

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker

Regional report – South Asia



This report summarises the major changes in the region for the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker's [Containment and Health Index](#), providing a high level overview of shifts in government policies.

OxCGRT is created by the Blavatnik School of Government, University of Oxford. For more information visit www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker.

REGION	SOUTH ASIA
Date range	14-26 August 2020
Reported by	Rushay Naik

Brief summary of major changes:

In the second half of August, governments across South Asia diverged in their attempts to roll back COVID-19 containment policies, as the pressure to reopen schools continues to build in many countries. During this period, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan lifted several lockdown measures implemented at the start of the pandemic, while Bangladesh, India, and Nepal maintained or imposed new measures. On 17 August, Sri Lanka reopened all universities nationwide, while on 22 August, Afghanistan reopened its own schools as restrictions on most public religious events and private gatherings were lifted in time for the Muharram and Ashura observances. Afghanistan's land border crossing with Pakistan at Spin Boldak reopened on 21 August, seeing an almost full return to pre-pandemic border controls there as both countries largely reopened to international travel. After meeting on 10 August, Pakistan's provinces additionally coordinated a widespread reopening of restaurants, sporting activities, and public transports over the next week. However, the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, and Punjab elected to maintain restrictions on some businesses under the purview of new SOPs for social distancing and prior administrative approval. India's central government struggled to convince state governments to lift inter-state restrictions on the movement of goods in compliance with its "Unlock 3" phase amid surging case numbers, as it prepares to enter its next "Unlock 4" lockdown rollback phase on 1 September. Bangladesh reaffirmed on 23 August to keep all educational institutes closed past September as cases continue to rise, while Nepal extended several containment measures, with most localized to districts in the Kathmandu Valley. These included bans on large public events and gatherings, non-essential business openings, and most public transports and international travel into the country.

C1: School Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afghanistan: reopened schools between 15-22 August after its reopening of universities the previous week ● Bangladesh: confirmed on 23 August that all educational institutes will remain closed past September until the COVID-19 situation improves in the country ● Pakistan: maintained closures on educational institutes in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh until at least 15 September despite the continued national reopening ● Sri Lanka: reopened universities on 17 August for all years
C2: Workplace Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afghanistan: permitted restaurants, hotels, and some shops to

Summaries are created with data from the OxCGRT, uploaded by contributors. For specific references, please see the database www.bsg.ox.ac.uk/covidtracker

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	<p>reopen, while all other large entertainment events and venues remain prohibited and closed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepal: extended guidelines for the closure of all businesses in the Kathmandu Valley and other districts with more than 200 COVID-19 cases which are unable to deliver services online or with social distancing protocols; restaurants remain closed • Pakistan: lifted restrictions on restaurants and some non-essential tourism-related businesses in the week following 10 August, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh provinces maintained some restrictions on marriage halls and expo centres until 15 September
C3: Cancel Public Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afghanistan: announced guidelines for the safe resumption of public religious events on 15 August in advance of the Ashura ceremonies; authorities are promoting social distancing precautions, the provision of masks, and the spraying of antimicrobials in places of worship • Nepal: banned all public and religious gatherings in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur districts on 19 August until at least 26 August, with other nationwide bans on large public events remaining in place • Pakistan: announced new requirements on religious congregations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh, with all festivals permitted with the condition of prior approval from respective provincial governments and adherence to local SOPs
C4: Restrictions on Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepal: increased nationwide non-essential gathering limits to 15 people, while restrictions on all gatherings persisted in Kaski (including Pokhara city), Chitwan, Gorkha, Sunsari, Surkhet, and Makwanpur districts until at least 23 August • Pakistan: announced on 12 August a phased approach to lifting sports-related gatherings as part of its lockdown reopening; in the current first phase, 10 or fewer people are permitted at workouts and practices nationwide
C5: Close Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepal: prohibited all private and public vehicles in Kathmandu on 19 August until 26 August, with only essential vehicles (including for food supply, security, and health workers) permitted; all long-distance public transports are closed until at least 31 August • Pakistan: continued reopening all public transport since 10 August with SOPs for mitigating COVID-19 transmission in place
C6: Stay at Home requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepal: extended stay-at-home requirements in all Kathmandu Valley districts on 19 August; only essential trips to stores for food and pharmaceutical needs are permitted • Pakistan: continued its withdrawal of stay-at-home measures across various provinces since the 10 August reopening
C7: Restrictions on Internal movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India: requested state governments to lift all remaining inter-state restrictions on the movement of goods and their conveyances in compliance with a mandate under the current "Unlock 3" lockdown rollback by the Ministry of Home Affairs • Nepal: maintained strict internal movement restrictions in the Kathmandu Valley; intercity travel is not permitted without a permit issued by local officials

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C8: International Travel Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Afghanistan: reopened its Spin Boldak border crossing with Pakistan on 21 August for the first time in 6 months; international travel controls are now largely lifted, with goods transit via Pakistan to India additionally permitted• Nepal: permitted the limited re-entry of Nepali citizens from 19 August through 10 land border crossings with India and China until at least 16 September; all other international travel via commercial flights remains prohibited
H2: Testing Policy	No changes reported
H3: Contact Tracing	No changes reported

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Cases vs Government Response Index:

