

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	01-31 October, 2020
Reported by	Rushay Naik

Brief summary of major changes:

During the month of October, countries across South Asia slowed in their reopening of various institutions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where particular attention has been placed in efforts to reopen schools in the region. Afghanistan most notably reopened all schools at all levels on 3 October with hygiene measures in place. India delegated school reopenings to state and union territory authorities on 15 October, while in Nepal, local districts in the Kathmandu Valley attempted to reopen limited classes despite national closures remaining in place through October. Bhutan maintained the opening of classes for classes IX-XII through the month, while Pakistan saw two more schools sealed in Islamabad on 13 October, nearly a month since the country reopened educational institutions. Bangladesh extended its shutdown of schools until 31 October.

In other sectors, governments centered local authorities in responding to emerging outbreaks. As India entered its Unlock 5.0 stage during October, more facilities reopened outside of containment zones: from 15 October, recreational spaces like cinemas and theatres reopened at 50% capacity, and gatherings above 100 people became permitted with state or union territory approval. In containment zones, however, lockdowns were extended until 30 November. Pakistan continued its 'smart lockdown' approach, imposing 'mini' closures of various localities within Karachi, Islamabad, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir as local outbreaks required residents to stay home. On 13 October, Pakistan's COVID-19 central coordination centre introduced new guidelines preventing all public gatherings in districts presenting COVID-19 testing positivity rates greater than 6%. Both Bhutan and Nepal limited public transport vehicles to 50% capacity, while trekking routes in Nepal reopened from 17 October.

C1: School Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afghanistan: reopened all schools across grade 1 through 10 nationwide on 3 October ● Bangladesh: extended school shutdowns until at least 31 October; statements from the education minister indicator schools unlikely to reopen in November ● Bhutan: maintained school closures for all primary levels, with only grades IX, X, XI, XII continuing to attend classes across the country since September ● India: released Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the state/union territory-directed reopening of schools from 15 October as part of Unlock 5.0 guidelines; online education for students is being encouraged by state/UT education departments, with in-person attendance requiring parental consent ● Nepal: maintained school closures nationwide through October; some local school districts in the Kathmandu Valley permitted limited classes to resume despite national measures ● Pakistan: closed two more educational institutions in Islamabad district on October 13; twenty-one schools have been sealed in Islamabad due to COVID-19 transmission since schools reopened nationwide in September
C2: Workplace Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afghanistan: maintained closures of recreational facilities through October, including bars, cinemas, museums, and gyms; some restaurants and shops have reopened ● Bhutan: maintained nightly shop closures by 7pm and vehicle movements by 8pm on 28 September for the month of October ● India: reopened entertainment parks, cinemas and theatres outside containment zones on 15 October at 50% capacity; work from home nationwide continues to be encouraged where possible as part of the National Directive of COVID-19 Management ● Pakistan: enacted mini smart lockdowns in various localities of Karachi on 1 October and localities in Islamabad on 25 October following outbreaks of COVID-19; only essential services remain open in these localities, with all other businesses and industrial units strictly closed
C3: Cancel Public Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pakistan: cancelled public events in localities under 'smart lockdown' SOPs, including those in designated neighborhoods in Karachi from 1 October, and in designated areas of Islamabad from 25 October; the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) issued new guidelines on 13 October banning public events in cities where COVID-19 testing positivity rates exceed 6%
C4: Restrictions on Gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India: enabled gatherings larger than 100 persons with permission from state and UT authorities from 15 October as part of Unlock 5.0 guidelines; hygiene practices including face masks, social

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	distancing, and use of sanitizer is mandatory as part of SOPs issued under this guidance
C5: Close Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhutan: issued an advisory on 8 October requiring buses and family cars to limit passenger capacity to 50%, with taxis set to a maximum occupancy of 3 persons • Nepal: maintained restrictions on public transport capacity to 50% capacity through October, with masks required on transports at all times
C6: Stay at Home requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India: extended lockdowns in all containment zones as part of Unlock 5.0 guidelines until 30 November; residents in these zones are required to stay in their homes except for accessing essential services • Pakistan: enacted mini smart lockdowns in various localities of Karachi on 1 October and localities in Islamabad on 25 October following outbreaks of COVID-19; residents are required to stay in their homes at all times except for accessing essential services
C7: Restrictions on Internal movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nepal: reopened all trekking routes nationwide on 17 October; participants must present negative PCR test results to travel on trekking routes and may be subject to quarantine
C8: International Travel Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major changes recorded
H2: Testing Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bhutan: issued guidance to citizens on 2 October indicating all symptomatic visitors to flu clinics can be tested for COVID-19 free of charge
H3: Contact Tracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No major changes recorded

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Cases vs Government Response Index:

