



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal



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-Sharpening the COVID-19 Response through Communications Intelligence

Date: October 1, 2021

Kathmandu, Nepal

EMERGING THEME(S)

- Nepal reported 898 new COVID-19 cases, 12 deaths on September 30; 3 schools of Jhapa's Buddha Shanti Rural Municipality shut down a week after reopening as teachers test positive for COVID-19; National Secondary School of Rolpa's Sunchhahari Rural Municipality shuts down after teachers, students start suffering from viral fever
- Discrepancy in Health Ministry's numbers on immunization, more people immunized than number of COVID-19 vaccines that country has received, procured; 48 per cent population of Kathmandu Valley has been fully vaccinated, 50 per cent has got the first dose, says Chief of Health and Vaccination Section
- Government does away with fast-track procurement of medical goods needed for COVID-19 treatment and management
- YouTube bans vaccine misinformation, to wipe false claims and conspiracy theories from its platform

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 795,061 on September 30 with 898 more people testing positive for the infection in the past 24 hours, while the countrywide COVID-19 mortality toll increased to 11,135 with 12 more fatalities. The country's active COVID-19 case count currently is 18,168 against 18,193 a day before, while the COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 96.3 per cent, and the fatality rate at 1.4 per cent.²

Three schools of the Buddha Shanti Rural Municipality of Jhapa have been shut down a week after reopening after the teachers there got infected with COVID-19. The students have also shown symptoms of cough and fever.³

The National Secondary School of Sunchhahari Rural Municipality of Rolpa has been shut down after the teachers and students there started suffering from viral fever. The school had to be shut down immediately after reopening after nearly 60 per cent of its teachers and students showed symptoms of fever, throat pain, headache, body ache, vomiting and weakness.⁴

The Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) has been providing daily updates on its immunization campaign on a regular basis. The MoHP's COVID-19 bulletin says 33.2 per cent of the targeted population has received the first dose of vaccine, and 28.7 per cent have been fully immunized. But there is a catch. If COVID-19 immunization data of MoHP is anything to go by, more doses have been administered than the number of doses supplied to the country. So far, 17,858,710 doses of COVID-19 vaccines manufactured by various companies have arrived in Nepal. According to MoHP, 7,214,742 people have received the first dose, and 6,238,001 people have been fully vaccinated so far. Except for Jansen, the single-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine, Nepal has used AstraZeneca and Vero Cell, both double dose vaccines. The United States had supplied 1,534,850 Jansen doses. If Jansen is not counted, 4,703,151 people are fully vaccinated with other jabs, which means 9,406,302 doses of double-shot vaccines have been administered. Going by the MoHP numbers, 18,155,849 doses have been used so far. This shows 289,259 doses more than the total doses that arrived in the country. Officials at MoHP say around 1 per cent of

² THT Online

³ Setopati

⁴ Onlinekhabar

doses has gone to waste, which means over 180,000 doses could have been wasted. Officials could not provide any answer to the discrepancy in data.⁵

Nearly 50 per cent of the population in Kathmandu Valley has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19, the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) said. Chief of Health and Vaccination Section, Family Welfare Division at the Department of Health Services Sagar Dahal said that 50 per cent of the population in the Valley had received the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine, while 48 per cent had received the full dose.⁶

Nearly 50 per cent target population of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur has been inoculated with complete doses of the COVID-19 vaccines, according to the Ministry of Health and Population. A total of 50 per cent have taken the first dose, while 48 per cent have taken the complete dose of the vaccine.⁷

The government agencies will now be required to make procurement of goods and services needed for combating COVID-19 by following the existing procurement laws, as the newly introduced ordinance on COVID-19 management has removed the provision of fast-track procurement. The government's move to go for a regular procurement procedure comes amid decline in COVID-19 cases and increase in the number of vaccinated population.⁸

