



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring, Nepal



Focused COVID-19 Media Monitoring Nepal¹

-Sharpening the COVID-19 Response through Communications Intelligence

Date: September 9, 2021

Kathmandu, Nepal

EMERGING THEME(S)

- Nepal reported 1,347 new COVID-19 cases on September 8; COVID-19 cases may be declining but 18 deaths per day on average still a case of concern, say experts warning all it is too early to put our guard down; infection rate has declined by nearly 25 per cent in past 20 days
- With 10,739,864 doses of COVID-19 vaccines being administered, Nepal becomes the second among South Asian nations to vaccinate the highest number of people

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 reported 1,347 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours on September 8 taking the nationwide infection tally to 773,529. In its regular situation report, the Ministry of Health and Population did not mention the death toll over the past 24 hours. It, however, reported 10 COVID-19-related fatalities, which included the number of deaths managed by Nepal Army on different dates. The countrywide death toll has reached 10,889. The number of active cases stands at 29,497.²

COVID-19 cases may have been declining in the past few days, but the number of daily deaths has remained somewhat the same — 18 on average, which experts say is quite concerning. Doctors say authorities must pay attention to testing, contact tracing and treatment, as well as the number of fatalities, before drawing a conclusion on the country's COVID-19 status. Amidst the looming third COVID-19 wave, doctors say it would be too early for people to let their guard down as around 20 deaths per day is still quite a big number. Since the number of deaths provided by the Ministry of Health and Population on a daily basis includes only those reported to the authorities, the daily fatalities could be even more, as some COVID-19 patients might be losing their lives without being hospitalized.³

The rate of COVID-19 infection has been declining across the nation in the last one week. The infection has reduced by nearly 25 per cent in the past 20 days. The rate of recovery has also increased. According to doctors, the boosting of immunity power against the infection due to the vaccination of people has led to the decline in infection.⁴

A total of 10,739,864 doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been administered in Nepal as of now, according to the Ministry of Health and Population. Nepal is the second amongst the South Asian nations to vaccinate the highest number of people.⁵

² Kathmandupost.com

³ The Kathmandu Post

⁴ Ratopati

A total of 149,574 members of all three security forces of Nepal have got the complete doses of the COVID-19 vaccine. This accounts for nearly 73 per cent of the total population of the security forces.⁶

The Bhotekoshi Rural Municipality has given the COVID-19 vaccine to the people above the age of 60 and to persons with disabilities by visiting their homes.⁷

OTHER(S)

National News

The national population census that had been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic will be held from October 11 to 25.⁸

The meeting of the Chief District Officer of Kathmandu with representatives of security agencies, guardians, education committee has decided to reopen schools physically from September 17. However, some experts have opined that it is not safe to reopen schools at present. The risk of infection is still there as the festivals are approaching. So, it would be favorable to reopen them after Dashain, they have said.⁹

In a country where less than 20 per cent of the population has been fully vaccinated, prospects of a 'vaccine vacation' bypassing the extended vaccine waiting time at home may be alluring, but it is also a luxury most Nepalis cannot afford. Unlike some of their Indian counterparts actively promoting vaccine tourism packages, Nepali travel agencies do not seem to be sold on the idea, at least on officially. Amidst debate on whether or not such tourism campaigns could exacerbate vaccine inequity,

⁵ Ratopati

⁶ Nayapatrika

⁷ Nayapatrika

⁸ Setopati

⁹ Baarhakhari

Faris Hadad-Zervos, the World Bank Country Director for Nepal, the Maldives and Sri Lanka, said the question of vaccine tourism was a complex one with both equity and efficiency considerations.¹⁰

The number of foreigners wanting to climb mountains in Nepal has increased despite the government becoming more stringent in giving visas to tourists due to the COVID-19 pandemic.¹¹

Taking lessons from the ongoing pandemic and emphasizing a once-in-a-century opportunity, countries of the World Health Organization South-East Asia region on September 7 adopted a Ministerial Declaration in a bid to strengthen the health system, ensure health security, achieve universal health coverage and attain the Sustainable Development Goals. “The pandemic has highlighted the urgency and importance of investment in human resource for health, especially at the primary healthcare level, and need to facilitate adequate supply of affordable, effective, quality and safe medical products to ensure an effective response to public health emergencies and build resilient health systems,” said Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia.¹²

It has been difficult to maintain the people-to-people relationship in the border areas of Nepal and India due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the borders have been shut down since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, activities like meeting relatives, shopping, celebration of festivals have stopped, affecting the relationship between the citizens of two countries.¹³

The Federation of Nepalese Journalists Morang has filed a writ petition against Ajod Insurance Company at Biratnagar High Court claiming that the payment against COVID-19 insurance has not been made.¹⁴

The Manakamana Temple of Gorkha, which had been shut down for nearly four months due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has reopened from September 8.¹⁵

¹⁰ The Himalayan Times

¹¹ Kantipur

¹² The Himalayan Times

¹³ Onlinekhabar

¹⁴ Annapurna Post

International News

Many top Indian epidemiologists and social scientists are urging authorities to reopen in-person school classes for all age groups saying the benefits outweigh the risks, especially as poor rural children are missing out on online education. The recommendation comes as experts say another COVID-19 wave in India this year could be far less deadly because a dramatic rise in cases in April and May means a big majority of the population have been infected already, while more than half of its adults have been at least partly vaccinated. An August survey of nearly 1,400 school children done by a scholars' group found that in rural areas, only eight per cent were studying online regularly, 37 per cent were not studying at all, and about half were unable to read more than a few words. Most parents wanted schools to reopen as soon as possible, it said.¹⁶

Travelers arriving in Hong Kong from China will no longer need to quarantine, Hong Kong's top official said on September 7, easing curbs imposed after summer outbreaks of the coronavirus on the mainland.¹⁷

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson on September 7 told lawmakers in the House of Commons that his Conservative government had made the 'difficult but responsible' decision to hike taxes in order to raise £36 billion over three years for social care and the overstretched National Health Service (NHS). The strains of the coronavirus pandemic have left the NHS facing a backlog of millions of delayed appointments and procedures.¹⁸

¹⁵ Onlinekhabar

¹⁶ Reuters (in The Kathmandu Post)

¹⁷ The Associated Press (in The Himalayan Times)

¹⁸ The Associated Press (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, the Government of Canada, UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), Government of Germany, and USAID.

Reference Code: 21SEPT09MM_025