



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring Nepal¹

-Sharpening the COVID-19 Response through Communications Intelligence

Date: June 28, 2021

Kathmandu, Nepal

EMERGING THEME(S)

- Nepal reported 1,353 new COVID-10 cases, 34 deaths on June 27; if we are not careful, infection due to Delta Plus variant will increase, warns Health Ministry; government to start seroprevalence survey in all 7 provinces once COVID-19 infection rate stabilizes in the country; 4 COVID-19 suspects in Myagdi's Beni Hospital found to have dengue; COVID-19 infections rising in Kusume of Morang's Kerabari Rural Municipality
- Nepal in no position to say when the COVID-19 vaccines will arrive, says Dr Roshan Pokhrel, Chief Specialist at Health Ministry; only 2.55 per cent of total population has been fully vaccinated, at this rate it will take Nepal more than 12 years to vaccinate everyone
- National Consumer Forum demands action against those smuggling Covishield vaccine doses through eastern border checkpoints and selling them for Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000
- Ventilator bank helps COVID-19-infected Nepalis breathe while cash-strapped Health Ministry gasps; Ventilators received as aid stored in storehouses of most hospitals, not enough trained manpower to operate the machines
- People of Khotang compelled to charter helicopters to fly critically-ill COVID-19 patients despite exorbitant fee, not all can afford it, so many opting to head to Kathmandu via bus once diagnosed though not critical

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 633,679 on June 27 with 1,353 more people testing positive for the infection in the past 24 hours. COVID-19 fatalities in Nepal crossed the 9,000-mark with 34 more COVID-19-related deaths taking the total toll to 9,009. Nepal's COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 92.2 per cent, while the fatality rate stands at 1.5 per cent.²

Nepal is the fourth country in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to have the highest number of active cases of COVID-19 infection. The rate of active cases is 7.9 per cent in Nepal while the death rate is 1.4 per cent.³

Delta Plus, the mutation of Delta variant, will have much impact during the third wave of COVID-19 pandemic amidst the shortage of COVID-19 vaccine. The Delta Plus variant was confirmed in nine samples of Nepal this week. This is highly infectious, and if we are not careful, the infection due to the Delta Plus will increase, according to Dr Krishna Prasad Paudel, Spokesperson at the Ministry of Health and Population.⁴

The World Health Organization has said the COVID-19 vaccine might not work on the new Delta Plus variant. It has been saying that the changing form of the virus has become a topic of concern. The infection due to the Delta Plus has been seen in Nepal too. As of now, it has been confirmed in 11 nations across the world.⁵

The government is set to conduct a seroprevalence survey in all seven provinces of the country at a time when the rate of COVID-19 infection has become stable. It will begin next week to study the state of the infection in the country, as per Dr Krishna Prasad Paudel, Spokesperson at the Ministry of Health and Population.⁶

The infection rate of coronavirus has remained stable in the past one week after the prohibitory orders were relaxed. The infection rate has been 21 per cent in the past two weeks. Dr Krishna Prasad Paudel, Spokesperson at the Ministry of Health and Population has said the stability of the infection rate is a good sign.⁷

² THT Online

³ Baarhakhari

⁴ Kantipur

⁵ Nayapatrika

⁶ Annapurna Post

The number of COVID-19 infections is increasing in Kusume tole of Kerabari Rural Municipality of Morang. Though it has been nearly more than one-and-a-half months since the infection was first recorded there, it has not come under control yet — the infection has spread in almost all the wards.⁸

Four COVID-19 suspects in Beni Hospital, Myagdi have been found suffering from dengue, a mosquito-borne disease.⁹

The OPD service at Madan Bhandari Hospital and Trauma Center of Morgan has been suspended after 12 healthcare workers including doctors got infected with COVID-19 there.¹⁰

No COVID-19 related death has been reported in Sudurpaschim in the last two days on June 26.¹¹

Scientist Dr Sudeep Khadka, who works at the Mayo Clinic of the USA, expressed his dissatisfaction over the role of research institutions and pandemic experts of Nepal during the COVID-19 pandemic. The expert-filled organizations like Nepal Medical Council, Nepal Research Council, Nepal Academy of Science and Technology, universities and medical colleges did not play any significant role. They were almost invisible even when there was a misuse of plasma therapy, vitamins, antibiotics and steroids in Nepal, he said.¹²

