



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring Nepal¹

-Sharpening the COVID-19 Response through Communications Intelligence

Date: August 25, 2021
Kathmandu, Nepal

EMERGING THEME(S)

- Nepal reported 2,020 new COVID-19 cases, 35 deaths on August 24; influenza cases on the rise in Nepal, health experts say this is concerning during COVID-19 pandemic as there are chances of misdiagnosis, negligence leading to delayed treatment, even death; Health Ministry says infection rate has been decreasing in last 15 days, confirmed in 19 per cent of those tested, a drop of 3 per cent
- Health Ministry has warned that if COVID-19 infection continues at the same rate, there will be need to impose stricter restrictions; prohibitory orders with few changes extended in Kathmandu Valley till September 1, extended till August 31 in Surkhet
- Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine gets full approval of US Food and Drug Administration

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 751,001 on August 24 with 2,020 more people testing positive for the infection in the past 24 hours, while the COVID-19 mortality toll increased to 10,568 with 35 more fatalities. Nepal's COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 93.5 per cent, the fatality rate stands at 1.5 per cent, and active COVID-19 case count currently is 38,250.²

Dr Sher Bahadur Pun, Chief of the Clinical Research Unit of the Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital, says there has been a rise in the number of patients visiting the hospital who are infected with influenza A and B virus. "It is not just COVID-19 cases we have to worry about at the moment. Influenza patients are also increasing in recent times," Dr Pun said. Public health experts say the rise in the number of influenza cases is concerning at a time when the country is dealing with the coronavirus pandemic. They have warned that chances of misdiagnosis and negligence could be high during this time, which could lead to delayed treatment and even deaths.³

The rate of COVID-19 infection has been decreasing in Nepal in the last 15 days. The infection was confirmed in 19 per cent of the tested population in the last 15 days, and this is three per cent less than the infection rate of 15 days earlier, as per the Ministry of Health and Population.⁴

The average rate of COVID-19 infection is around 20 to 25 per cent at present. However, the infection might spread any time due to the arrival of festivals, carelessness in following the health safety protocols and the new variant, as per the experts.⁵

A 34-year-old man from Jhapa, his wife and a daughter were found hanging in their home — he had returned home from Kathmandu after being unable to fly to Dubai for foreign employment as he tested positive for COVID-19.⁶

The Ministry of Health and Population has warned that if the infection of COVID-19 continues at the current rate, then there will be a need for imposition of stricter prohibitory orders than what is on at present. It has said there has been an increase of

² THT Online

³ The Kathmandu Post

⁴ Setopati

⁵ Kantipur

⁶ Kantipur

crowds in different places in the name of festivals and public health protocols are being ignored — this might lead to the need for stricter orders.⁷

The prohibitory orders have been extended till September 1 in Kathmandu Valley — as per the new orders, the vehicles will be allowed to ply on the roads after 8:00 pm.⁸

The August 24 meeting of the Chief District officers of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur has decided to allow the organization of seminars, conferences and other programs in physical presence of not more than 25 people.⁹

The prohibitory orders have been extended for a week, till August 31 in Surkhet citing that the COVID-19 infection has not come under control.¹⁰

The United States gave full approval to Pfizer’s COVID-19 vaccine on August 23, a milestone that may help lift public confidence in the shots. The vaccine made by Pfizer and its partner BioNTech now carries the strongest endorsement from the Food and Drug Administration, which has never before had so much evidence to judge a shot’s safety. “The public can be very confident that this vaccine meets the high standards for safety, effectiveness and manufacturing quality the FDA requires of an approved product,” said acting FDA Commissioner Janet Woodcock. ¹¹

⁷ Baarhakhari

⁸ Onlinekhabar

⁹ Onlinekhabar

¹⁰ Ratopati

¹¹ The Kathmandu Post

OTHER(S)

National News

COVID-19 PANDEMIC: PREPARATION & CONTROL MEASURES

A total of 158 beds are empty at the COVID-19 Unified Hospital (Bir). According to Dr Bhupendra Basnet, Chief Administrative Officer of the Hospital, whether it is a post-COVID patient or the one infected with COVID-19, they do not need to return from Bir Hospital without getting the needed treatment. He also informed that they are preparing to bring 500 beds into operation within a week in case the pressure of patients increases in future.¹²