YouTube is wiping vaccine misinformation and conspiracy theories from its popular video-sharing platform. The ban on vaccine misinformation, announced in a blog post on September 29, comes as countries around the world continue to offer free immunizations for COVID-19 to somewhat hesitant public. Public health officials have struggled to push back against a steady current of online misinformation about the COVID-19 shot since development of the immunization first got underway last year. YouTube's new rules will prohibit misinformation about any vaccine that has been approved by health authorities such as the World Health Organization and are currently being administered.⁹

⁵ The Kathmandu Post

⁶ Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)

⁷ Setopati

⁸ The Kathmandu Post

⁹ The Associated Press (in The Himalayan Times)

OTHER(S)

National News

The government has decided to ban conferences and other gatherings in Kathmandu district from October 1 — the first day of the statute general convention of the Communist Party of Nepal Unified-Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML). According to a notice issued by the District Administration Office Kathmandu, organizing conferences, making unnecessary crowds, getting out of the house or organizing *jatras*, festivals and feasts, among others have been banned. However, the CPN-UML has said it will not stop its convention at any cost as it had begun the preparations for it a month ago. The convention is scheduled for October 1-3.¹⁰

The District Administration Office Kathmandu has made a decision to not allow people to use public vehicles without wearing a mask.¹¹

The Province 2 government is set to organize an extensive mask campaign keeping in mind the risk of the spread of COVID-19 infection during festivals like Dashain, Tihar and Chhath. The three-day campaign will be conducted in Birgunj on October 2, in Janakpur on October 3, and in Rajbiraj on October 5.¹²

The World Health Organization (WHO) will provide information on COVID-19 in Nepali language from now onwards. It will provide the information via the Science in Five program through a podcast. It will provide the information every Friday starting

¹⁰ Baarhakhari

¹¹ Baarhakhari

¹² Baarhakhari

from October 1 in the audio-visual format.¹³

Dhulikhel Hospital is reeling under financial strain. The hospital has been struggling to provide salary to its employees since the authorities concerned are yet to release the budget under the health insurance and COVID-19 risk allowance for the last three months.¹⁴

The income and profit of the education sector in Nepal has been affected due to regular and physical classes being stopped due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has also impacted the revenue the nation collected from the education sector — the tax paid by the education sector to the nation has reduced by nearly 50 per cent. However, the revenue collected from the health sector has nearly doubled, as compared to three years ago.¹⁵

The roulette wheels are spinning once again at Nepal's casinos as they emerge from COVID-19 hibernation. The government has allowed the gambling houses to reopen after one-and-a-half years and also granted them a full waiver of the annual royalty fee for the last fiscal year that ended mid-July.¹⁶

Ever since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country last year, customers' priority in selecting a restaurant has shifted considerably. Earlier if it was food and ambience, now equally important is the space. "If a restaurant is small, it will most likely be crowded, increasing the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Another equally important aspect is proper hygiene, and sanitary protocols," said 24-year-old Deevna Karki. Food vlogger Aleesah Sapkota has been considering the spaciousness of the restaurants she visits. In addition, she also looks at sanitary protocols implemented in the restaurants. The strong emphasis diners have been placing on health, hygiene and safety protocols have not gone unnoticed by restaurants, many of which have made changes to their operations to cater to customers' needs.¹⁷

¹³ Ratopati

¹⁴ The Kathmandu Post

¹⁵ Nayapatrika

¹⁶ The Kathmandu Post

¹⁷ The Kathmandu Post

International News

Russia on September 29 recorded its highest coronavirus death toll for a second day running as infections are on the rise driven by the Delta variant and slow vaccination rates. A government tally reported 857 fatalities over the past 24 hours and 22,430 new cases. The new figure brings the country's total deaths from COVID-19 to 206,388 — the highest in Europe.¹⁸

Investing in job-rich growth, social protection and a just transition to a net-zero emissions future, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, could prevent a further deepening of the inequalities between developed and developing economies that have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, in a policy brief issued on September 28.¹⁹

¹⁸ Agencies (in The Kathmandu Post)

¹⁹ The Himalayan Times

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