



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal



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-Sharpening the COVID-19 Response through Communications Intelligence

Date: September 3, 2021
Kathmandu, Nepal

EMERGING THEME(S)

- Nepal reported 1,619 new COVID-19 cases, 16 deaths on September 2; neurological problems being seen in COVID-19-recovered of Nepal; number of seasonal flu patients has increased in Kathmandu hospitals and other city areas; impact of COVID-19 seen to be similar in city and rural population of Nepal, according to seroprevalence study
- Members of Dalit community affected the most by COVID-19 pandemic, according to researcher JB Bishwokarma

RECURRING THEME(S)

- Kathmandu preparing to reopen schools from next week guided by the concept of 'smart lockdown'; health experts warn against the reopening of schools in Kathmandu Valley; schools in Myagdi have reopened, while Rautahat and Gorkha preparing to reopen schools

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 765,914 on September 2 with 1,619 more people testing positive for the infection in the past 24 hours, while the countrywide COVID-19 mortality toll increased to 10,786 with 16 more fatalities. Nepal's COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 94.2 per cent, the fatality rate at 1.5 per cent, while the active COVID-19 case count currently is 33,946. ²

Neurological complications are being seen in people who have recovered from COVID-19 infection. Though COVID-19 infection is mostly regarded as a respiratory problem, it has caused neurological problems in the Nepali public, experts have pointed out. ³

The patients of seasonal flu have increased in the hospitals of Kathmandu Valley and other city areas of the country. The data of different hospitals show that the number of people with COVID-19-like symptoms visiting the hospitals has increased. According to Dr Runa Jha, Director of National Public Health Laboratory, as most of the symptoms of influenza are similar to that of COVID-19, tests are mandatory to identify between the two. ⁴

The impact of COVID-19 infection has been found to be similar both in the rural and urban areas of Nepal. According to a seroprevalence study done by the Nepal Health Research Council, World Health Organization, and Central Bureau of Statics, the antibody of COVID-19 has developed in 68.7 per cent in rural, and 68.5 per cent of the population in urban areas. ⁵

People from the Dalit community have been affected the most by COVID-19 pandemic. A large number of family members are forced to live together in a small space due to poverty, according to researcher JB Bishwokarma. No effort for awareness programs has been made by the government and such people have been found to be using the same mask after washing many times, he said. ⁶

² THT Online

³ Kantipur

⁴ Baarhakhari

⁵ Ratopati

⁶ Onlinekhabar

The district administrations of Kathmandu Valley have further eased the COVID-19 restrictions allowing conditional reopening of schools. The District Administration Office, Kathmandu in a notice on September 1 said local administrations after obtaining permission from the District COVID-19 Crisis Management Center may allow schools under their jurisdictions to reopen. The notice says school re-openings should be guided by the concept of 'smart lockdown', which allows local administrations to impose different levels of restrictions in different areas depending upon the severity of the COVID-19 situation. ⁷

The Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC) is preparing to reopen schools from next week. The KMC has started making preparations after the Kathmandu District COVID-19 Crisis Management Center said schools can be reopened observing the procedures of smart lockdown. ⁸

Health experts have said it is not time yet to reopen schools in Kathmandu Valley. According to virologist Dr Luna Bhatta, school students are mostly below the age of 18 and they have not got the COVID-19 vaccine. Schools are crowded and the current variant is able to infect all kinds of people, so if anything happens to children, it will create a problem, she said. ⁹

The schools of rural areas of Myagdi have reopened after a gap of nearly five months. They have resumed in-person classes adhering to public health protocols. ¹⁰

The prolonged closed community schools in Rautahat will come into operation physically from September 2. Following the directive of the District Administration Office (DAO), schools in all 18 local levels of Rautahat will come into physical operation by following the basic health protocols. According to the DAO, a directive has been issued to all schools to operate in-person classes as COVID-19 infections have been decreasing. ¹¹

The local levels have been given the authority to reopen schools that have been shut down for months in Gorkha. ¹²