One must be vaccinated against COVID-19 to enter the Pasang Lhamu Rural Municipality of Solukhumbu. The Rural Municipality has already informed the airline companies about this. Those going to the village via air need to have completed the two doses of the vaccine. For those not vaccinated, they must have a negative PCR report.¹³

The Sudurpaschim provincial government has prepared the action plan to prevent the spread of the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic and it has been presented before the Ministry of Finance for approval.¹⁴

The Education and Health Committee of the Parliament has ordered the government to conduct the exams of Grade XII in the physical presence of students observing public health protocols.¹⁵

With countries giving approval to laborers to enter for employment carrying the vaccination card against COVID-19, the number of Nepali youth flying abroad has increased in recent days. Every day a large number of people are seen at the Tribhuvan International Airport to go abroad for foreign employment.¹⁶

¹² Onlinekhabar

¹³ Onlinekhabar

¹⁴ Onlinekhabar

¹⁵ Onlinekhabar

According to the 58th report of the Auditor General, irregularities have been found in the control of COVID-19, quarantine management, distribution of relief materials, and procurement of medical supplies in the local levels.¹⁷

The committee formed to investigate the discovery of the COVID-19 focal person of Birtamod Municipality in a hotel with Vero Cell vaccine has concluded that though the person had no intention of hiding the vaccine, utter recklessness was found during the handing over of the vaccine. The report stated that it is irresponsible of the focal person to take the vaccine to the hotel and hand it over to the hotel staff despite there being ample time and possibility to send the vaccine to the Municipality. The committee has also recommended that action be taken against those responsible.¹⁸

On August 23 Nepal received 559,360 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine from Japan. This is the last batch of the total of 1.6 million doses the government of Japan had pledged to Nepal through COVAX.¹⁹

Caterpillar Foundation in partnership with Assist International provided essential medical supplies including oxygen concentrators, non-invasive ventilators, ICU ventilators, patient monitors, nebulizers and related accessories to four hospitals in Pokhara city and surrounding areas.²⁰

International News

The Director-General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on August 23 called for a two-month moratorium on administering booster shots of COVID-19 vaccines as a means of reducing global vaccine inequality and preventing the emergence of new coronavirus variants. He told reporters in Budapest, Hungary that he was “really disappointed” with the scope of vaccine donations worldwide as many countries struggle to provide first and second doses to more than small fractions of their populations, while wealthier nations maintain growing vaccine stockpiles. He called on

¹⁶ Onlinekhabar

¹⁷ Annapurna Post

¹⁸ Setopati

¹⁹ The Kathmandu Post

²⁰ The Kathmandu Post

countries offering third vaccine doses “to share what can be used for boosters with other countries so (they) can increase their first and second vaccination coverage”.²¹

Taiwanese President Tsai Ingwen received her first dose of the island’s domestically developed coronavirus vaccine on August 23, launching its rollout to the public. The vaccine, made by Medigen Vaccine Biologics Corporation, was given emergency approval by regulators in July using a shortcut that prompted fierce opposition from parts of Taiwan’s medical and scientific community.²²

Indonesia’s anti-graft court sentenced former social affairs minister Juliari Peter Batubara to 12 years in prison on August 23 after finding him guilty of bribery related to the government’s distribution of coronavirus aid.²³

Indonesia will from August 24 start to allow the partial reopening of restaurants, shopping malls and places of worship in some areas including in the capital Jakarta and the holiday island of Bali.²⁴

²¹ The Associated Press (in The Himalayan Times)

²² The Associated Press (in The Himalayan Times)

²³ The Associated Press (in The Himalayan Times)

²⁴ Reuters (in The Himalayan Times)

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

WHO's COVID-19 response in Nepal is made possible through the generous support of the Government of Azerbaijan, the Government of Canada, UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), Government of Germany, and USAID.

Reference Code: 21AUG25MM_014