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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Covid claims 3 more in Sikkim, toll rises to 324

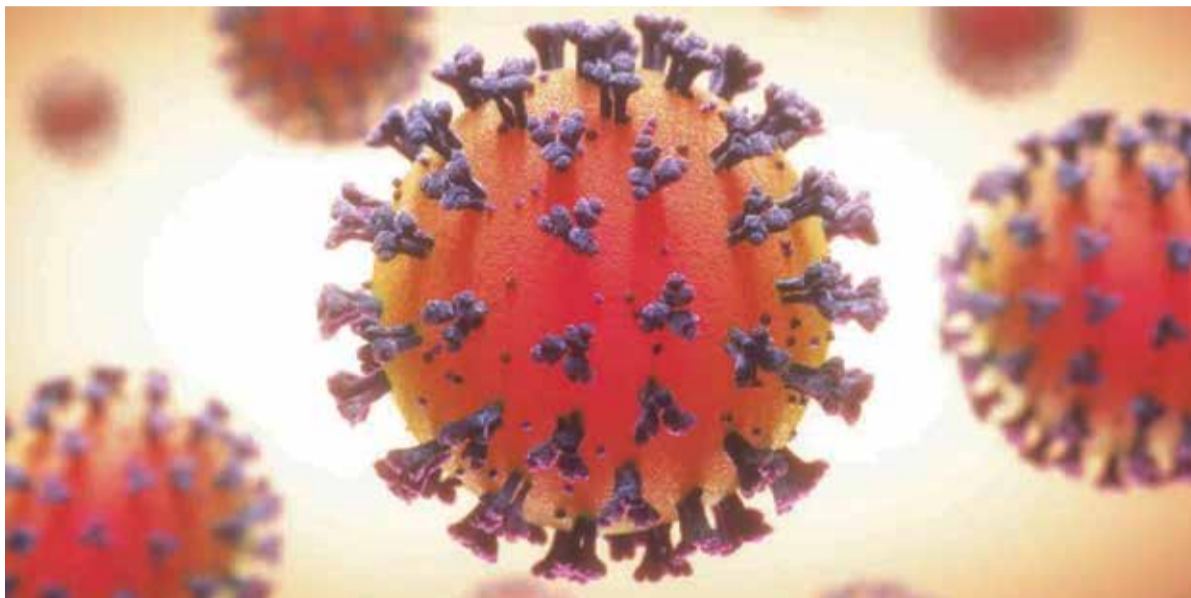
**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 18 JUL:**

Sikkim's COVID death toll reached 324 today with reports of three more COVID patients passing away in the last 24 hours in the State.

Out of three new deaths, two were reported from the STNM Hospital and one from Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

The second continues to be brutal for Sikkim, and after having calmed down slightly a week back, Covid fatalities have become consistently worrisome again. In the last four days, Sikkim has lost seven lives to the virus and recorded 601 new cases. Of the 384 Covid deaths, 188 have occurred in the second wave alone accounting for nearly 52% of the Covid toll in Sikkim.

Today, for instance, the Daily Report of Covid-19 in Sikkim released by the Integrated Disease



Surveillance Programme of the Health Department covering the last 24 hours, informs that 155 more cases of Covid-19 were detected in the State.

This is the third consecutive day that daily cases have gone past 150.

The 155 cases were picked up from the screening of 931 samples on Saturday giving Sikkim a dai-

ly positivity rate 16.6%.

The overall tally of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Sikkim [since 28 Feb, 2020] now stands at 23,392 which works out to a cumulative positivity rate of 13.06%. Nearly 70% of the total Covid cases have been detected in the second wave [counted from 22 April, 2021, onwards by this newspaper].

Of the 155 new cases, 77 were detected in RT-PCR testing of 647 samples and 78 in rapid antigen testing of 279 samples.

Of the new cases, 64 were registered in East District, 38 in West District and 53 in South District.

Hospital meanwhile, registered only eight new admissions while

the rest of the cases were with symptoms mild enough not to require hospitalisation. Only 95 of the 2,304 active cases of Covid are in hospital at present, 13 of whom are in ICU.

Over the same 24 hour period, Sikkim witnessed 98 new recoveries to further improve the count of recovered cases to 20,498.

## SKM govt still clueless about Covid management, hiding failure by blaming people: Chamling

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 18 JUL:**

The State Government, despite the year and half that Covid-19 has been around, refuses to learn and continues to blunder about clueless, Sikkim Democratic Front president, former Chief Minister PawanChamling, has alleged.

In his weekly ritual of posting Facebook ruminations on the current situation, Mr Chamling takes on the ongoing second wave of Covid in Sikkim and criticised the SKM Government for what he sees as the "utter failure of the administration under the watch of the SKM government".

The Chief Minister, he contends, "doesn't understand the seriousness of the Covid situation" and it is only after a wake-up call from the Central government that

he is "finally pretending" to become serious.

The Dandi March tour to Gujarat at the start of the second wave, the Fish Mela in Gangtok and SKM's cycle rally, public meetings despite the situation, all events which have received much flak online, are reiterated by Mr Chamling, who goes on to argue that instead of course-correction, the party and its government administration are blaming the people for the situation.

"Threatening people and making their life inconvenient in the name of Covid guidelines while they themselves living a normal life with all privileges is politicising the pandemic," Mr Chamling writes about SKM leaders and representatives.

He has also rued the state government's

strong-arm tactics against those wishing to serve the people [like Dr Mechung Bhutia] and those who disagree with the SKM and its government, like ArunLimboo and Bhaichung Bhutia.

"It is time for the SKM party to be humble and realise that no one has been politicising the Covid pandemic except themselves. The Union Health Minister and all others who are offering advice and suggestions are simply alerting the government to the gravity of the situation," Mr Chamling writes, while adding, "The people who are living in fear of the terror and threats of the SKM government and goons may remain silent temporarily. But history and the future will never forgive the cruelty this government has subjected the Sikkimese people to."

## South distadm feels rural disobedience of Covid guidelines causing spike in cases

**NAMCHI, 18 JUL [IPR]:**

The state of Sikkim has seen a significant rise in COVID-19 cases in the past few days, especially in the rural areas despite laying down of strict SoPs and guidelines.

It was felt in the meeting held with DTF on 16 July by DAC/South that not following Covid appropriate behaviours and guidelines set by Central and State Governments by the rural populace may be the major reason for the spread of the virus in the rural areas.

Hence, it was directed by the Chairman of DDMA, District Collector (South), Bharani Kumar, to all surveillance teams of South district to ensure that people strictly follow the guidelines set forth by the Government by frequently visiting rural areas and taking strict action against the violators so that the number of positive Covid cases are minimised at the earliest.

Following the direction of DC (South), a team comprising of Sr.SP-South, ADC-South,



DSO(S), BDO-Sumbuk and SHOs of Jorethang and Melli took a round of Melli constituency on 17 July. The team visited places like fair price shops, milk collection Centers, restaurants, child care centers and families performing last rites of the their deceased ones of all the six GPUs.

It has been observed that social gatherings such as last rites, pujas etc are the major sources of spread, therefore the team visited the houses of two of the families performing last rites at Child Care Institute at MelliGumpa, Sadam and Turuk respectively and interacted with the family members.

During the course of interaction medical team

sensitised them about the importance of following Covid appropriate behaviour, administrative team explained to them about various DOs and DONT's as per the norms and Police team informed them about actions that would be initiated under various sections of the relevant law if violation is noticed, they also urged them to help the state in curbing the spread of the virus.

The team fined people who were found violating the guidelines and also handed a challan to Government vehicle for violating odd-even rule.

The team also visited Melli check post and took stock of the entry process of tourist, labourers, local and other categories of people entering the state.

## Guru Rimpoche's Thrunkar Tshechu greetings from CM

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 18 JUL:**

Chief Minister PS Tamang has extended greetings on the occasion of Guru Rimpoche's Thrunkar Tshechu which falls on 19 July.

"Let us all honour Guru Padmasambhava and pray collectively for his blessings for continued peace, happiness, and well-being of all sentient beings in these testing times," the CM has conveyed his message, while calling on all to take time out to reflect on the teachings of Guru Padmasambhava and continue to live in peace and harmony.

## CM offers prayers at Rolu, gets briefed on re-development project



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**NAMCHI, 18 JUL:**

Chief Minister PS Tamang today visited RoluMandirin South Sikkim and offered prayers for the well-being of Sikkim and Sikkimese people,

a press release from the CMO informs.

Principal Chief Engineer and Chief Engineer of Tourism Department and other officials were also in attendance and made a presentation re-

garding the forthcoming redevelopment and construction of the Rolu Complex. Tourism Minister BS Pant was also present for the briefing.

The Chief Minister highlighted that the area

holds great religious value and that the complex will assist in its development and also serve as a tourist spot. Funds for the project have already been designated, the release adds.

## Danish Siddiqui to be buried at Jamia Millia Islamia graveyard

**NEW DELHI, 18 JUL [PTI]:** Slain photojournalist Danish Siddiqui will be laid to rest at the Jamia Millia Islamia graveyard, according to a statement on Sunday.

"Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) Vice Chancellor accepted the request of the family of late photojournalist Danish Siddiqui to bury his body at the JMI graveyard meant exclusively for university employees, their spouses and minor child," the university said in the statement.

The Pulitzer Prize winner Siddiqui had done his masters from the university. His father Akhtar Siddiqui was the Dean of Faculty of Education there. Danish Siddiqui had studied at AJK Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC) from 2005-2007.

The Jamia Teachers' Association (JTA) ex-



pressed condolences at the death of Danish Siddiqui. The Officiating Director of AJK MCRC said, "Danish was one of the brightest stars in our hall of fame and a proactive alumnus who kept returning to his alma mater to share with students his work and experiences. We will

miss him deeply but are determined to keep his memory alive."

Professor Sabeena Gadhihoke said his photographs were hard-hitting but he never compromised on the dignity of those within his frames. "Danish had the unique ability to be-

stow a journalistic picture with empathy and to give dignity and grace to his subjects," she added. In 2018, Danish Siddiqui was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award by MCRC. During the ceremony, he described being a photojournalist as both an honour and responsibility to bear witness for those who could not speak for themselves, in the hope that he could make a change for the better, the JTA said in a statement.

JTA president Professor Majid Jamil described his death as a big loss to journalism and the Jamia community. Siddiqui, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 2018, worked for Reuters news agency and was killed on Friday in the town of Spin Boldak, near the border with Pakistan. He was embedded with Afghan special forces at the time of his death.

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## WEST SIKKIM'S CONNECTIVITY WOES INCREASE

**GYALSHING, 18 JUL:** The bridgespanning PhamrongKhola had collapsed a few months back and this disruption has been creating problems in movement of people and materials in the YuksomTashiding area of West Sikkim. Although a temporary alternate road through the stream itself had worked during the dry season, it can no longer be forded, at least not by smaller vehicles. To avoid this stretch, vehicles have to take a long detour through Pelling. The district's connectivity woes continue with the Tashiding to Legshipaxis disrupted at Lampatey and Khundrukey. [from RUDRA KAUSHIK]

## India records 41,157 fresh Covid cases

**NEW DELHI, JUL 18 (PTI):** India recorded 41,157 new coronavirus cases, which took the infection tally to 3,11,06,065, while the death toll climbed to 4,13,609 with 518 more fatalities, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Sunday.

The active cases have declined to 4,22,660 and comprise 1.36 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate stands at 97.31 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

It said that active COVID-19 cases have decreased by 1,365 in a span of 24 hours. The ministry said that 19,36,709 tests were conducted on Saturday, taking the total cumulative tests conducted for detection of COVID-19 in the coun-

try to 44,39,58,663. The number of people who have recovered from the disease has risen to 30269796, while the case fatality rate has increased to 1.33 per cent, the data stated.

The total vaccine doses administered has reached 40.49 crore under the nationwide vaccination drive. India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20 lakh-mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16 last year.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one crore-mark on December 19 last year. India crossed two crore cases on May 4 and three crore cases on June 23.

## Ganga gobbles up Malda villages, many left homeless

**ENGLISH BAZAR (WB), JUL 18 (PTI):** River Ganga went in around 300 metres, eroding the bank in West Bengal's Malda district, gobbling up houses, fields and mango orchards, officials said on Sunday.

Balutola in Manikchak block is the most affected area by the erosion, which is happening over a stretch of 1 kilometre, they said.

More than 400 families have been displaced so far this year as the river devoured more than half of Balutola and

Elahitola villages, locals claimed. Scores of villagers are fleeing these areas every day, they said.

Block Development Officer Joy Ahmed said that he has visited the affected areas.

"The gram panchayat has been allotted tarpaulin. The whole situation is being monitored," he said.

State Irrigation Minister Sabina Yasmin also visited the area recently.

A delegation of the Left Front also went to the area and spoke to the villagers.

## No-Castling Chess: Anand held to draw by Kramnik, all to play for in decider

**DORTMUND, JUL 18 (PTI):** Former world chess champion Viswanathan Anand was held to a draw by a fighting Vladimir Kramnik in the third game of their four-game No-Castling match for the Sparkassen Chess Trophy here. The Indian maestro led 2-1 after the 61-move draw and has the advantage going into the final game.

In an English Defence game, Anand, playing white, got into an advantageous position and piled on the pressure on the Russian in game three late on Saturday. Kramnik, however, held firm to earn a hard-fought draw.

The duo will meet later on Sunday in the fourth and final game. Anand only needs a draw

to triumph. The second game between the two former World champions had ended in a draw on Wednesday. The Indian had won the opening game on Tuesday to jump into the lead.

The match is played as part of the "No-Castling" Chess devised by the Russian GM. Castling is not allowed in this format in an effort to make the game more interesting.

Castling is a special move to protect the king and activate the rook. It's the only time in chess a player can move two pieces in one move. Anand had returned to over the board action in the Croatia Grand Chess Tour tournament in Zagreb last week and finished second overall (Rap- id and Blitz combined).

## "No fancy presentation, come to House": Trinamool On PM's All-Party Meet

**NEW DELHI, 18 JUL (PTI):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi today chaired an all-party meeting on the eve of this year's monsoon session of Parliament, seeking a productive sitting. The Trinamool, however, took a swipe at him saying his regular presence in the House was important.

"Took part in the All-Party meeting before the start of Parliament's Monsoon Session. We look forward to a productive session where all issues can be debated as well as discussed in a constructive manner," PM Modi tweeted today.

Besides Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath

Singh, Union Minister and Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha, Piyush Goyal, and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Prahlad Joshi attended the meeting, apart from the floor leaders of various parties, PTI reported.

Derek O'Brien, who represented the Trinamool Congress later tweeted saying, "MPs do not want fancy PowerPoint presentations on COVID-19 from the PM or this government in some conference room. Parliament is in session. Come to the floor house of the House."

Earlier in the day, before the meeting, the Trinamool leader tweeted

saying the BJP government must not mock Parliament. Posting a bar graph on the fall in the number of bills sent to standing committees, he said "legislation is serious business" and it requires scrutiny, not bulldozing.

The monsoon session will begin tomorrow and is scheduled to conclude on August 13. On day one, the Prime Minister will introduce the newly-inducted ministers to both the Houses, as is the convention.

Some new members who recently entered Lok Sabha following by-polls will also take oath tomorrow.

## MirabaiChanu: Indian weightlifting's lone ranger at Tokyo Olympics



**NEW DELHI, 18 JUL (PTI):** Star Indian weightlifter Mirabai Chanu has emerged as a strong contender in the women's 49kg category in the run up to the Olympics, making her one of the brightest medal prospects at the Tokyo Games.

The lone Indian weightlifter to qualify for the Tokyo Games, Chanu will be eager to make amends for the disappointing show at the 2016 Rio Olympics where she had failed to record a legal lift in any of her three attempts in clean and jerk and thus could not get an overall total in women's 48kg.

Here's a look at Chanu's strengths and weaknesses ahead of the Tokyo Games.

Chanu's comeback from the dismal show at the Rio Games five years ago has been a remarkable one to say the least.

Not only did she silence her detractors by winning the gold in the world championship in 2017 and the Commonwealth Games a year later, the diminutive Manipuri also overcame an unspecified back prob-

lem, which marred her progress in 2018, and changed her weight category to 49kg from her original 48 kg after the international federation decided to introduce new categories in the sport in the run up to the Tokyo Games.

What had led to her downfall in the Rio Games -- the clean and jerk -- has now become Chanu's strength. The 26-year-old has consistently improved in the section to stay in contention for medals at top events.

In fact, Chanu currently holds the world record in clean and jerk in the women's 49kg category. She successfully lifted 119kg in the Asian Championships, her last tournament ahead of the Tokyo Games, in April to win the gold medal in the section and an overall bronze.

The performance is bound to boost her confidence when she heads into the weightlifting arena on July 24.

While Chanu's superior display in clean and jerk has helped her stay at par with her opponents in recent tourna-

ments, her performance in the snatch event has often proved to be her achilles heel.

The 26-year-old has, self-admittedly, struggled while lifting weights in the snatch due to her shoulder injury.

At the recent Asian Championships, Chanu failed to hoist 85kg in her first two snatch attempts and was in danger of getting knocked out of the competition before she successfully lifted 86kg in her final attempt.

However, the effort was a whopping 10kg less than Chinese lifter Hou Zhihui's world record lift of 96kg at the same competition. Chanu's personal best in snatch is 88kg, which she lifted at the national championship in February last year.

Chanu is aware of her weakness and has been working on it with Dr. Aaron Horschig, a former weightlifter turned physical therapist and strength and conditioning coach.

She has reached Tokyo after undergoing a 50-day training stint in St Louis, USA.

## Surreal feeling to qualify for Olympics, says Sumit Nagal

**NEW DELHI, 18 JUL:** Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal on Friday fell short of words to describe the feeling of qualifying for the Tokyo Olympics seven days before the start of the Games. Nagal qualified for the upcoming Tokyo Olympics on the basis of withdrawals in the men's singles.

All India Tennis Association (AITA) Secretary General Anil Dhupar confirmed to ANI that Sumit Nagal has qualified on the basis of withdrawals. "Yes, he has qualified but we have to look at many things. Due to withdrawals, Sumit Nagal has become eligible, this mail we have got, now we will talk to Sumit," Dhupar said.

"We are already in the process, will talk to him if it's possible for him be-

cause the notice is very short. If it works for him accordingly, we will respond to the concerned authority," he added.

The 23-year-old said no words can express what he is feeling right now and thanked everyone for the "support and wishes".

"No words can express my emotions. A surreal feeling to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics. Grateful to all your support and wishes," Nagal tweeted.

The 23-year-old currently sits at 154 in the ATP Ranking. He achieved career-high No. 122 on August 24, 2020 after reaching Prague, CZE Challenger QF.

He broke into the Top 200 on July 29, 2019, after qualifying at Hamburg and earned 1st

ranking point at age 16 on November 25, 2013.

Nagal has also captured ATP Challenger Tour titles at 2017 Bangalore and 2019 Buenos Aires.

If Nagal manages to fly to Tokyo, then the Indian tennis contingent will represent the nation in two events.

Earlier this month, Sania Mirza and Ankita Raina were confirmed to represent India in women's doubles at the Olympics after entries were officially announced.

Sania is now set to become the first female athlete to represent India at four Olympics when she features at the Tokyo 2020, slated to get underway from July 23 while Ankita Raina will be making her debut at the showpiece event.

## Germany walk off Olympics friendly after Jordan Torunarigharacist abuse



**WAKAYAMA, 18 JUL [AFP]:** Germany walked off after 85 minutes of Saturday's pre-Olympics friendly with Honduras after Jordan Torunarigha suffered racist abuse.

The 2016 silver medalists played the Central Americans in Wakayama, Japan, as they warmed up for their Games campaign which starts on July 22 against champions Brazil.

"The game has ended 5 minutes early with the

score at 1-1. The German players left the pitch after Jordan Torunarigha was racially abused," the German Football Association (DFB) tweeted.

German head coach Stefan Kuntz defended his 23-year-old squad member. "When one of our players is racially abused, playing on is not an option," told DFB's Twitter account.

The Honduras Football Federation said on Twitter the situation was

down to a "misunderstanding on the pitch."

In February 2020, Hertha Berlin centre-back Torunarigha was sent off for reacting to alleged monkey chants from Schalke fans during a German Cup loss.

In that match, Torunarigha, who is of Nigerian descent, picked up a water bottle carrier and slammed it to the ground before being shown a red card for second bookable offence.

## Cinema halls, theatres at 50% capacity allowed in Karnataka

**BENGALURU, 18 JUL [NDTV]:** Cinema and theatre halls in Karnataka can open at 50 per cent capacity, night curfew with new timings will continue, the state government announced today in further relaxation to COVID-19 enforced restrictions.

The decisions were taken after Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa, who returned from Delhi, met senior officials and ministers at his official residence in Bengaluru to discuss the Covid situation.

"Some more relaxations to the Covid-ban. Closed and open auditoriums are permitted. Night curfew from 9pm to 5am is now from 10pm to 5am... Some more business activities will continue. Because they have suffered a lot in the last one and a half months. Today we took a decision under the

leadership of Mr Yediyurappa, our CM," said R Ashoka, Revenue Minister, after the meeting.

Here are details from the government Order :

1. Night Curfew will continue to be imposed from 10 pm to 5 am in the state.

2. Cinema halls/multiplexes/theatres/rangamandiras/auditoriums and similar places permitted to operate at 50 per cent of its seating capacity strictly adhering to Covid appropriate behaviour and SOPs issued by the concerned departments.

3. Colleges and institutions pertaining to Department of Higher Education, permitted to re-open from July 26, strictly adhering to Covid appropriate behaviour and SOPs

4. Only students, teaching and non-teaching/other staff who have taken at least one dose of

COVID-19 vaccine will be permitted to attend the colleges/institutions. Attendance of students will be optional.

5. All Skill Development trainings including long term technical courses are permitted.

Neighbouring Tamil Nadu on Friday extended the coronavirus lockdown in the state till July 31 while easing more curbs.

Earlier this week, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking to the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, Kerala and Maharashtra - which have contributed 80 per cent of new cases and 84 per cent of deaths in the past week - stressed the 'test, track, treat and teeka (vaccinate)' system to contain the virus.

Karnataka today reported 1,869 fresh Covid cases and 42 deaths.

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# Discoms' outstanding dues to gencos fall 15.25 pc to Rs 82,305 cr in May

**NEW DELHI, JUL 18 (PTI):** Total outstanding dues owed by electricity distribution utilities or discoms to power producers fell 15.25 per cent to Rs 82,305 crore in May 2021 from a year ago.

Distribution companies (discoms) owed a total Rs 97,111 crore to power generation firms in May 2020, according to portal PRAAPTI (Payment Ratification And Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency in Invoicing of generators).

The outstanding dues of discoms towards electricity producers have been increasing year-on-year as well as month-on-month for years showing perennial stress in the power sector till February this year. It has started tapering off from March 2021.

Total dues in May increased sequentially compared to Rs 77,203 crore in April this year. The PRAAPTI portal was launched in May 2018 to bring in transparency in power purchase transactions between generators and discoms.

In May 2021, the total overdue amount, which was not cleared even after 45 days of grace period offered by generators, stood at Rs 68,762 crore as against Rs 84,691 crore in the same month



a year ago.

The overdue amount stood at Rs 63,050 crore in April this year.

Power producers give 45 days to discoms to pay bills for electricity supply. After that, outstanding dues become overdue and generators charge penal interest on that in most cases.

To give relief to power generation companies (gencos), the Centre enforced a payment security mechanism from August 1, 2019. Under this mechanism, discoms are required to open letters of credit for getting power supply.

The Centre had also given some breathers to discoms for paying dues to gencos in view of the

COVID-19-induced lockdown. The government had also waived penal charges for late payment of dues.

In May, the government announced Rs 90,000 crore liquidity infusion for discoms under which these utilities would get loans at economical rates from Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and REC Ltd. This was a government initiative to help gencos remain afloat.

Later, the liquidity infusion package was increased to Rs 1.2 lakh crore and further to Rs 1.35 lakh crore. Under the liquidity package, over Rs 80,000 crore has been disbursed.

Discoms in Rajasthan,

Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu account for the major portion of dues to gencos, the data showed.

Overdue of independent power producers amounted to 35.86 per cent of the total overdue of Rs 68,762 crore of discoms in May, 2021. The proportion of central PSU gencos in the overdue was 47.59 per cent.

Among the central public sector gencos, NTPC alone has an overdue amount of Rs 8,297.29 crore on discoms, followed by NLC India at Rs 3,918.61 crore, Damodar Valley Corporation at Rs 3,847.90 crore,

NHPC at Rs 2,432.65 crore and THDC India at Rs 1,130.33 crore in May 2021.

Among private generators, discoms owe the highest overdue of Rs 17,338.48 crore to Adani Power followed by SEMB (Sembcorp) at Rs 2,420.53 crore, IL&FS Tamil Nadu Power Company at Rs 2,004.53 crore, Jindal Steel and Power at Rs 1,659.61 crore and Bajaj Group-owned Lalitpur Power Generation Company at Rs 1,608.10 crore and in the month under review.

The overdue of non-conventional energy producers like solar and wind stood at Rs 11,373.88 crore in May, 2021.

## Export market at Delhi's Sarojini Nagar shut for violating Covid norms

**NEW DELHI, 18 JUL [NDTV]:** The export market in Delhi's Sarojini Nagar has been shut until further orders for "grossly" violating COVID-19 norms, a state government order said on Saturday.

The order stated that even though daily coronavirus cases in the capital have gone down significantly, due caution needs to be maintained.

"... An inspection was done in Sarojini Nagar Market on July 17, at 5:30 pm and it was found that the Export Market SN was extremely crowded with Covid-19 norms being grossly violated and no social distancing being followed at all," read the order issued by sub-divisional magistrate (VasantVihar) Ankur-PrakashMeshram.

The authorities further expressed dissatisfaction over Market Associations' inability to enforce Covid protocol despite the state government issuing various directives.

"Various directions have been issued from time to time with regards for ensuring CAB (covid appropriate behaviour) in Sarojini Nagar Market, latest being CEO New Delhi DDMA minutes of meeting No. SDM/VV/2021/1935 dated 9th July 2021; and it has been found that Market Associations have not complied with these directions," order read.

The export market comprises of nearly 200 shops and is located at the heart of Sarojini Nagar market.

Calling the decision unfair, the market associations of Sarojini Nagar will meet today over the issue, news agency ANI reported.

Threatening to shut the entire market, Nitin Bhatia, Secretary, Sarojini Nagar Market said: "We don't understand on what basis did sub-divisional magistrate issued this order against us?... We will protest against it".

"We strictly follow

social distancing... Why should only shopkeepers suffer? Don't we have kids? We have electricity bills to pay. Why is the order only for the export market? How will we pay our workers," said Vikas-Kashyap, an export trader in the market.

GovindYadav, an employee in a shop said, "Since there's no money we will go back to our villages. if we sit in our homes with no work, how will we pull off rent?"

Earlier this month, authorities had ordered the closure of Delhi's Gaffar market, DDA market and Naiwala for 48 hours for violating COVID-19 norms.

The capital recorded 59 COVID-19 cases and four deaths on Saturday while the positivity rate dropped to 0.08 per cent, according to data shared by the health department.

The four new fatalities have pushed the death count in the city to 25,027.

