Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal
**Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring Nepal**

Date: June 15, 2021
Kathmandu, Nepal

---

### EMERGING THEME(S)

- Is this a new variant of COVID-19? PCR tests for people showing COVID-19-like symptoms in Kanchanpur’s Mahakali Hospital show negative reports yet chest CT scans show COVID-pneumonia.
- Nepal reported 2,049 new COVID-19 cases, 53 fatalities on June 14; people showing COVID-19-like symptoms rising in Upper Dolpa but no human resources to carry out COVID-19 tests.
- Experts skeptical about Kathmandu Valley model working in other areas with regards to relaxation to prohibitory orders.

---

### RECURRING THEME(S)

- Daily wage laborers, petty businesses dealing in non-essentials hit the hardest by ongoing prohibitory orders.
- Drug manufacturers have created artificial shortage of paracetamol in market to raise the price by double.

---

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

People showing COVID-19-like symptoms are visiting the Mahakali Hospital of Kanchanpur in recent days — despite showing the symptoms, their PCR tests reports are coming back negative. When a CT scan of their chest was done, it showed COVID-pneumonia, as per Dr Govinda Rokaya of the hospital. We are suspecting if it could be a new variant of COVID-19, he said. Similar cases are being seen in the Dhangadhi’s Seti Provincial Hospital too.\(^2\)

Nepal reported 2,049 new COVID-19 cases and 53 fatalities on June 14. The country's COVID-19 recovery rate climbed to 87.8 per cent as compared to 87.3 per cent on June 13, while the fatality rate stands at 1.6 per cent.\(^3\)

The number of patients showing COVID-19-like symptoms is rising in Upper Dolpa. However, authorities are unable to conduct COVID-19 tests due to lack of human resources.\(^4\)

Eight members of one family tested positive for COVID-19 in Durga Bhagawati Rural Municipality, Rautahat. Swab samples of 40 people were collected for lab test; of them eight tested positive and all of them are members of the same family.\(^5\)

The National Human Rights Commission has drawn the government's attention towards the need for an increase in the tests being done for detection of COVID-19 at a time the infection is spreading at the community level in Nepal.\(^6\)

For Nepali authorities, maintaining the status quo is the name of the game. Even after 50 days of lockdown, they are yet to devise any modality on how to loosen or lift it. Nor is there any planning yet. On June 13, Kathmandu Valley authorities announced the ongoing prohibitory orders would continue for one more week with some minor changes to the existing modality. Home Ministry Spokesperson Janak Raj Dahal said that all districts will follow the modality of the three districts of

\(^2\) Onlinekhabar  
\(^3\) THT Online  
\(^4\) The Kathmandu Post  
\(^5\) The Himalayan Times  
\(^6\) Ratopati
Kathmandu with minor changes according to their needs. Experts however are skeptical as they feel ad-hoc decisions are not going to work and a studied decision is a must.\(^7\)

All 12 districts in Lumbini Province are under prohibitory orders. The restrictions have affected everyone but it’s the daily wage earners that have been hit the hardest. They have no source of income at present and none of the local units have announced relief and income-generating programs for them.\(^8\)

With the lockdown getting longer and longer, owners of small businesses selling ‘nonessential’ goods are having the worst time as they are totally shut down and their scanty savings are gone. Petty traders say that the second lockdown has been harder for them than the first one. Small businesses selling non-essentials said the government had not listened to their pleas for some leeway.\(^9\)

Drug manufacturing companies have created artificial shortage of paracetamol in the market to increase its price by double. They have been pressurizing the Department of Drug Administration to increase the price of a tablet of paracetamol from Re 1 to Rs 3 amidst the pandemic stating that there has been an increase in the price of raw materials.\(^10\)

---

\(^7\) The Kathmandu Post  
\(^8\) The Kathmandu Post  
\(^9\) The Kathmandu Post  
\(^10\) The Kathmandu Post
PROHIBITORY ORDERS

The officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) have not yet reached a decision on lifting the prohibitory orders in Kathmandu Valley. The MoHP has been saying that prohibitory orders can be lifted only after the daily infection reduces to 10 per cent. According to Kali Prasad Parajuli, Chief District Officer of Kathmandu, they will relax the prohibitory orders step-by-step if the daily COVID-19 infection rate continues to decrease.\(^\text{11}\)

The number of COVID-19 infected has reduced by more than 65 per cent in Kathmandu Valley. With this many had anticipated the prohibitory orders to be lifted from June 15. However, the Chief District Officers of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur have said the prohibitory orders were extended as the risk of infection still exists. They have agreed to relax the restrictions after the infection rate comes down to 10 per cent. The Ministry of Health and Population is working on how to handle the restrictions once the infection rate goes below 10 per cent.\(^\text{12}\)