⁷ The Kathmandu Post

⁸ Onlinekhabar

⁹ Setopati

¹⁰ Setopati

¹¹ The Himalayan Times

¹² Onlinekhabar

OTHER(S)

National News

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, World Health Organization Regional Director for South-East Asia, has congratulated Nepal for being able to fully inoculate 15 per cent of its population against COVID-19 in a short period of time. ¹³

The prohibitory orders imposed by the District Administration Office, Rupandehi has banned the organization of any kind of *darr*, dance and musical programs related to Teej in hotels and party palaces. However, such programs are being held in hotels and party palaces. The traders and general public have defied the orders. ¹⁴

The prohibitory orders have been relaxed to an extent in Kaski — the odd-even number system for vehicles has been removed and permission has been granted to organize different programs with a gathering of not more than 25 people. ¹⁵

The District Administration Office Parsa has urged the public to follow the provisions of smart lockdown seriously. The request has come as carelessness has been seen in following public health protocols with the decline in the cases of COVID-19. ¹⁶

A writ has been filed at the Supreme Court demanding that the general conference of Nepali Congress, which is being held amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, be cancelled for now. Member of Bagmati Provincial Assembly Narottam Baidya filed the writ and said he wants it to be postponed keeping in view that a pandemic is raging. ¹⁷

About 17 per cent of the total hotels of Nepal have shut down completely due to lockdown, the COVID-19 pandemic and the

¹³ Ratopati

¹⁴ Onlinekhabar

¹⁵ Onlinekhabar

¹⁶ Onlinekhabar

¹⁷ Setopati

obstruction in the arrival of tourists in Nepal. ¹⁸

The COVID-19 pandemic badly affected the debt recovery work of the Debt Recovery Tribunal in the last two fiscal years. The tribunal is responsible for recovering the debts that the banks and financial institutions failed to recover through their own efforts. ¹⁹

International News

Japan's health ministry said today that contaminants found in suspended Moderna Inc COVID-19 vaccine doses were particles of stainless steel, and it did not expect they would pose an additional health risk. "Stainless steel is routinely used in heart valves, joint replacements and metal sutures and staples. As such, it is not expected that injection of the particles identified in these lots in Japan would result in increased medical risk," domestic distributor Takeda Pharmaceutical Co and Moderna said in a joint statement. ²⁰

More students in India stepped inside a classroom for the first time in nearly 18 months from September 1 as authorities gave the green light to partially reopen more schools despite apprehension from some parents and signs that infections are picking up again. Schools and colleges in at least six more states are reopening in a gradual manner with health measures in place throughout September. ²¹

Global factory activity lost momentum in August as the ongoing coronavirus pandemic disrupted supply chains, raising concerns faltering manufacturing would add to economic woes caused by slumping consumption, surveys showed on September 1. Many firms reported logistical troubles, product shortages and a labor crunch which have made it a sellers' market of the goods factories need, driving up prices. ²²

Asia's factory activity lost momentum in August as a resurgence in coronavirus cases disrupted supply chains across the

¹⁸ Nayapatrika

¹⁹ The Kathmandu Post

²⁰ Reuters (in The Himalayan Times)

²¹ The Associated Press (in The Himalayan Times)

²² Reuters (in The Himalayan Times)

region, raising concerns faltering manufacturing will add to economic woes caused by slumping consumption. Southeast Asia, a low-cost manufacturing hub for many global companies, was hit particularly hard with factory activity shrinking in Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia because of virus outbreaks and output suspensions, surveys showed on September 1. In a worrying sign for global economy, China's factories also slipped into contraction in August for the first time in nearly one-and-half-years as COVID-19 curbs, supply bottlenecks and high raw material prices weighed on output. ²³

Singapore is among the first countries to reopen in the region albeit slowly. Masks are still mandatory in almost all public settings, group sizes are limited, and a contact-tracing app is required. ²⁴

²³ Reuters (in The Kathmandu Post)

²⁴ Reuters (in The Kathmandu Post)

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