When Nepal started its vaccination campaign on January 27 with the 1 million doses of Covishield provided by India under grant assistance, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli had announced that all Nepalis would be inoculated within three months. Now despite being one of the first countries to launch the vaccination drive against COVID-19, Nepal's inoculation campaign has become a fiasco. Though government officials have been claiming they are making "utmost efforts" to get vaccines, there has not been any substantial development. "We are not in position to say anything about when the vaccines will arrive," said Dr Roshan Pokhrel, Chief Specialist at the Minister of Health and Population.¹³

June 26 marked the 155th day of the beginning of the vaccination drive against COVID-19 in Nepal. Only 2.55 per cent of the total population has taken the complete doses of the vaccine during this duration. It will take more than 12 years to inoculate

⁷ Setopati

⁸ Ratopati

⁹ The Kathmandu Post

¹⁰ Ratopati

¹¹ The Himalayan Times

¹² Onlinekhabar

¹³ The Kathmandu Post

72 per cent population, which the government has said will need the vaccine COVID-19 vaccine if the vaccination drive continues at the current speed.¹⁴

Newly-appointed Minister for Health and Population Krishna Gopal Shrestha has expressed his commitment to bring the COVID-19 vaccine. He also said the flood-hit people of Sindhupalchowk will be given priority when the vaccine is received.¹⁵

Minister of Finance Bishnu Prasad Poudel led the Nepal delegation to the virtual Asia and Pacific High-Level Conference on Belt and Road Cooperation on June 23 and in his address to the conference, he emphasized global cooperation, unity and solidarity in defeating COVID-19. Highlighting the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on least developed countries and poorer segments of society, Poudel stressed the need to give due priority to those countries in vaccine cooperation as well as in post-pandemic recovery.¹⁶

The National Consumer Forum has said people are bringing doses of Covishield vaccine from eastern border checkpoints of Nepal illegally and selling them at an expensive price — from Rs 3,000 to Rs 5,000. It has demanded the government take strong action against the people involved in such activities.¹⁷

A ventilator “bank” where hospitals can rent critical care machines for COVID-19 patients has given Nepal’s cash-strapped healthcare system a much-needed lifeline. Nepal Ventilator Services, a non-profit organization that has bought 85 of the machines through donations since the start of the pandemic last year, has helped to meet the surge in demand. Dr Bishal Dhakal, the group’s co-founder, reached out to donors for funding in April last year and money poured in, allowing the organization to buy 20 ventilators to rent out to hospitals at cost. Hospitals are charged Rs 3,000 (US\$25) per day to cover maintenance and transportation costs. The ventilators have been used for nearly 1,500 patients across the country.¹⁸

Nepal requested help from the international community after its citizens dying due to the shortage of oxygen and ventilators amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. After the World Health Organization also appealed to the international community saying that

¹⁴ Kantipur

¹⁵ Nagarik

¹⁶ The Himalayan Times

¹⁷ Ratopati

¹⁸ Agence France Presse (in The Himalayan Times)

Nepal's health system has crashed, lots of help was generated from different parts of the world. However, the ventilators that had been airlifted by the donors and brought to Nepal have been stored in the storehouses of most of the hospitals.¹⁹

Nepal has received 367 ventilators as of now from different donor agencies and nations since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there is a vacancy for only 80 human resources needed to operate the ventilators, while only 29 of them are working at present. There is no team of critical care specialists to operate such equipment in Nepal, and the experts of anesthesiology have been providing this service.²⁰

The people of Khotang are compelled to charter helicopters paying an expensive fee — as high as Rs 350,000 — to airlift their kin infected with COVID-19 to well-equipped hospitals of Kathmandu and other places. They fear that it will take too long to transport critically-ill patients via ambulances or buses to the hospitals of other districts and thus are forced to charter helicopters. However, not all people are able to pay such a high amount for helicopters — so many people have started heading to Kathmandu via bus once they get infected despite their condition not being serious.²¹

OTHER(S)

National News

VACCINE PROMISE

If the activities and statements of the President, Prime Minister, the then health minister and foreign affairs minister in the past two months are to be observed, then the COVID-19 vaccine should have been easily available in Nepal at present. However,

