



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal



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-Sharpening the COVID-19 Response through Communications Intelligence

Date: October 5, 2021

Kathmandu, Nepal

EMERGING THEME(S)

- Nepal reported 812 new COVID-19 infections, 10 fatalities on October 4
- Impossible to screen everyone for COVID-19 as number of migrant laborers at Nepal-India border points surge, say healthcare workers; Nepalgunj border checkpost has reopened from October 3; Rautahat border checkpost remains closed as India has not given permission yet; shoppers from Biratnagar, Itahari, Dharan throng reopened Jogbani border checkpost
- 44 out of 354 maternal deaths reported since May 24, 2020 due to COVID-19, but Health Ministry has not placed pregnant, lactating women on priority for COVID-19 vaccine

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 798,004 on October 4 with 812 more people testing positive for the infection in the past 24 hours, while the countrywide COVID-19 mortality toll increased to 11,174 with 10 more fatalities. The country's active COVID-19 case count currently is 16,606 against 16,804 a day before, while the recovery rate stands at 96.5 per cent and the fatality rate at 1.4 per cent.²

COVID-19 infection has been confirmed in a teacher and two students of a school at Patan Municipality-9 in Baitadi. They have been staying in home isolation while the classes are being run adhering to the public health protocols, as per the school.³

On September 30, a group of five migrant workers reached Jamunaha border point in Nepalgunj from India seeking entry into Nepal. The healthcare workers deployed at the border point ran Antigen tests on them. One among them tested positive for COVID-19, but the group was still allowed to enter Nepalgunj. Healthcare workers deployed at the border points in Lumbini Province run Antigen Tests on COVID-19 suspects and those with no proof of vaccination, but there are no restrictions on those testing positive for COVID-19. Most walk across the border into busy markets without adopting any health safety measures, said one of the security personnel deployed at Jamunaha. Every day around 1,500-2,000 migrant workers from India are entering Nepal from the border point, according to the record kept by the security personnel at the border. The sheer volume of people entering Nepal through the border point has made it difficult to run tests on each individual crossing the border point, said Chiranjibi Gyawali, a healthcare worker deployed at the health desk in Jamunaha. "We provide consultations to the infected and send them home with suggestions to stay in isolation. It is not possible to test everyone. We run tests only on those suspected of having COVID-19," Gyawali said.⁴

The Nepalgunj border checkpost, which had been shut during the lockdown, has reopened from October 3. The meeting of the security officials of Nepal and India decided to reopen the border checkpost like before.⁵

The ban that was in place on vehicular movement across the Nepal-India border point in Jamunaha of Banke district was

² THT Online

³ Onlinekhabar

⁴ The Kathmandu Post

⁵ Nayapatrika

completely lifted from October 3. Banke Chief District Officer Shivram Gelal said that though the border point had opened from October 3, it would come into full operation from tomorrow after completion of some documentation work.⁶

The Nepal-India border checkpoint of Rautahat, which has remained shut down since the past one-and-a-half years, has not reopened despite the festivals approaching. It has not been reopened as the Indian side has not yet given permission for the same despite the Nepal government already deciding to reopen it.⁷

With the reopening of the Jogbani border checkpoint, which had been shut down due the COVID-19 pandemic, the crowd of Nepalis visiting the area to shop has increased. People from areas including Biratnagar, Itahari and Dharan have been visiting the market daily.⁸

At least 354 maternal deaths have been reported since May 24, 2020; of them, at least 44 pregnant women had COVID-19-like symptoms. Doctors say pregnant and lactating women are highly vulnerable to getting serious and dying from COVID-19. However, despite them being in the highly vulnerable group, the Ministry of Health and Population has not yet kept the women of the said groups in its priority risk for vaccination. “We recommended the vaccine for pregnant and lactating women long ago,” said Dr Bholu Rijal, Chair of Fertility Society of Nepal. Studies show pregnant women infected with COVID-19 are at more risk of severe illness, complications and deaths than non-pregnant women.⁹

⁶ The Himalayan Times

⁷ Ratopati

⁸ Nagarik

⁹ The Kathmandu Post

OTHER(S)

National News

The Chinese government has provided oxygen cylinders and other healthcare materials including masks, sanitizers, and PPEs to ease the treatment of the residents of Rasuwa. They have been stored at the District Police Office for safekeeping as well as to ease carrying them to the hospitals that need them.¹⁰

Tourism activities, which had remained closed after the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic started, have been officially opened inside Chitwan National Park. All kinds of tourism activities inside and outside the park like jeep safaris, elephant safaris and jungle walk have now resumed, Chief Conservation Officer Ananath Baral said.¹¹

The mobility of domestic tourists has increased in the Annapurna Base Camp area in recent days, as per the locals there. All hotels of the area have reopened with the arrival of the tourists. The tourism entrepreneurs as well as tourists have taken the COVID-19 vaccine, as per Jaganraj Gurung, Vice-President of Chhomorong Tourism Management Committee, and he said this has made them hopeful that the number of tourists visiting the area will increase in the coming days.¹²

International News

Dubai's Expo 2020 acknowledged for the first time on October 3 that three workers had died from the coronavirus over the course of building the world's fair during the pandemic, as the prestigious event draws scrutiny of labor conditions in the United Arab Emirates.¹³

¹⁰ Baarhakhari

¹¹ Rastriya Samachar Samiti (in The Himalayan Times)

¹² Nagarik

¹³ The Associated Press (in The Himalayan Times)

Despite having the highest rates in the US, there are constant reminders for most New England states of just how vicious the Delta variant of COVID-19 is. Hospitals across the region are seeing full ICUs and staff shortages are starting to affect care. Public officials are pleading with the unvaccinated to get the shots.¹⁴

¹⁴ The Associated Press (in The Kathmandu Post)

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