## Have an open mind on forging alliance for UP polls: Priyanka Gandhi

**LUCKNOW, 18 JUL [PTI]:** Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday said her party is "open-minded" about forging an alliance with other political parties for the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls.

Asked whether the Congress will go it alone on all the 403 assembly seats in the state or align with some political party, the party general secretary told reporters in an informal meeting, "It is too early to say." On whether she is ruling out an alliance or not, she said, "I do not rule out (alliance). We are absolutely not closed-minded. We are having an open mind."

"Our aim is to defeat the BJP," she said, adding that other political parties should also be "open-minded". She added that the organisation is also her area of focus, and a lot of work has been done on it, and in a silent manner.

"I have an open mind, but my priority is my party," she said.

To a question on the party becoming active in her presence and tending to become inactive as soon as she leaves the state, the Congress leader said, "When I come (here), there is the media focus and you pay attention. But

when I am not here, you do not give any attention. But our work is going on."

"We have done the maximum work during the COVID-19 pandemic. You can see that we are the ones who have raised issues. Congress is no longer confined to garlanding photographs. Our party has been out of power for 30-32 years, and it has become weak. However, full efforts have been made, and a lot of energy has come (into the party)," she added. Priyanka Gandhi also said that plans are afoot to revamp the Congress Seva Dal in the state.

She also slammed the BJP over its statement that she was a "political tourist". Stating that she is not a "political tourist", the Congress general secretary said that the BJP's propaganda is to show her and her brother Rahul Gandhi as non-serious politicians.

Later, Priyanka Gandhi interacted with senior party leaders of the state, including UP Congress chief Ajay Kumar Lallu, co-in-charge of Uttar Pradesh DheerajGurjar, UP Congress spokesperson Ashok Singh and NaseemuddinSiddiqui, a Congress leader said.

## Indian students enrolled in Italian universities stranded back home due to travel ban

**GUNJAN SHARMA NEW DELHI, JUL 18 (PTI):** Indian students who had rushed back home from Italy to be with their family members or take part in last rites of the loved ones at the peak of the second wave of COVID-19 are now stranded here as air travel remains banned to the European country.

As the students witnessed a flashback similar to the brutal first wave of COVID-19 in Italy last year, many of them had rushed back home earlier in the year. While some managed to come home in time, few were late to meet the last minute rush when Italy closed their international borders to India.

Those who returned to India before April 28, when air travel to and from the country was suspended, are now stuck here even though their peers back in Italy have gone back to their normal lives in universities. Zeeshan Ahmed, a cyber security student at Sapienza University of Rome, arrived in India when he got news of his sister being ill due to COVID-19. Ultimately his entire family got infected with the virus, including him.

"It was mayhem. In fact, it was a repeat of what I saw in Italy last year that made me scramble even more when I got to know about my sister first. Then, everybody around was infected and news of losing loved ones and family became an everyday thing," Ahmad told PTI.

"The second wave may have subsided but the nightmare for me is

far from over. Italy has gone back to normal but I am stuck here while universities function completely. I also had a part-time job there which I am continuing from here but that will not be an option in few weeks because ultimately work is getting affected due to my absence," he added.

Aligarh's Owais R Khan, who is studying MSc Computer Science at the same university in Rome, says he came back to India in February when the situation in both the countries was better.

"Suddenly, all hell broke loose here and a week before my scheduled return, Italy imposed a travel ban which has still not been lifted. The exams are going on at my university both in offline and online mode. We have been reaching out to the Embassy, sending emails to the Ministry to raise the issue with their counterparts in Italy but nothing has worked," Khan said.

"It feels like a vicious cycle. Last year, we were stuck in Italy when the families back here were on tenterhooks. An year later, the same series of incidents has happened in India and we are in the same situation again. Its hard to struggle through these issues while dealing with loss of family members and memories of last rites afresh in mind," he added.

For NihalVikram Singh, an MBBS student at Vita-Salute San Raffaele University, the trouble is not just limited to delayed travel plans but residence permit and Indian vaccines not being permitted there.

## HC frowns over acquittal of rape accused over a typo, reverses lower court order



**CHENNAI, JUL 16 (PTI):** Holding a typographical error in recording the word "semen" as Tamil word "semman", meaning red soil, cannot contribute to the acquittal of a man booked under POCSO Act for sexually assaulting a child, the Madras High Court has reversed a trial court order setting him free.

Justice P Velmurugan, before whom the appeal from the victim's mother, challenging the September 2018 orders of the Mahila Court in Tiruvavur, came up recently, also pulled up the trial court judge and the investigating officer for their lacunae.

The typographical error had led the trial court judge to treat the semen found in the genitals of the child as "semman", which was not uncommon on a child playing on the floor outside a house.

In her complaint, the mother had stated that there was liquid in white colour in her daughter's genitals. The police of-

ficial had written it as white colour fluid, like semen.

The trial court typist typed it as "semman", which became wrongly interpreted as red soil.

It totally turned the case of the prosecution and admittedly, the defence side had taken advantage of this flimsy ground, the judge said.

He also cited the doctor's report, which clearly stated that the three year-old victim was sexually assaulted.

Turning down the other reasoning of the trial court there was delay in filing the complaint, the judge pointed out that the mother was an illiterate woman living in a remote village in Tiruvavur district.

Her working husband was far away in another village when the offence took place in September, 2017. So it is natural for a hapless woman to not file the complaint in time as she would have been unaware on where to go and how to deal with the

matter, the court said.

Moreover, sentiments and stigma were attached to the issue.

The culprits arrested under the POCSO Act are escaping over technical reasons and unfortunately the Investigation Wing was also not up to the standard.


Due to the defect or fault in investigation, in most of the cases, the culprits go scot-free, the judge added.

The trial courts also, sometimes not applying their minds, don't exercise their inherent or discretionary power either to order re-investigation or summon relevant records.

They only search for proof beyond reasonable doubt, and taking advantage of the flaw in the investigation, the accused were acquitted by giving the benefit of doubt.




"But in cases like this, we cannot give much importance to the technical ground of proof," the judge said and set aside the trial court order.

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**What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?**

**The Novel Coronavirus (nCoV) is new strain of Coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Notorious for mutating quickly and acquiring new qualities, it is a rising epidemic that was previously not identified in humans.**

<p><b>Symptoms of nCoV</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fever</li> <li>● Difficulty in breathing</li> <li>● Dry Cough</li> <li>● Severe acute respiratory syndrome</li> <li>● Pneumonia - like symptoms</li> </ul>	<p><b>Precautions to Prevent nCoV</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wash your hands often with soap.</li> <li>● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer</li> <li>● Observe good personal hygiene.</li> <li>● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.</li> <li>● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.</li> <li>● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.</li> <li>● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.</li> <li>● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Treatment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.</li> <li>● No vaccinations available as of now.</li> <li>● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.</li> </ul>	
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;">    </div> <p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104</p> <p>District surveillance Officer</p> <p>EAST : 7029372100</p> <p>WEST : 9593287809</p> <p>NORTH : 9641957468</p> <p>SOUTH : 7407691463</p> <p>New STNM</p> <p>AMS : 9434711402</p>	
<p><b>DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH &amp; FAMILY WELFARE</b></p> <p><b>GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM</b></p>	

## Allow Local Adaptations of Centralized Models

*The top-down model needs tweaking to deliver better*

Given the energy with which Sikkim is hosting programmes under the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao scheme, it would appear that the State has a major problem when it comes to ensuring access and care for its daughters. Sikkim has many problems, some even gender related, but letting the girl child be born, survive and receive an education is not one of them. An important issue no doubt if the national scenario is taken into consideration, but in a State with no reported cases of female infanticide, one might wonder at the necessity of such elaborate events and robust funding on what, let us accept it, is a redundant issue as far as Sikkim is concerned. The government agencies too realize this awkward emphasis and do, it appears, try and work around it to ensure that the earmarked funds end up coming to some use. So one has ingenious ways in which the BB-BP funds are being utilized. Or the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan obsession in what is the country's first Nirmal Rajya!

