



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal



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-Sharpening the COVID-19 Response through Communications Intelligence

Date: August 20, 2021
Kathmandu, Nepal

EMERGING THEME(S)

- Nepal reported 2,321 new COVID-19 cases, 33 more fatalities on August 19; no detailed study in Nepal on mental health problems post-COVID pandemic, 1 in 10 persons visiting hospitals facing some kind of health issue; District Administration Office of Rukum West has suspended all except emergency services as one staffer has tested positive for COVID-19; Jumla has stopped all kinds of religious melas to curb the spread of COVID-19; Kathmandu administration asks citizens to mark religious festivals without making a crowd, and in a symbolic manner
- 8 million doses of Vero Cell vaccine arrived in Kathmandu from China on August 19, remaining 8 million to arrive on same day; remaining doses of AstraZeneca vaccine provided by Japan under COVAX program to arrive by August 21-23
- Government has formed a high-level committee under State Minister for Health and Population Umesh Shrestha for the management and control of COVID-19 pandemic
- Community schools in Kalikot have resumed in-person classes from August 19
- Insurance companies have not paid insurers who took out COVID-19 insurance policy despite government announcing grant assistance

¹ 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 742,228 on August 19 with 2,321 more people testing positive for the infection in the past 24 hours, while the countrywide COVID-19 mortality toll increased to 10,429 with 33 more fatalities. Nepal's COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 93.1 per cent, the fatality rate at 1.5 per cent, and the active COVID-19 case count currently is 40,500.²

There is no detailed study on the mental health problems post the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal. However, doctors estimate that every one in 10 persons visiting hospitals with health problems are facing some kind of mental health issue.³

The District Administration Office Rukum West is shutting down all its services except for emergency services from August 20 to 27 after COVID-19 infection was confirmed in an employee working there.⁴

The District COVID-19 Crisis Management Center in Jumla has decided to stop celebration of all kinds of religious melas (gatherings) to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the district. The longest jatra of Karnali could not take place last year as well in Jumla due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The people of Jumla have said this has put the religious faith of people at risk.⁵

The District Administration Office, Kathmandu has requested the public to celebrate the festivals like Janai Purnima, Gai Jatra without making a crowd, and in a symbolic manner. In a notice issued on August 19, Chief District Officer Kali Prasad Baskota made the request while stating that the risk of COVID-19 infection and its rate of spread are high.⁶

The number of people infected with viral fever has increased in Kanchanpur — more than 100 patients of viral fever are visiting the Mahakali Provincial Hospital on a daily basis. However, these are not COVID-19 cases, as per Dr Hari Kumar Shrestha, the hospital's Medical Superintendent.⁷

² THT Online

³ Nayapatrika

⁴ Baarhakhari

⁵ Nagarik

⁶ Onlinekhabar

⁷ Baarhakhari

A total of 800,000 doses of Vero Cell vaccine have arrived in Nepal from China. The vaccine arrived at 1:15 am on August 19 at the Tribhuvan International Airport. The remaining 800,000 doses will also arrive on August 19.⁸

The remaining doses of AstraZeneca vaccine that the Japanese government had provided to Nepal via the COVAX program will arrive in the country in the first week of Bhadra. According to the State Minister for Health and Population Umesh Shrestha, the remaining 50 per cent of the 1,614,740 doses will arrive in Nepal by August 21-23.⁹

The government has formed a high-level committee under the chair of State Minister for Health and Population Umesh Shrestha for the control of COVID-19 pandemic. The committee aims to manage the COVID-19 pandemic along with effective implementation, monitoring and management of regular services.¹⁰

Dr Anupama Karki and Dr Prajjwal Shrestha have been appointed as deputy directors of the COVID-19 Unified Central Hospital.¹¹

The community schools of Kalikot are resuming classes from August 19 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Naraharinath Rural Municipality is set to reopen community schools, children development centers, and community education centers from August 19, as per the decision of the District COVID-19 Crisis Management Committee.¹²

Insurance companies have cheated the insurers by not paying them Rs 6,160,000,000 for COVID-19 insurance. The companies have collected billions of rupees by selling COVID-19 insurance policy yet they have stopped making payment against such insurance claims. They are not paying the insurance claims despite the government announcing grant assistance to the citizens as well as such insurance companies for making the payment.¹³

⁸ Setopati

⁹ Onlinekhabar

¹⁰ Onlinekhabar

¹¹ Onlinekhabar

¹² Ratopati

¹³ Nayapatrika

OTHER(S)

National News

VACCINATION DRIVE

The citizens who have taken the first dose of Vero Cell vaccine will get the second dose from August 25 in Kathmandu. A total of 216,000 citizens in Kathmandu who took the first dose from July 29 onwards and have completed three weeks will be given the second dose.¹⁴

