

Nepal is being overwhelmed by Covid.

We need help: *KP Sharma Oli*

There are deep bonds between our nations, and so I appeal to the UK, chair of the G7, for urgent assistance

- KP Sharma Oli is the prime minister of Nepal



Nepalese paramedics treat a Covid-19 patient outside a hospital in Kathmandu, Nepal. Photograph: Niranjan Shrestha/AP
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As I write this, my country is battling a new and brutal wave of the Covid-19 pandemic. The rise in the number of infections poses a serious challenge to our brave doctors, nurses, other care providers, citizen volunteers and the entire health service system. Nepal's history is one of hardship and struggle, **yet this pandemic** is pushing even us to our limits. The number of infections is straining the healthcare system; it has become tough to provide patients with the hospital beds that they need.

The infection graph is climbing up and so is the rate of people testing positive. There have been about **8,000 new cases** every day for the past several days, which is quite high for a country of approximately 30 million people. Even

though our mortality rate is relatively low, every one of the 3,720 lives that, at the time of writing, we have lost to the pandemic is precious for us.

My government is making the best possible efforts on both fronts – prevention and treatment – to save people from this lethal enemy. Well-calibrated restrictions are in place, particularly in urban areas, aimed at breaking the chain of infection, and public awareness campaigns are continuing. We have tried to make sure that those needing interventions such as oxygen support and ICU care get access to the treatment they need. We have taken measures to expand the testing, tracing and treatment facilities.

But due to the constraints of resources and infrastructure, the pandemic is turning out to be an overwhelming burden. I have, therefore, appealed to the international community to help us with vaccines, diagnostic tools, oxygen kits, critical care medicines and equipment, to support our efforts to save lives. Our urgent goal is to stop preventable deaths occurring.

When it comes to the United Kingdom, our expectation of solidarity is high at this difficult time, given the close historical ties that we have nurtured. We are nations thousands of miles apart, yet our bonds are strong and deep. These bonds are further reinforced by robust connections between people. After all, we are living in an interconnected and interlinked world; this disease affects everyone. Nobody is safe until everyone is safe.

This pandemic has highlighted once again the vast gulf between the rich and poor worlds. This gap should be minimised by making the vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics more accessible to all. Billions of people in the global south still do not know when the Covid-19 vaccine will be made available to them. Solidarity with these nations is essential.

As the current chair of the G7, and a champion of human welfare, the UK is in a position to play an important role in generating international support. Nepal has faith that Britain will use its influence to ensure that the G7 accelerates the deployment of vaccines around the world, especially to the countries that need them most urgently.

My country also hopes that the UK, as the host of Cop26, will push hard for an ambitious climate deal later this year – a deal that should contain financial support and capacity-building for climate-vulnerable countries at its core. The presence of the Himalayas, which are experiencing glacial melting that can trigger floods, makes Nepal one of the countries bearing a disproportionate brunt of climate change through no fault of its own. The pandemic has compelled us to postpone Sagarmatha Sambaad, a flagship dialogue forum named after Mount Everest, which would have focused on climate change and mountains.

Our sherpas are known for sharing their oxygen with struggling climbers at high altitude. Today, Covid-19 is leaving our country breathless and so we are looking for the “sherpas” of the international community. We are pleading with our friends around the world to urgently provide us with essential medical items, life-saving drugs and vaccines. The only way out of these twin challenges – climate change and the pandemic – is solidarity. The only way out is fighting together, as a global family.

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