



## Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal



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*-Sharpening the COVID-19 Response through Communications Intelligence*

**Date: August 19, 2021**

Kathmandu, Nepal

## EMERGING THEME(S)

- Nepal reported 2,613 new COVID-19 cases, 42 deaths on August 18; Biratnagar hospitals overrun with COVID-19 patients; Surkhet District Land Revenue Office suspends all but essential services for 2 weeks starting August 18 as staff contract COVID-19
- People made to pay exorbitant prices (17 times the ceiling price) for drug used to treat critical cases of COVID-19

## RECURRING THEME(S)

- COVID-19 Crisis Management Center has approved working procedure of smart lockdown

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<sup>1</sup> This intelligence is tracked through manually monitoring national print, digital and online media through a representative sample selection, and consultations with media persons and media influencers.

## ISSUE(S) IN FOCUS

Nepal's coronavirus caseload reached 739,907 on August 18 with 2,613 more people testing positive for the infection in the past 24 hours, the COVID-19 mortality toll increased to 10,396 with 42 more fatalities. Nepal's COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 93.1 per cent, the fatality rate at 1.5 per cent, while the active COVID-19 case count currently is 40,338.<sup>2</sup>

The private and government hospitals of Biratnagar treating the COVID-19 patients have all been filled up. The increase in the symptomatic patients has made it difficult to get beds in government hospitals, according to Dr Laxmi Narayan Yadav of Koshi Hospital. As such the citizens are forced to go to private hospitals for treatment, he said.<sup>3</sup>

The District Land Revenue Office of Surkhet has been shut down for two weeks after the employees there got infected with COVID-19. All services except for essential services have been suspended from August 18.<sup>4</sup>

The number of people who have lost their lives due to COVID-19 has increased five times in the second wave of the pandemic as compared to the first wave in the Gandaki Province. A total of 1,000 people have lost their lives in the past four months.<sup>5</sup>

A total of 137 people have lost their lives in Kavre in the past four months to COVID-19.<sup>6</sup>

There has been a problem in the treatment of the people infected with COVID-19 in Arghakhanchi jail as the inmates are more than double the capacity of the prison, which has led to the problem in the control of the infection in the prison.<sup>7</sup>

With the rise in the number of critical COVID-19 patients of late, demand for Tocilizumab, an arthritis drug which is said to reduce the risk of death in severe coronavirus patients, has increased several fold. Due to the limited supply, the drug is being smuggled into the country and sold in the black market at exorbitant prices. Dhana Raj Gurung, who procured the drug for his ailing brother in the black market for Rs 1 million, paid more than 17 times the price ceiling set by the Department of Drug

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<sup>2</sup> THT Online

<sup>3</sup> Baarhakhari

<sup>4</sup> Onlinekhabar

<sup>5</sup> Onlinekhabar

<sup>6</sup> Baarhakhari

<sup>7</sup> Nagarik

Administration (DDA). The DDA has allowed the supplier to sell the drug for not more than Rs 58,000, according to Santosh KC, DDC spokesperson.<sup>8</sup>

The COVID-19 Crisis Management Center has approved the working procedure related to smart lockdown to control the spread of COVID-19 infection. It aims to conduct public and economic activities as much as possible by breaking the chain of infection based on infection risk analysis.<sup>9</sup>

The prohibitory orders have been imposed for 10 days in Diktel Rupakot Majhuwagadhi Municipality due to the surge in COVID-19 infection there.<sup>10</sup>

All areas, except the pharmacies, will be shut down in Dharan Sub-Metropolitan City in the 10-day lockdown effective from August 20. The stringent measure has been introduced as Province 1 has become the hotspot of COVID-19 infection.<sup>11</sup>

## OTHER(S)

### National News

#### **VACCINE: PROCUREMENT & DRIVE**

An additional 1,600,000 doses of Vero Cell vaccine that the Nepal government procured from Chinese company Sinopharm will arrive by August 20.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The Kathmandu Post

