

# Nepal's vaccine disaster has left millions unprotected



**KATHMANDU, Nepal** — Nepal was on the right track to break its vaccination drought on Jan. 27, even as several Western countries began to roll out their vaccines.

But the euphoria that saw a decline in COVID-19 cases and a successful rollout of vaccines didn't last long. Lockdowns were eased, the following months, and political rallies and protests, religious festivals, and public movements turned into super-spreader events. The trend was negatively predictable: Nepal was hit by a double second wave.

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to be used in March and peaked in mid-May. Nepal has received India's first dose of infection, the COVID-19 vaccine, in Nepal. The government signed a deal to procure 2 million vaccines from the Serum Institute for \$4 per dose. One million doses arrived in Nepal on Feb. 21, and the government was willing to pay up to \$5.50 for additional doses.

But the Serum Institute's local agent in Nepal, Hakesh Chaudhary & Logistics Private Ltd., was hoping to cash on the pandemic. The whole program was half of what the agents demanded: 10 percent commission, pushing the price to \$6.05 per dose.

From the government had wanted to pay what was, in effect, a cover charge by a middleman. Nepal's public health law has no provision that would allow the government to pay a commission to agents under a government-to-government deal. But the Serum Institute had informed the Nepal government that it would only sell the vaccine through Hakesh. On March 3, the Serum Institute wrote a letter to the Department of Health that it could no longer provide vaccines as per contract. The

# India gingerly eases coronavirus rules as new cases dip to two-month low

Many Indian states eased coronavirus restrictions on Monday, including the capital Delhi, where authorities allowed all shops and malls to open, as the number of new infections dropped to the lowest in more than two months.

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# A major greenhouse to be built in Kazakhstan with Dutch technologies

The investment potential of the Western Kazakhstan region has been discussed with the visiting of the governor, Mr. Gali Akhmetov, and the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Republic of Kazakhstan, Mr. Arno Kruis.

The joint project of the Kazakh Government and the Dutch company Van der Horst will be carried out in three phases. Within the first phase 15 ha of greenhouses will be constructed, which will be generally expected to 15 million euros by the end of 2022.

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# Bangladesh asks for Saudi Arabia's help repatriating Rohingya



**Dhaka** — Bangladesh is seeking the cooperation of Saudi Arabia to facilitate the sustainable repatriation of Rohingya Muslims to their home country, Myanmar.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister A. K. Abdul Monem made the appeal while speaking to his Saudi counterpart Faisal bin Farhan Al-Falaj over phone, and a statement for the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry on Saturday.

Bangladesh is currently hosting more than 1.2 million Rohingya refugees, most of whom fled a brutal military crackdown in Rohingya in August 2017.

24,000 Rohingyas Muslims have been killed by Myanmar's army forces while more than 24,000 were thrown into rivers, over 114,000 were burned, or many were killed. Bangladesh has 11,000-15,000-plus Rohingya Muslims, according to a report by the United Nations Development Agency (UNDA).

"Bangladesh pays the highest repatriation cost of any country," Monem said, quoting the minister.

Monem urged Saudi Arabia to help Dhaka over his long-standing

# Uzbekistan to start production in gas-to-liquids plant in Q4 2021

Uzbekistan has plans to commence production at its first gas-to-liquids (GTL) plant in the South region by the end of the year.

The 33.08-hectare plant, which is being constructed by Gazprom Neft, is expected to help the country reduce its reliance on oil imports, reported Reuters.

The plant is being developed by the state-owned oil and gas firm Gazprom Neft.

This facility will be equipped to process natural gas (cracked) to produce clean transport fuel.

Uzbekistan said the new plant is a milestone. "The start of GTL plant production will help to significantly decrease Uzbekistan's import of diesel and jet fuel."

With the capacity to process 3.4 billion cubic meters of gas a year, the GTL plant is expected to produce about 307,000 tonnes of diesel annually, and 25,000 tonnes of jet fuel.

These products would be primarily supplied to meet the domestic demand, and will also be exported to other countries.

The GTL complex is expected to be completed in the first half of 2022.

Monem also invited his Saudi counterpart to visit Dhaka at any convenient time.

# Bukhara to host International Forum on Inter-Parliamentary Global Cooperation

KABUL, Bukhara is expected to host an international forum on Inter-Parliamentary Global Cooperation in the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Uzbekistan Embassy in Kabul said Tuesday.

The one-day June 23-24 forum on Inter-Parliamentary Global Cooperation in the Implementation of Sustainable Development Goals will be organized in the Bukhara City of Uzbekistan, the embassy said in a statement received by The Kabul Times.

The forum is a platform to expand the list of inter-parliamentary cooperation in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, to support legislation in implementing national goals and objectives in this area, as well as to develop proposals and recommendations to strengthen parliamentary cooperation and mutual assistance in the implementation of the SDGs.

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