¹⁹ Nayapatrika

²⁰ Nayapatrika

²¹ Nagarik

other than the vaccine given by China under the grant assistance during this duration, there has been no progress in the vaccine procurement process of Nepal.²²

Nepal has seen three health ministers since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the country. All of them have said bringing vaccines to the country as their priority. The newly appointed Minister for Health and Population Krishna Gopal Shrestha said that 'the public have said no vaccine, no vote, but we will make yes vaccine, yes vote'. Former minister Hridayesh Tripathi had claimed there would be a vaccine-related miracle. Even Sher Bahadur Tamang, who became the health minister for 19 days, had said vaccine was his priority.²³

The challenges with regard to control of the COVID-19 pandemic have been multiplied with the frequent change in health ministers — four health ministers have changed since the beginning of the pandemic in Nepal. The vaccine is the foremost need of the country at present and the public expect the government to address it every time there is a change in health minister. However, the recent political push-and-pull have directly affected the Ministry of Health and Population, which has ultimately impacted the Nepali citizens' chance of getting the vaccine.²⁴

Chief Minister of Gandaki Province Krishna Chandra Nepali has vowed adequate supply of COVID-19 vaccines in the province.²⁵

Businessman Binod Chaudhary has accused the government of not being serious about providing the COVID-19 vaccine.²⁶

VACCINATION DRIVE

Nearly 250,000 people, who had taken the first dose of Covishield vaccine in Province 1 are waiting for the second dose. They are in confusion as the government has not arranged for the second dose when the time frame to get it is about to expire.²⁷

The government is set to provide the second dose of Vero Cell vaccine to those in the age group 60-64 who took the first dose

²² Kantipur

²³ Kantipur

²⁴ Baarhakhari

²⁵ Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)

²⁶ Nagarik

²⁷ Nagarik

from July 6.²⁸

More than 1,300,000 people have filled up forms voluntarily to get the COVID-19 vaccine. However, according to an official at the Ministry of Health and Population, one can't get the vaccine just by filling up the form. The vaccine will be given based on its availability, and on the basis of priority.²⁹

PROHIBITORY ORDERS

The chief district officers of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur have decided to make a decision about the prohibitory orders in the Kathmandu Valley on June 28. They are preparing to extend the prohibitory orders for one more week while planning to resume public vehicles, as per Prem Prasad Bhattarai, Chief District Officer of Bhaktapur.³⁰

Public vehicles will be operated on an odd-even number system in Kathmandu Valley, according to the Chief District Officer of Lalitpur Dhundi Prasad Niroula, but the final decision on it will be made on June 28.³¹

The District Administration Office Kathmandu consulted with the stakeholders regarding the resumption of public vehicles. The meeting held between Chief District Officer Kali Prasad Baskot and stakeholders of the transportation sector and security agencies agreed to decide on whether to let the public vehicles resume after observing the state of COVID-19 infection till June 27.³²

The prohibitory orders imposed to prevent and control the coronavirus infection since May has been extended till July 4 in Doti.³³

Prohibitory orders have been extended till July 4 with more relaxations in place in Parsa. The shops will now be allowed to

²⁸ Kantipur

²⁹ Nayapatrika

³⁰ Setopati

³¹ Baarhakhari

³² Kantipur

³³ Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)

open throughout the day.³⁴

All the services of Pokhara Metropolitan City that had been shut down since the second week of Baisakh (end of April) to control and contain the COVID-19 pandemic have resumed from June 27. The services have resumed after the District Administration Office of Kaski has relaxed the prohibitory orders imposed there.³⁵

Eight cases of violence against women occurred in Salyan during the period of prohibitory orders. Six cases of rape, one case of child marriage, and one case of polygamy were filed during the period, as per District Police Salyan.³⁶

HOSPITALS and HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

Narayani Hospital is all set to build a 66-bed dedicated COVID-19 hospital in Birgunj for which the provincial government recently allocated Rs 30 million. Highlighting the need for a dedicated COVID-19 hospital, Dr Birendra Bahadur Pradhan, Narayani Hospital Medical Superintendent, noted that COVID-19 patients from many other districts such as Bara, Rautahat, Sarlahi and Mahottari also come to Birgunj for treatment. As per Dr Pradhan, construction of a separate structure in the empty space behind the existing hospital building has begun.³⁷

Amid speculations that the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic may affect the children more, over 10,000 healthcare workers including consultant doctors, medical officers, paramedics and nurses will be provided with pediatric training to deal with the third wave of the pandemic. “We are preparing to impart training to over 10,000 healthcare workers,” Dr Prakash Budhathoki, senior consultant at Curative Service Division of the Department of Health Services said. “The World Health Organization Nepal will provide technical support to the government to impart the training.”³⁸

There had been discussions on starting ICU service in the temporary COVID-19 hospital of Panchthar when the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic was spreading rapidly. The building to set up the ICU was also made while the hospital management

³⁴ Onlinekhabar

³⁵ Ratopati

³⁶ Baarhakhari

³⁷ The Himalayan Times

³⁸ The Kathmandu Post

claimed to have been working on it. It was supposed to start its service almost a month ago. However, the ICU has not yet been operated and there are no signs that it will start anytime soon. According to the District Hospital Panchthar, they have been unable to start the service because of a lack of trained human resources to operate the ICU.³⁹

The budget for the procurement of the oxygen plant has been released for different hospitals across the country, but its implementation has been uncertain in the hill districts of eastern Nepal. That's because no one has yet submitted the specification of the oxygen plant and the price quotation. The healthcare workers have complained that it has become difficult for them to manage oxygen for patients as the oxygen plants have not been set up though the risk of COVID-19 pandemic is still there.⁴⁰

The Bharatpur Metropolitan City of Chitwan has started a 15-bed COVID-19 Hospital at Ward No 11 from June 27.⁴¹

The government is set to establish oxygen concentrator banks in the health centers of all districts across the nation to manage and ease the supply of oxygen.⁴²

Floods and landslides have damaged the road section from the Tatopani Customs Office to the border point. Over 80 containers, including those carrying at least two oxygen plants and other vital medical supplies, are stuck at the border, said Narad Gautam, Chief of the Customs Office. "One of the containers is carrying an oxygen plant meant for Bir Hospital," he said. The Customs Office had been clearing 10 containers a day before the road was damaged. These days it clears 2-3 containers daily — and for that the goods have to be carried by porters from the border point to the office. "Only containers carrying apples are being cleared for the last 10 days because they can be carried by porters. Heavy goods and equipment cannot be transported by porters, so they remain stuck," he said.⁴³

³⁹ Nagarik

⁴⁰ Nagarik

⁴¹ Ratopati

⁴² Baarhakhari

⁴³ The Kathmandu Post

Some intoxicated youth have beaten the doctors and staff of the Malu COVID-19 Hospital of Dolakha. They had used force on the doctors while demanding that the hospital treat patients other than COVID-19 patients.⁴⁴

A 65-year-old man died of COVID-19 while undergoing treatment at the Birat Medical College of Biratnagar on May 22. The hospital has taken about Rs 400,000 from his relatives though it had signed a contract with the government to provide free medical treatment to COVID-19 infected patients.⁴⁵

The eyes of two people infected with mucormycosis have been replaced with artificial eyes at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital. Both of them had got infected with mucormycosis, after being infected with COVID-19.⁴⁶

HELP and AID

A consignment of medical equipment and supplies from Italy arrived here on June 25 to support Nepal fight the COVID-19 pandemic through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.⁴⁷

Italy has provided healthcare materials including 20 ventilators to Nepal to fight the COVID-19 pandemic.⁴⁸

Leader of Nepali Congress Purna Bahadur Khadka has provided healthcare materials worth Rs 5,000,000 to 54 healthcare institutions and nine local levels of Surkhet. He provided oxygen concentrators, oxygen cylinders, oxygen flowmeters, and masks among others.⁴⁹

Two oxygen concentrators have been given to the Nuwakot District Hospital Trishuli, and Kharanitar Hospital of Nuwakot on the initiative of Fanindraaj Lohani of Rastriya Prajatantra Party.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ Onlinekhabar

