen Tennyi Dhargyeling		Ven Pema/Ngawang Chondhem	2200650, 9939188777			18
39	Sikkim Temple Guest House		Mr. Buddhiman	9572808822			-
40	Sakya Monastery Charitable Trust		Khenpo Tsega Dorje/Tenzin Lama	2200770			15
41	Tai Bodhi Kham C/O Siam Thai Restaurant		Mr. Chow Shiah Makron				6
42	Taiwan Temple		Mr. Baiju Singh	2200503, 9708982618			-
43	Yonger Tergar Monastery		Ven Kunga Sotop	2200188, 8002658888			-
44	Vietnam Temple (Bhagalpur)		Dr. Lam/Mr. Sushant	2200733, 9934018820			-
45	Vien Giac Institute		Ven Thich Hanh Nguyen	2200252			15
46	Wat Lao International Buddhagaya		Ven Onta Mingsisouphanh	2201213, 9931890634			36
47	Wat Thai Magadh Temple						36
48	Wat Neeranjas						-
49	Wat Thai Buddha Charitable trust		Uthen	7070772600			10
50	Viyetnam Temple		Ninh.Tao/Susant	9934018820			15

क्रम सं०	होटल/गेस्टहाउस/मोनास्ट्री का नाम	पता	होटल/गेस्ट हाऊस /मोनास्ट्री के प्रबंधक का नाम	प्रबंधक का मो०नं०	मोनास्ट्री में कमरों की संख्या		कुल कमरों की संख्या
					AC	Non AC	
51	Buddh Sabika Trust		Sunil Mehta	9534975710			36
52	Meta Buddha Temple		Shiv Shankar Singh	9801850619			9
53	H.H.Shabdrung Rinpoges Charitable trust		Teacher Guruji	9934221063			44
54	Buddhist Thai Bharat Socity		Lama ji	9430840444			-
55	Watt thai bhudh bhumi		Kawit bhantk	7764957781			12
56	Maiteriya Project, Bapunagar			7070895785			-
TOTAL							1033

**ANNEXURE 2: LETTER OF INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST COUNCIL TO
CHIEF MINISTER NITISH KUMAR ON 16 MAY 2020**

Regd. No. : 261/2018

INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST COUNCIL

(A Bonafide Organisation of All Buddhist Temple, Monasteries and Institutions in Buddhagaya)

Working Office : All India Bhikkhu Sangha, Bodhgaya Centre

Mobile : +91-9934611480, 9470852078

Ref.

Date : ..1.....

To
The Hon'ble Chief Minister,
Government of Bihar,
India.
Subject : Suggestion for quarantine centres.

Date: 16/05/2020.

Hon'ble Sir:

This is in reference to the Circular Ref. No. 3751, dated 11.05.20 circulated to all Buddhist Temples, Monasteries and Buddhist Institutions in Buddhagaya requesting to provide accommodations for the purpose of quarantine for a period of 21 days to the people who would be shortly arriving at Gaya who were stranded in different countries abroad due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It is in this regard, we wish to draw your kind attention that since the threat of Corona Virus was declared, a complete lockdown was imposed w.e.f. 22nd March, 2020 in Gaya-Bodhgaya with all establishments including, Temples, Monasteries, Institutions and even the Mahabodhi Temple closing its gates as precautionary measures. And since then strict precautionary measures are being taken by one and all. As a result there was not a single case in Bodhgaya.

Now despite ours undergoing strict precautionary measures to prevent the Corona Virus, now we are being ordered to house people who were stranded and arriving at Gaya from different Corona affected countries for a period of 21 days together with us, with some amount of donation. The Temple and monasteries are the place blessed with the daily religious chartings and practices for many years and the rooms are for the service of devotees and not for commercial purposes. And the pristine energy and vibration and purity of the temple/monastery's sanctity will be contaminated if it is made a quarantine centre. Housing these people is a matter of great risk, and it would be meaningless of our having taken precautionary measures all these days. It is a matter of great concern. And the rooms also do not meet the SOP guidelines issued by the Ministry of Health, Government of India for quarantine purposes. We, therefore request the authority to kindly, shift the place of quarantine centre from Bodhgaya to other place which is safe for all. Or send them for home quarantine, as you said they are thoroughly checked and screened. If any positive case arises in Bodhgaya, it will hamper the incoming of tourist as Bodhgaya is the most important Tourist spot which is one of the main sources of income in Bihar state.

Regd. No. : 261/2018

INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST COUNCIL

(A Bonafide Organisation of All Buddhist Temple, Monasteries and Institutions in Buddhagaya)

Working Office : All India Bhikkhu Sangha, Bodhgaya Centre

Mobile : +91-9934611480, 9470852078

Ref.

Date :

It has also been observed in the said Circular that implementing of IPC Act 188 would be imposed to any of us in case of non-cooperation to your orders. And this we feel how could a respectful learned officer come to such a decision before any feedback from our side. We feel ourselves degraded in the eyes of the Government Agencies.

We therefore look forward to your help in this matter and would always support you as we have been doing every time and during every calamity. If our humble request are not heard, all the international monks will come out for a peace protest in front of Maha Bodhi Temple.

With warm regards,

Yours in the Dhamma,

Bhikkhu Pragyedee

General Secretary,

International Buddhist Council

Bodhgaya.