The prohibitory orders have been extended for a week, till June 21, in Morang.\(^\text{13}\)

The prohibitory orders have been extended for a week, till June 21, in Rupandehi.\(^\text{14}\)

The prohibitory orders have been extended till June 24 in Dailekh.\(^\text{15}\)

The prohibitory orders have been extended for the fifth time in Baglung till June 21.\(^\text{16}\)

Adding some provisions of relaxations, the District COVID-19 Crisis Management Center decided to extend the prohibitory orders till June 28 in Baitadi.\(^\text{17}\)

The prohibitory orders have been relaxed in Banke to an extent as there has been a decline in the number of COVID-19 infections. In the orders extended till June 21, the shops of daily consumable goods and others are allowed to remain

\(^{11}\) Baarthakhari  
\(^{12}\) Setopati  
\(^{13}\) Onlinekhabar  
\(^{14}\) Onlinekhabar  
\(^{15}\) Setopati  
\(^{16}\) Setopati  
\(^{17}\) Setopati
The prohibitory orders have been extended for a week till June 21 in Dhanusha, Mahottari and Sarlahi, and for two weeks till June 28 in Siraha of Province 2.

The prohibitory orders have been extended till June 21 in Gulmi.

### VACCINATION DRIVE

The National Health Education Information and Communication Center has said the COVID-19 vaccine is safe and it does not have any negative impact on human health. It has urged the public not to believe in rumors against the vaccine. Addressing one of such rumors, it has said there is no metal or microchip in the vaccine, and has asked the public to not believe in such fake information.

A total of 55,079 people from the age group 60-64 have taken the first dose of Vero Cell vaccine till June 13 in Kathmandu district.

Restaurant entrepreneurs have demanded the government to give the laborers working in the restaurant business the COVID-19 vaccine by handing over a letter to the Minister for Health and Population Sher Bahadur Tamang.

The tanker drivers halted the supply of petroleum products for the second day in Bagmati Province demanding that they be given the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Nepal Rastra Bank has directed the banks and financial institutions to open their branches based on the pressure of customers while following public health protocols in Kathmandu Valley. It has dismissed its earlier order as per which it had

---

18 Setopati  
19 Onlinekhabar  
20 Ratopati  
21 Baarhakhari  
22 Baarhakhari  
23 Ratopati  
24 Onlinekhabar
specified the number of branches allowed to be open per day.\textsuperscript{25}

The Gandaki Province has put forth the policy of providing financial support to the families of those who have died due to COVID-19. According to its programs and policies for the new fiscal year, financial support will be given to the children who have lost their guardians due to COVID-19, along with families of healthcare workers, security personnel and general public who have lost their lives due to COVID-19.\textsuperscript{26}

The provincial governments are preparing to follow in the footsteps of the federal government in relation to the budget for the upcoming fiscal year — like the federal government, they will focus their upcoming budgets for the improvement of COVID-19-focused treatment system.\textsuperscript{27}

### HOSPITALS and HEALTH FACILITIES

The COVID-19 infected people of Sarlahi are dying due to lack of treatment as the District Hospital there does not have ICUs and ventilators. Most of the infected are staying in home isolation, while those admitted to the hospital are not getting the required treatment. If in case a patient needs ventilator support, s/he is referred to other hospitals.\textsuperscript{28}

The Rapti Academy of Health Sciences will resume its OPD and ICU services from June 15. The hospital had closed those services from May 2 due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 infection.\textsuperscript{29}

Devghat Rural Municipality in Tanahun has set up a 10-bed isolation ward with five oxygen cylinders at Chhipchhipe targeting the residents of Wards 2 and 3.\textsuperscript{30}

The hospitals in Chitwan did not face a shortage of oxygen and beds for COVID-19 infected patients even when the daily

\textsuperscript{25} Baarhakhari
\textsuperscript{26} Setopati
\textsuperscript{27} Kantipur
\textsuperscript{28} Onlinekhabar
\textsuperscript{29} Baarhakhari
\textsuperscript{30} The Kathmandu Post
Infection reached the peak here. Despite a higher number of infections as well as critical cases as compared to last year, the number of deaths was comparatively low, according to the data of District Health Office, Chitwan. The early preparedness for the pandemic and patients getting good treatment are some of the reasons for the low number of deaths, according to Deepak Tiwari, Chief of Health Office.31

It has been projected that there will be a high number of children infected in the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic. Keeping this projection in mind, preparedness has begun in Kavre. The District COVID-19 Crisis Management Center has decided to ask the Dhulikhel Hospital, Scheer Memorial Hospital, and Methinkot Hospital to allocate 20 per cent beds for children.32