<sup>9</sup> Onlinekhabar

<sup>10</sup> Ratopati

<sup>11</sup> Baarhakhari

The COVID-19 vaccine has been given to almost everyone above the age of 18 in Bigu Rural Municipality, which shares the border with China. However, the vaccine is yet to reach the remote village Lapchi of Ward-1. Nearly 45 families reside in the area where about 100 people are eligible for the vaccine, according to a local Karmawaiser Sherpa. With the onset of monsoon, the lack of transportation facilities has made it difficult for the vaccines to be taken to the village.<sup>13</sup>

The first dose of vaccine against COVID-19 is being administered to nine target populations in Kathmandu district from August 17 — it is being given from six hospitals and all wards of Kathmandu Metropolitan City.<sup>14</sup>

The COVID-19 vaccine is being given to those who have registered themselves online for vaccination.<sup>15</sup>

The Karnali Province government has started a health check-up of the citizens coming from India and other countries at the Kuine border checkpost of the Province to mitigate the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. A 15-bed COVID-19 hospital has also come into operation at the border checkpost at Panchapuri Municipality of the Province.<sup>16</sup>

Entry to the Patan Durbar Square without wearing masks has been prohibited. Stating that there is a crowd of people on the premises of the Durbar Square, the Lalitpur Metropolitan City introduced the measures from August 17.<sup>17</sup>

As of August 12, since the beginning of COVID-19 pandemic, a total of 513,960 youth who had gone for foreign employment have returned to Nepal after losing their job or due to contract ending or on sick leave, according to the COVID-19 Crisis Management Center (CCMC). Nepalis have returned home from 60 nations including UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Kuwait, Oman, Cyprus, Cambodia, Pakistan, China, Turkey, Sudan, and USA. Most of them want to start business here but have gone back abroad due to the lack of investment.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Baarhakhari

<sup>13</sup> Kantipur

<sup>14</sup> Baarhakhari

<sup>15</sup> Ratopati

<sup>16</sup> Nagarik

<sup>17</sup> Setopati

<sup>18</sup> Setopati

Lithuania has donated medical supplies to help Nepal's ongoing fight against COVID-19. The support included five breathing machines and 20 oxygen inhalers.<sup>19</sup>

The United States of America has provided additional healthcare materials to Nepal to fight against COVID-19 — two liquid oxygen tanks were provided to the Bir Hospital and Paropakar Maternity Hospital of Kathmandu.<sup>20</sup>

The arrival of foreign tourists has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic in Pokhara. A few tourists visited Pokhara in March and April, but their number has reduced after those months.<sup>21</sup>

## International News

With just a few dozen COVID-19 deaths and one of the world's highest vaccination rates, Singapore wants to reopen for business — and is laying the groundwork to live with the coronavirus as it does with other common diseases such as influenza. Its medical experts say residents may see hundreds of deaths each year from endemic COVID-19, similar to the flu. That pragmatic approach could set an example for other countries looking to exit lockdowns as they ramp up their own inoculation programs.<sup>22</sup>

New Zealand's government took drastic action on August 17 by putting the entire nation into a strict lockdown for at least three days after finding a single case of coronavirus infection in the community. Prime Minister Jacinda Arden said Auckland, where the infected man lives, and Coromandel, where he had visited, would go into full lockdown for seven days and the remainder of the country for three days while health experts tried to find the source of his infection.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)

<sup>20</sup> Onlinekhabar

<sup>21</sup> Nagarik

<sup>22</sup> Reuters (in The Himalayan Times)

<sup>23</sup> The Associated Press (in The Kathmandu Post)

## Contacts for further details

### Dr Sunoor Verma

Strategic, Risk and Crisis Communication Consultant  
World Health Organization, Country Office for Nepal  
[sverma@who.int](mailto:sverma@who.int)  
[sunoorv@gmail.com](mailto:sunoorv@gmail.com)

### Ms Tsering Dolkar Gurung

NPO (Communication, Media and Public Information)  
World Health Organization, Country Office for Nepal  
[gurungt@who.int](mailto:gurungt@who.int)

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