

**From: Lieutenant General Sir David Bill KCB
President The Gurkha Brigade Association**



THE GURKHA BRIGADE ASSOCIATION

Headquarters Brigade of Gurkhas
Robertson House
CAMBERLEY, Surrey, GU15 4PQ



Tel: 01258 473150; Mob: 079833323630
e-mail: david.gay.bill@gmail.com

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AB

15 June 2021

Dear Prime Minister,

I write on behalf of the Gurkha Brigade Association to ask for the urgent provision of Covid vaccines to the people of Nepal.

You will be aware that the second wave of the Covid pandemic is having a devastating impact on the lives and livelihoods of our friends and our pensioners in Nepal. The Nepali Government and Nepali Army are fully engaged in combatting the pandemic having received aid, mainly equipment, from various donor countries including the UK. Our military and civilian contacts in Kathmandu report that whilst additional equipment would be welcome, the priority must be the supply of Covid vaccines. COVAX delivered around 350k vaccines in March and India has provided more, but to a country with a population of nearly 30M this quantity is clearly insufficient.

We understand that in the build-up to the G7 summit, our national position was to limit the provision of vaccines to other countries exclusively through COVAX. Given, we gather that this policy has now changed, and we are open to bilateral donations, we urge you to prioritise Nepal. You will be aware of the groundswell of support for Nepal at its time of need both in the Upper House; from your own Ministers and Members of Parliament; and prominent figures in civil society. The number of petitions and signatories speaks for itself. An early decision and announcement would greatly help to reduce such public disquiet at the UK's lack of generous and timely action in support of one of our closest and most loyal friends.

Indeed, Nepal has and continues to be a "special friend" of the UK. In our hour of need during World Wars I & II, Nepal voluntarily contributed 90,780 and 137,883 Gurkha soldiers respectively to our war effort. We continue to enjoy the privilege of recruiting Nepalis into the British Army as Gurkhas who serve with the same pride, discipline, dignity and fortitude of their forebears. We believe that we owe Nepal a debt of gratitude and must stand by them in their hour of need as they did in ours. Many of our veterans, including recipients of our highest awards for gallantry, reside in Nepal and need our urgent support. Prime Minister Oli has directly requested vaccines and has specifically mentioned the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Nepal has a proven track record of national vaccination initiatives and has a country-wide public health infrastructure rapidly to vaccinate its population; all it needs is the vaccines.

I ask you to direct the necessary steps to deliver Covid vaccines for the people of Nepal as a matter of urgency.

Yours sincerely