The students of Grade XI and XII will get the first dose of Vero Cell vaccine in Kathmandu from August 20. Students above the age of 18, and those with a valid examination admit card of university level exams will also get the vaccine.¹⁵

The first dose of Vero Cell vaccine will be given to those above the age of 40 from August 20 to 22 in Kathmandu.¹⁶

Around 50 per cent of the people above 65 years old from Kathmandu, who took their first dose of the Covishield vaccine have not been seeking a second dose. The number of people not seeking a second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine is significant in other districts as well, but the Ministry of Health and Population said that it does not have the exact data.¹⁷

Kathmandu Health Office has started providing the first dose of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to the public. As per the Office, people who have requested the vaccine through online registration have been included in the vaccination drive that kicked off on August 17.¹⁸

¹⁴ Onlinekhabar

¹⁵ Onlinekhabar

¹⁶ Onlinekhabar

¹⁷ The Kathmandu Post

¹⁸ The Himalayan Times

Minister for Health and Population of Gandaki Province Madhumaya Adhikari has said that they are making preparations to face the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. She also informed that the Province's 50 per cent population will get the COVID-19 vaccine by the end of Asoj (October 17).¹⁹

'Where is your mask?' campaign has begun in Kailali with a surge in the cases of COVID-19 there. The campaign, jointly initiated by the District Police Office and District Traffic Police of Kailali, aims to motivate everyone to wear masks.²⁰

Bhimdatta Municipality of Kanchanpur has brought ambulance and hearse services into operation for effective control and containment of COVID-19 pandemic. The ambulance will be kept at the Gaddachauki border checkpost to take people infected with COVID-19 to the isolation center free of cost, while the hearse will be used to carry the bodies of COVID-19 dead.²¹

A number of Nepali pharmaceutical companies have approached the Department of Drug Administration (DDA) after the government announced incentives for firms that produce vaccines for infectious diseases including COVID-19. The government came up with the incentive package considering that countries without access to vaccines have suffered badly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, no pharmaceutical company in Nepal produces vaccines for human diseases. However, a few companies produce vaccines against animal diseases. Santosh KC, information officer at the DDA, said some domestic pharmaceutical companies approached the department to discuss the matter but nobody has sought approval for producing vaccines.²²

The work of setting up of the oxygen plant has not started in Baitadi district. An agreement with the Health Care Suppliers of Kathmandu was made to complete the installation by the end of Asadh (July 15), but the work has not started yet. The oxygen cylinders need to be purchased for the supply of oxygen in the district due to a lack of an oxygen plant there.²³

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Report 2021 unveiled by the National Planning Commission (NPC) on August 18 reveals that the country had made substantive progress in reducing MPI from 30.1 per cent to 17.4 per cent over the timeframe

¹⁹ Onlinekhabar

²⁰ Setopati

²¹ Baarhakhari

²² The Kathmandu Post

²³ Onlinekhabar

of five years — from 2014 to 2019. The MPI Report of 2021 — an update to the 2018 report applying revised global MPI methodology — is based on the Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey Report 2019. It has been acknowledged that since the latest report used a 2019 dataset, this rate might have been changed in the COVID-19 pandemic context. The analysis of COVID-19 related deprivations show that a majority of Nepal’s population is vulnerable to Nepal’s COVID-19 implications, as they are deprived in at least one of the COVID-19 related MPI deprivations (nutrition, water, cooking fuel). Almost 5 million (17 per cent) experience increased vulnerability, and around 375 are highly considered to be highly vulnerable.²⁴

A project will be conducted to provide temporary employment opportunities to laborers of the tourism sector who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Nepal Tourism Board, the project aims at creating job opportunities for 5,000 laborers.²⁵

Leading tourism sector organizations have called on the government to arrange vaccination of all citizens against COVID-19 at the earliest to save their lives. More than 12 organizations met the Minister of State for Health and Population Umesh Shrestha at his office on August 17 and urged him to provide the vaccination.²⁶

International News

Several Chinese ports are facing congestion as vessels due to call at Ningbo are being diverted and cargo processing is slowed partly due to stricter disinfection measures under China’s “zero-tolerance” coronavirus policy.²⁷

New restrictions aimed at curbing the spread of COVID-19 took effect in Israel on August 18 after the largely vaccinated country saw the highest daily infection rate at 8,700 since January.²⁸

²⁴ The Himalayan Times

²⁵ Onlinekhabar

²⁶ Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)

²⁷ Reuters (in The Kathmandu Post)

²⁸ Agence France Presse (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
sunoorv@gmail.com

Ms Tsering Dolkar Gurung

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

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