⁴⁵ Setopati

⁴⁶ Baarhakhari

⁴⁷ The Himalayan Times

⁴⁸ Onlinekhabar

⁴⁹ Nagarik

⁵⁰ Annapurna Post

The IME Foundation has handed over equipment worth Rs 12,800,000 needed to set up an oxygen plant at Sukraraj Tropical and Infectious Disease Hospital.⁵¹

The Hong Kong Nepalese Federation has provided 100 units of oxygen concentrators to the primary health centers and health posts of rural Nepal.⁵²

The European Union (EU) Ambassador to Nepal Nona Deprez has been active in arranging support to Nepal since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic here. She said the EU is at the forefront of the world's war against the COVID-19 pandemic. Team Europe has expressed its commitment to provide 100,000,000 doses of vaccine to the low-and middle-income nations through COVAX, she said and emphasized that Team Europe is one of the major contributors to the COVAX facility.⁵³

The Canadian government is providing 27 units of ventilators and other healthcare materials to Nepal.⁵⁴

LOCAL LEVEL BUDGET

The 681 local levels have announced the budget for the upcoming fiscal year giving priority to the health sector to control the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁵

Some of the local levels of the different districts of Bagmati Province have put the control of COVID-19 as a priority in the budget for the upcoming fiscal year.⁵⁶

FLOUTING OF HEALTH PROTOCOLS

The rate of COVID-19 positivity is above 20 per cent. It is still difficult to get ventilators for COVID-19 infected people in

⁵¹ Ratopati

⁵² Setopati

⁵³ Onlinekhabar

⁵⁴ Ratopati

⁵⁵ Kantipur

⁵⁶ Kantipur

Kathmandu Valley. However, ignoring the risk of infection, the leaders of major political parties are staging protests on the streets against the government. One of the student leaders Surendra Basnet claimed they have maintained social distance while staging the peaceful protest. However, health experts say it is a crime to organize such programs amidst the pandemic.⁵⁷

Following of health protocols has not been paid much attention to in the districts of Lumbini Province with the relaxation of the prohibitory orders. The number of people wearing masks has reduced. The crowd of people to buy things has increased in the markets.⁵⁸

The Prabhat Secondary School, Ranibash of Sindhuli has set up alternative learning centers in four places that are convenient for the students as it has been impossible to run physical classes due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The centers are facilitating the teaching-learning process where the students are present physically, and health protocols are being followed, as claimed by the school.⁵⁹

The tourism sector has been on a standstill for the past 15 months due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The investment of old hotels has been at risk and the new hotels constructed with investment of billions of rupees have postponed the dates of starting their service. However, the investment of the banks in the hotels during this time has increased by Rs 30,000,000,000 — the banks' investment in hotels has reached Rs 139,000,000,000.⁶⁰

The tourism sector is losing Rs 10,000,000,000 per month due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many entrepreneurs in the tourism sector have opted for alternative businesses since the pandemic has affected their business.⁶¹

The homestays in different parts of the country — Bhaktapur, Kavre, Ilam, Nawalpur, Lamjung, and Syangja — have taken COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to expand their infrastructure and capacity. However, others are confused due to the pandemic as they are not sure when the situation will normalize.⁶²

⁵⁷ Kantipur

⁵⁸ Kantipur

⁵⁹ Kantipur

⁶⁰ Nayapatrika

⁶¹ Nagarik

No tourist has reached the homestay of the Tharu village of Kailali due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁶³

The homestay entrepreneurs of Lamjung are jobless as no tourists are visiting the touristic destinations there. The Ghale Gaun, which used to see 400 visitors a day, does not have a single tourist these days. As tourism is the major profession of the people of Ghale Gaun, they have been suffering due to the prohibitory orders imposed to control the COVID-19 pandemic. The entrepreneurs are looking for a relief package from the state.⁶⁴

The traders and entrepreneurs have warned that the nation's economy will be at risk if the government is unable to give the COVID-19 vaccine to the majority of Nepalis.⁶⁵

With COVID-19 cases declining in Kathmandu Valley, the administrations of the three districts of the Valley have eased the lockdown allowing most businesses to reopen and more vehicles to ply the streets, However, for the tattoo and piercing industry, the closure has no end in sight. Uma Kanta Adhikari, Assistant Chief District Officer of Kathmandu said that along with tattoo parlors they have not allowed beauty parlors, barber shops and gyms to reopen due to infection risks. The continued ban on their business has left tattoo artists worried as they are struggling even to pay the rent for their shops, the majority of which are located at the famous tourist area like Thamel, where the rents are high.⁶⁶