The staff of the Nepalgunj Medical College of Banke have staged a protest stating that they have not received their salaries and allowances since the past four months. They have demanded payment of their regular salaries along with COVID-19 risk allowance.33

HELP and AID

The Chairperson of Bandipur Rural Municipality Purna Singh Thapa carries COVID-19 infected patients to the hospital. Also, a medical practitioner, he does the health check-up of the locals who comprise of COVID-19 infected people even while on duty as the chairperson.34

The house owners of Thatipokhari Bazar of Palungtar Municipality have been providing discounts on house rents for traders on a monthly basis till the time the prohibitory orders are imposed.35

The Nepal Innovation Center has handed over 50 ventilators to the Nepal government. They have been provided by Gradian Health Systems, USA.36
The CG Foundation has handed over four oxygen concentrators to two government hospitals of Bara and Rautahat. It handed over two concentrators each to Kalaiya Hospital and Gaur Hospital.\(^{37}\)

The Food Management and Trading Company Ltd has started selling rice at a 20 per cent discount from its two depots in the northern part of Gorkha and also from the district headquarters for the period of prohibitory orders.\(^{38}\)

Medical equipment donated by three European Union member states — Slovenia, Austria and Malta — arrived at the Tribhuvan International Airport, Kathmandu on June 13.\(^{39}\)

Youth hailing from Rampur village of Molung Rural Municipality currently living in Kathmandu have brought relief and safety materials and distributed them in the village.\(^{40}\)

Seventy-five students aged 19 to 23 in Saptari have been helping daily wage laborers — who have lost their jobs due to the COVID-19 pandemic, poor, orphans as well as people with disabilities — with food items.\(^{41}\)

Prarambha and Ani Choying Drolma Foundation have provided healthcare materials to all district hospitals of Karnali Province. They have provided two oxygen cylinders each to the hospitals.\(^{42}\)

The Amnesty International has asked the international community to immediately provide more oxygen, COVID-19 vaccine and essential medical materials to Nepal for the treatment and containment of COVID-19 infection.\(^{43}\)

The Standard Chartered Bank has provided healthcare materials like ventilators, oxygen concentrators, masks, and gloves to

\(^{36}\) Onlinekhabar
\(^{37}\) Onlinekhabar
\(^{38}\) The Kathmandu Post
\(^{39}\) Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)
\(^{40}\) Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)
\(^{41}\) Annapurna Post
\(^{42}\) Setopati
\(^{43}\) Baarhakhari
Eighty-eight personnel from the Nepal Police went to take PPE sets distributed free of charge at the National Innovation Center on June 13. A photo of them is going viral on social media where the police personnel are staying in line without maintaining social distancing — this has created fear that they might be spreading the COVID-19 infection.

The COVID-19 pandemic has emerged as yet another challenge for the country’s tiger conservation efforts. The immediate and tangible impact is that the incidences of hostile interaction between tigers and communities have increased. There have been several incidents of tigers attacking and killing locals and livestock during the ongoing pandemic in different parts of the country.

The Press Council Nepal has urged the government to ensure free treatment for journalists facing health problems due to COVID-19 infection.

The leaders of different political parties, groups and individuals have been regularly distributing healthcare materials to fight the COVID-19 pandemic in Rolpa to gain political benefits. At a time when the government is busy in gaining power only, such people have been busy promoting themselves keeping in mind the upcoming elections by distributing such materials.

Leader of Nepali Congress Sujata Koirala blamed the government for not being able to play an effective role in the control of COVID-19 pandemic in the country. She also stated that the government should prioritize vaccine procurement.

Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has virtually laid the foundation stone of the country’s first-ever liquefied oxygen plant at the Simarhawa of Rupandehi district.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>International News</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The COVID-19 vaccine made by the American company Novavax is said to be 90.4 per cent effective. Novavax said the result was found from the tests of the third phase done in the USA and Mexico.(^{51})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group of Seven leaders on June 13 scolded China over human rights in Xinjiang, called for Hong Kong to keep a high degree of autonomy and demanded a full and thorough investigation of the origins of the novel coronavirus in China. “We call for a timely, transparent, expert-led and science-based World Health Organization-convened Phase 2 COVID-19 Origins study including, as recommended by the experts’ report,” in China, the G7 said.(^{52})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Korea will exempt some travelers who have received their COVID-19 vaccine shots overseas from its mandatory two-week quarantine starting July 1, health authorities said on June 13.(^{53})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{50}\) Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)  
\(^{51}\) Rato Pativi  
\(^{52}\) Reuters (in The Himalayan Times)  
\(^{53}\) 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,
UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO),
Government of Germany and USAID.

Reference Code: 21JUN15MM_31B