This is shared here to highlight the disconnect- edness with which centralized planning looks out for the country. India's daughters, by and large, need saving and access to education, but that is not necessarily the case everywhere that the programme is being force-fed. In areas like Sikkim, it could have easily been ratcheted up some notches to speak more about gender equality, empowerment and rights; it could have moved beyond the unimaginatively routine official events and roped in activists and women leaders to push the envelope of gender rights a little further. But that did not happen. May be its time will come too, but this reference was made not to speak only about the BB-BP initiative, and is cited here to highlight how the pressures of implementing imported models saps everyone of the energy to work out local solutions for local issues. For example, while a girl-child's right to live is not threatened in Sikkim, her right to education often gets compromised; securing the best education for the daughters when a choice has to be made is quite often sidestepped. It is in this direction that Sikkim's energies need to be focused more and it would be unfortunate if the BB-BP was deployed only to reinforce an existing access to literacy. In that sense, it would helped more if centralized planning provided the overall ideology and allowed local adaptations to build on them.

Something on these lines was attempted a few years ago when Delhi announced that it was looking at releasing funds directly to the gram panchayats based on developmental agendas set up by these micro units in line with the developmental push. That said, the decentralisation process already underway in some states, including Sikkim, will achieve little if the decentralised components are not allowed the freedom to change, adapt and modulate projects and schemes to suit the needs, aspirations and ground realities of the areas they represent. Agreed, if this happens, the control that central agencies have over line organisations will weaken, but that is how things should be when one is decentralizing anyways. The parent body should decide policy and leave the implementation to the grassroots level workers who understand the severity of the problems and know which solutions will work. They are not handicapped for initiative or skill, it is only access to funds that limits their effectiveness; as does a more trusting environment which is why they are straitjacketed with guidelines and instructions. Give them the funds and an overarching policy framework to work under and see how everything that the top-down model failed to deliver can actually be rather easily achieved.

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## Why have South Africans been on a looting rampage? Research offers insights

GUY LAMB  
*theconversation.com*

The looting of businesses, shopping centres and warehouses in South Africa over the past week, particularly in the KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng provinces, has taken place at an unprecedented scale. It has affected both poor and middle-class areas. Private as well as government property has been damaged and destroyed. People have been injured and lives have been lost.

A variety of narratives have emerged in an effort to explain the looting frenzy. Some have accused die-hard supporters of former president Jacob Zuma of fuelling the unrest. Others have intimated that the looting is a consequence of state capture and the high level of criminality in South Africa.

There have been suggestions that the current disorder is akin to a rebellion of the poor brought about by acute food insecurity.

Research findings on looting, nonetheless, suggest that such phenomena are rarely caused by one thing. Rather, it's often the outcome of various factors.

Looting in South Africa has taken place intermittently for decades in the context of an ongoing crisis of poverty, inequality and unemployment. It occurred under apartheid and continued to take place after democracy 1994. But it has traditionally been largely confined to marginalised urban and peri-urban areas.

Incidents of looting have often been synonymous with outbreaks of xenophobic violence and service delivery protests. These have overwhelmingly happened in townships and informal settlements in which shops and businesses owned by foreign nationals have been plundered.

A study on xenophobic violence and the spaza shop sector by myself and researchers from the Safety and Violence Initiative showed that looting was often a highly localised phenomenon. That is, foreign-owned spaza shops (small, informal retail outlets) were vulnerable to looting

in communities where a combination of factors were at play. Among them were intense xenophobic attitudes, ineffective measures to regulate competition among shop owners, dysfunctional community leadership and the alienation of foreign shop owners.

We noted in our study the uncomfortable reality that a key driver of looting was that it was perceived by the looters to be socially acceptable. And it was often encouraged and endorsed within social and community networks.

Our findings echo those in a number of publications on looting in the US and England.

However, as underscored in our report, looting does not spontaneously emerge. It usually comes about due to instigation by influential individuals or groups who actively articulate that looting against specific targets is permissible and justifiable.

### THE DRIVERS

In political violence literature, the process of active encouragement is often referred to as brokerage. A good example was during the storming of the Capitol building in Washington DC. Trump supporters were actively encouraged to engage in acts of sedition by leaders of extremist groups.

Brokerage has been a central feature of the current looting spree in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. Supporters of Jacob Zuma have been actively encouraging South Africans to engage in acts of violence and civil disobedience.

Individuals who are more prone to violence and criminal offending tend to initiate the looting. Ordinary people may then join. Acts of looting are often contagious and develop a life of their own. This is due to group dynamics where acts of looting by some may encourage others.

In addition, collective disorder offers a degree of camouflage and impunity for criminal actions.

The absence of capable guardians, such as police and private security, can also contribute to looting by ordinary people.

Another important observation from the xenophobic violence study was that the looting of

spaza shops tended to be more widespread in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. This was due to the greater prevalence of groups and networks willing to engage in various forms of collective violence. Action taken included protests, extortion, political assassinations, taxi conflicts and hostel violence. This mainly entails violence between groups of residents over control of hostels, which are often badly maintained.

Recent reports have suggested that groups and networks like this have contributed to igniting and accelerating the present spate of looting.

The intensity of the ongoing looting in parts of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng signifies a convergence of brokerage, an upsurge in attitudes that looting is socially allowable, and a willingness of certain pro-violence groups and networks to actively facilitate looting across the two provinces.

But these factors don't adequately account for the significant shift of the looting into middle class retail areas and commercial properties.

The grand scale and bold nature of suggests well-resourced "hidden hands" that have expertise in provoking and instigating civil disorder.

### POOR STATE OF SECURITY

A report published in December 2018 revealed deeply troubling findings about state security in South Africa. The report was drawn up by the high-level review panel on the country's State Security Agency.

In particular, it showed that elements within the intelligence services at the time had access to large sums of money and had not only fuelled political factionalism but had engaged in sophisticated "dirty tricks" operations against governing party factions aligned to President Cyril Ramaphosa.

The police minister announced on Wednesday that former intelligence operatives and Zuma loyalists, some of whom may still be on the State Security Agency payroll, were under investigation for possibly instigating the looting and disorder.

*[the writer is Criminologist / Lecturer, Stellenbosch University]*

## Report from Europe's flood zone: researcher calls out early warning system gridlock amid shocking loss of life

JEFF DA COSTA  
*theconversation.com*

It was close to midnight when I received a phone call from my sister telling me that our parent's house was under water. Neither she nor they really knew what to do next. They were in a state of shock amid an ongoing emergency.

I drove from my house in Luxembourg City to my hometown on the only road that was still passable – and even that didn't stay that way for long. The streets were empty and I passed no one. My parents had already called the fire service for help, but they were advised that they could not come in the next few hours.

I arrived to find the lower level of my childhood home submerged. There we were, together as a family, holding torches, knee deep in the water, trying to get as much of it out, one bucket at a time.

My parent's experiences will largely be counted in material loss. But water damage does not capture what they and many others went through that night. During the pandemic, people have related differently to their homes. Declared a place of refuge from the invisible

threat of the virus, home is supposed to be one place you can feel safe. This is especially true for the most vulnerable and the elderly. I was heartbroken to see my parent's sense of safety swept away in a matter of minutes.

In my PhD research, I study how we can effectively adapt to the consequences of increasing severe weather events under climate change and what can be done to prepare for them and mitigate their impact. One area I'm interested in is early warning systems, or the lack thereof, during extreme weather events, such as the recent floods in western Europe.

While the climate is certainly a complex system that is difficult to predict with any certainty, the unfolding catastrophe is a sad reminder of just how inadequate early warning systems can be.

### GRIDLOCKED EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS

The European Flood Awareness System (EFAS) issued a flood notification at the beginning of the week, announcing that there would be extreme rainfall and the risk of floods mid-week in the most severely hit regions (western Germany, Luxem-

bourg, eastern Belgium and southern Netherlands).

This information was passed to a variety of national authorities, which can differ depending on the member countries. In Luxembourg it's the fire and rescue service. These bodies are in charge of transmitting the message to relevant local authorities.

It is within each country's laws and regulations to determine which authority has the power to issue warnings to their citizens.

This delegation of responsibility meant that the southern Dutch province of Limburg issued evacuation warnings on the Wednesday afternoon, well before the flood hit the region, while in neighbouring Germany, the state of Rhineland-palatinate only started evacuating people when it was too late.

Evacuating people when they are already knee deep in water is not a successful way to mitigate against disaster and it does not bode well for the ability of countries to adapt to these events in future. Early warning systems cannot be successful if used in this manner.

EFAS did send out early notifications, sometimes in addition to infor-

mation from national services. But the bodies receiving this information were specific to each country. As a result, the responsibility of implementing any actions on the ground based on a flood warning is taken at a political level.

So why are there no coordinated warning systems in place for all affected areas, regardless of borders and local government? The system is fundamentally flawed. While the EFAS is highly effective in detecting threats, the different ways countries delegate responsibility for warning their citizens creates a gridlock along the chain of transmission. Ordinary people pay the price, sometimes with their lives.

There are systems in place to protect us. Weather models have high enough resolution to warn us, often in enough time. But somewhere along that line from meteorologists to the public, there is a gap. That is where I will be focusing my attention in my research. After all, if we cannot manage the present, what does that say about our plans for the future?

*[the writer is PhD researcher in Environmental Science at the University of Reading & PhD Fellow at RSS-Hydro, University of Reading]*

# Nepal's new Cabinet cancels appointments of 11 ambassadors made by Oli government

**KATHMANDU, 18 JUL [KATHMANDUPOST]:** The SherBahadurDeuba government has cancelled the appointment of ambassadors in various 11 countries.

A Cabinet meeting on Friday decided to cancel the ambassadorial appointment in 11 countries made by the erstwhile KP Sharma Oli government, a minister told the Post.

The Oli government on May 8 had recommended ambassadors to 11 countries.

The recommendation had landed in controversy as the Cabinet had amended the criteria for ambassadorial appointment to suit certain individuals.

The Cabinet had amended the eligibility criteria that any individual must have completed bachelor's degree to become an ambassador, with this provision not applicable in the case of those who have served as ministers.

The move was challenged in the Supreme Court, which on June 27



issued an interim order to not appoint former YuvarajKarki, a former minister, as Nepal's Ambassador to Bahrain, saying the appointee did not have the required qualification.

"In the absence of the parliamentary hearing, as the House had been dissolved, 45 days after their recommendation, we had sent the names of these ambassador appointees to respective countries," said a senior Foreign Ministry official. "Now, we have sent let-

ters to all 11 countries for cancellation of their agreement process."

The Oli government had recommended Nir-mal Raj Kafle and Jeevan-PrakashShrestha, joint secretaries at the Foreign Ministry, for Austria and Egypt, respectively.

Former head of the Central Department of English of Tribhuvan University Krishna Chandra Sharma was recommended for South Korea, a position that has been vacant for more than two years.

SumnimaTuladhar, a noted child rights activist, was recommended for Australia. She is the daughter of well-known human rights activist late Padma RatnaTuladhar.

The other appointees were former mayor of Biratnagar Metropolitan City Ramesh Chandra Poudel for Sri Lanka, Narayan Prasad Sangraula for Myanmar, Kul Prasad Nepal For Brazil, SumitraSubedi for Denmark, MerajMusalman for Saudi Arabia and JangaBahadurChauhan for Russia.

Sangraula was a professor of history and Nepal is a former lawmaker of Palpa district from the CPN-UML. Subedi is a primary school teacher in Jhapa district.

Musalman is from Kapilvastu district and has been long associated with UML's Muslim wing. Chauhan is a professor of English at Kathmandu University.

Of the 11 appointees, two were from foreign service and nine were recommended under the political quota.

## Strict curbs across Northeast amid concerns over Delta variant

**GUWAHATI, 18 JUL [NDTV]:** With more cases of delta variant emerging in the region and a slow decline in the number of fresh cases, several states in the northeast have been forced to either announce fresh lockdown or crowd-control measures to control the situation.

While Manipur - which is seeing a surge in Delta variant cases - has announced a 10-day lockdown, neighbouring Mizoram will go into a stricter lockdown from midnight tonight till 24th of this month.

Meanwhile, Tripura has already imposed a weekend curfew and a day curfew in capital Agartala and 11 other

urban local body areas from July 19 to July 23.

Assam and Sikkim have also announced strict curbs amid the surge in cases.

While Sikkim - which recorded around 155 per cent of new cases in the second wave compared to the first wave - has decided to ban all socio-religious and entertainment-related activities in the state for 30 days, the state government in Assam has withdrawn the relaxation given to people who have taken double vaccination. Both these states have imposed curfews in districts reporting high cases.

People arriving in As-

sam will also have to undergo mandatory covid tests even if they have been completely vaccinated.

"The northeast region is of great concern. Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and possibly Tripura are showing a rise in the number of cases," Sitab-hraSinha, who led the team of researchers on R-factor - which indicates the speed at which the infection is spreading in the country, was quoted as saying by news agency PTI.