A total of 20 journalists have lost their lives due to COVID-19 across the country. More than 1,000 have been infected with it.⁶⁷

The Gulf countries have said they will allow only those laborers vaccinated against COVID-19 to work. With this the Nepali laborers won't be able to go to the Gulf countries for foreign employment as the Nepal government has been unable to arrange the vaccine for them.⁶⁸

⁶² Nayapatrika

⁶³ Nayapatrika

⁶⁴ Nayapatrika

⁶⁵ Nayapatrika

⁶⁶ The Kathmandu Post

⁶⁷ Nagarik

⁶⁸ Kantipur

Nepal's foreign employment sector encounters a new problem — COVID-19 vaccinations. With labor destination countries tightening their borders and requiring vaccinations for arrivals, the sector, already reeling under the impact of the pandemic, is set to be hit further. Last week Kuwait said it would allow foreigners entry only if they have been inoculated against COVID-19 with vaccines it has approved. Dubai also announced similar restrictions. Labor hosting nations welcoming only those who are vaccinated does not surprise Rameshwor Nepal, a labor migration researcher. "The way labor destination countries had ramped up vaccination drives for their citizens as well as expats shows they were preparing to keep the people within their borders safe," said Nepal. "Once the people inside the country are safe with immunization, they would genuinely not want others to enter the country." ⁶⁹

Disruptions in the supply chain caused by the second wave of the coronavirus have resulted in thousands of tons of fresh milk valued at Rs 118 million being wasted in just one and a half months, dairy farmers in Chitwan said on June 25.⁷⁰

After the imposition of prohibitory orders to control the COVID-19 pandemic, milk worth Rs 110,781,342 has gone to waste after farmers were unable to sell the milk.⁷¹

A total of 2,090,214 liters of milk went to waste due to the prohibitory orders imposed to control the COVID-19 pandemic in Chitwan. As the farmers were not able to sell the milk during this period, they suffered a loss of Rs 110,000,000.⁷²

International News

For 14 months, Bhutan's King Jigme has been traveling by foot, car and horse to remote hamlets to oversee measures to protect his tiny kingdom of 700,000 from the coronavirus outbreak that has flared up in neighboring India. The impact of the 41-year-old king's excursions is evident in a COVID-19 death toll of just one. "When the king travels for miles and knocks to alert people about the pandemic, then his humble words are respected and taken very seriously," said Lotay Tshering, the country's

⁶⁹ The Kathmandu Post

⁷⁰ The Kathmandu Post

⁷¹ Kantipur

⁷² Onlinekhabar

prime minister. His presence is far more powerful than just issuing public guidelines, he said, that his presence assures people that they are not alone in their fight against the pandemic.⁷³

India's richest state Maharashtra tightened restrictions on June 25 citing fears of a "more severe third wave" as the country recorded its third death caused by a new coronavirus variant. The announcement came days after India's health ministry called Delta Plus "a variant of concern", citing its increased transmissibility and ability to bind to lung cell receptors more easily.⁷⁴

Africa is facing a vicious coronavirus resurgence with unprecedented hospital admissions and fatalities pushing health facilities to the brink as the continent falls far behind in the global vaccination drive. So far African nations have been spared a disaster comparable to Brazil or India. However, the pandemic is resurging at an alarming rate in at least 12 countries, with continental cases expected to hit a record peak in around three weeks. "The third wave is picking up speed spreading faster, hitting harder," World Health Organization Africa Director Matshidiso Moeti warned on June 24. "The latest surge threatens to be Africa's worst yet."⁷⁵

Britain will next month publish plans to allow fully vaccinated people to travel unrestricted to all countries except those with the highest COVID-19 risk, in a boost for a travel industry wrecked by the pandemic.⁷⁶

⁷³ Reuters (in The Himalayan Times)

⁷⁴ Agence France Presse (in The Himalayan Times)

⁷⁵ Agence France Presse (in The Kathmandu Post)

⁷⁶ Reuters (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

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: 21JUN28MM_40B