

Death on Everest leads to risky effort to bring down the bodies

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Kathmandu: Nearly 300 people have died on Mount Everest in the century or so since climbers have been trying to reach its summit. At least 100 of them are still on the mountain, perhaps 200.

Most of the bodies are hidden in deep crevasses or covered by snow and ice, but some are visible to every climber who passes by, landmarks in heavy plastic climbing boots and colorful parkas that fade a little more every year. The most famous corpses get nicknames – “Green Boots,” “Sleeping Beauty,”

“The German” – becoming warnings of what can go wrong on the 8,850-meter (29,035-foot) peak, even as they become part of the mountain’s gallows humor.

No mountaineer wants to end up a nicknamed body. No grieving family wants their loved one to become a punchline. But in one of the most unforgiving places on Earth, where low oxygen, frigid temperatures and strong winds mean any effort can seem impossible, taking down the dead is no simple thing.

So when four people died on the upper reaches of Everest in recent days, and with a fifth missing and presumed dead, climbing teams and climbers’ families scattered around the world had to face the question of whether the bodies would be brought down.

“For the loved ones back home and family members of those fallen and died on Mount Everest, it is worth it,” said Ben Jones, a guide from Jackson, Wyoming, who made his third successful Everest ascent this year.

- AP