As for the northeastern states, the R for Manipur is 1.07, Meghalaya 0.92, Tripura 1.15, Mizoram 0.86, Arunachal Pradesh 1.14, Sikkim 0.88, Assam 0.86.

## Vietnam puts southern region in lockdown as surge grows

**HANOI, JUL 18 (AP):** Vietnam put its entire southern region in a two-week lockdown starting midnight Sunday, as confirmed COVID-19 cases exceeded 3,000 for the third day in a row.

The lockdown order includes the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh City metropolitan, the country's financial and economic hub with over 35 million people - nearly a third of Vietnam's population.

Officials say they have to act as the number of infections reached nearly 50,000 since the outbreak reemerged at the end of April after several months of no cases being recorded. Most of the 225 COVID-19 dead - 190 of them - have occurred since April.

Ho Chi Minh City, the epicenter of the surge, had already announced a full lockdown a week ago, after dozens of cases were reported in late May. The city now accounts for most of the cases in the country with over 2,000 daily.

The situation is getting serious with a high rate of transmission, especially with the dangerous delta variant. We have to put the health and safety of the people as top priority, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh was quoted as saying

in announcing the restrictions.

The government order bans all gatherings of more than two people in public places except for government offices, hospitals and a handful of essential businesses. People are requested to only leave home to buy necessities such as food, medicine, or for vital matters.

Deputy Prime Minister Vu Duc Dam, head of the country's committee for COVID-19 pandemic prevention, said the lockdown order must be applied strictly since the latest wave has spread to 57 of the country's 63 municipalities and provinces while the vaccine supply is still limited.

We have to keep the transmission rate at the lowest possible to ensure the health system functions effectively and is not being overloaded, Dam said.

According to the Ministry of Health, Vietnam has received only about 6 million of the 124 million doses of vaccine it had secured through the UN-backed COVAX facility and in direct orders with vaccine manufacturers.

Over 4 million people have received at least one dose. Vietnam aims to inoculate at least 70 per cent of the population by the end of the year.

## Assam logs 1,727 new COVID-19 cases, 23 more fatalities

**GUWAHATI, JUL 17 (PTI):** Assam on Saturday reported 23 more COVID-19 deaths, which took the toll to 4,984, according to a bulletin issued by the National Health Mission.

The coronavirus caseload in the northeastern state mounted to 5,45,954 as 1,727 more people tested positive for the infection, it said.

Assam now has 17,431 active cases.

At least 2,495 people were cured of the disease during the day, taking the total number of recoveries to 5,22,192, it said.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state stands at 95.65 per cent.

The 1,727 fresh cases, detected during the day, include 250 from Kamrup Metro, 172 from Golaghat, 119 from Jorhat and 114 from Lakhimpur.

The new cases were

detected from 1,33,670 tests conducted during the day with the daily positivity rate at 1.29 per cent.

Of the fresh fatalities, three each were reported from Jorhat and Sivasagar, two each from Cachar, Golaghat and Sonitpur and one each from Barpeta, Bishwanath, Darrang, Dibrugarh, Hojai, Karimganj, Lakhimpur, Morigaon, Nagaon, Tinsukia and Udalguri.

Currently, the COVID death rate is at 0.91 per cent, and 1,347 coronavirus-positive patients have died in the state due to other ailments.

The state has conducted over 1.69 crore sample tests for COVID-19 so far.

Altogether, 87,58,130 people have been inoculated with 15,26,108 of them having received both doses of the vaccine.

## 463 new COVID-19 cases push Mizoram's tally to 27,153



**AIZAWL, JUL 18 (PTI):** Mizoram's COVID-19 tally surged to 27,153 on Sunday as 463 more people including 117 children tested positive for the infection, a health department official said.

The COVID-19 death toll climbed to 121 as a 75-year-old woman succumbed to the infection at Zoram Medical College (ZMC) on Saturday night, he said.

The 463 new cases were detected from 4,679 samples tested in the last 24 hours and the single-day positivity rate was 9.89 per cent, he said.

The fresh cases were

reported from various districts with Aizawl reporting the highest at 294, followed by Lunglei and Kolasib districts both reported 79 and 36 cases each.

Seventy-three new cases were confirmed by RT-PCR test, while 45 cases were detected through TrueNat facilities and 345 cases were detected through Rapid Antigen test.

Four patients have travel history, while the rest 459 were found to have contracted the infection locally, the official said, adding that 231 patients have developed symptoms of COVID-19

and 232 are asymptomatic. Mizoram now has 5,896 active COVID-19 cases, while 21,136 people have recovered from the infection.

The COVID-19 recovery rate in the state now is 77.84 per cent and death rate is 0.44 per cent.

The northeastern state has tested over 5.55 lakh samples for COVID-19 till date.

According to state immunisation officer Dr Lalzawmi, as many as 6 lakh people have been inoculated till Friday, of which over 1.28 lakh have received both doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

## Kolkata Police arrests drug peddler, Heroin worth 26 Cr seized

**KOLKATA:** The Special Task Force (STF) of Kolkata Police arrested a drug peddler in the city and seized heroin worth nearly 26 crore from his possession, a senior officer said on Sunday.

Acting on a tip-off, sleuths of the STF detained the Durgapur-based "wanted" drug peddler when he was riding a motorcycle on EM Bypass near Captain Bheri under PragatiMaidan Police Sta-

tion area on Saturday midnight, he said.

"We seized from his possession heroin weighing around 5.177 kg having a market value of ₹ 25.88 crore in the international grey market," the police officer said.

The accused has been booked under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

## Bengal minister SadhanPande 'very critical'

**KOLKATA, JUL 18 (PTI):** West Bengal minister SadhanPande, who is in hospital with a severe infection in lungs, continued to be very critical on Sunday, officials said.

Pande, the minister for Consumer Affairs, and Self Help and Self Employment, continued to be on ventilator sup-

port, an official of the private hospital said.

"Mr Pande's condition continues to be very critical.

Doctors are keeping him under constant watch at the ICU," he said.

The senior TMC leader was rushed to the hospital on Friday night in a semi-conscious state

after he complained of chest pain and severe breathing issues.

Pande has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and renal disorders, the hospital official said.

A four-member medical team, which included an endocrinologist, is treating him.

## Youth killed in BSF firing in Bengal

**CHAPRA (WB), JULY 17 (PTI):** A 19-year-old man who along with others allegedly attacked BSF personnel was shot dead by the force in Nadia district of West Bengal on Saturday, sources said.

The incident occurred at Bhatgachhi village under Chapra police

station bordering Bangladesh. BSF sources said that a patrolling team found that four-five men were trying to cut the barbed wire fencing from the Indian side territory early on Saturday.

When challenged by the border guards, they allegedly attacked them

with stones and sharp weapons, forcing them to fire in self-defence, the sources said.

One resident of the village, identified as AshifHalsana, was killed in the firing.

The BSF lodged a complaint with the police in this connection.

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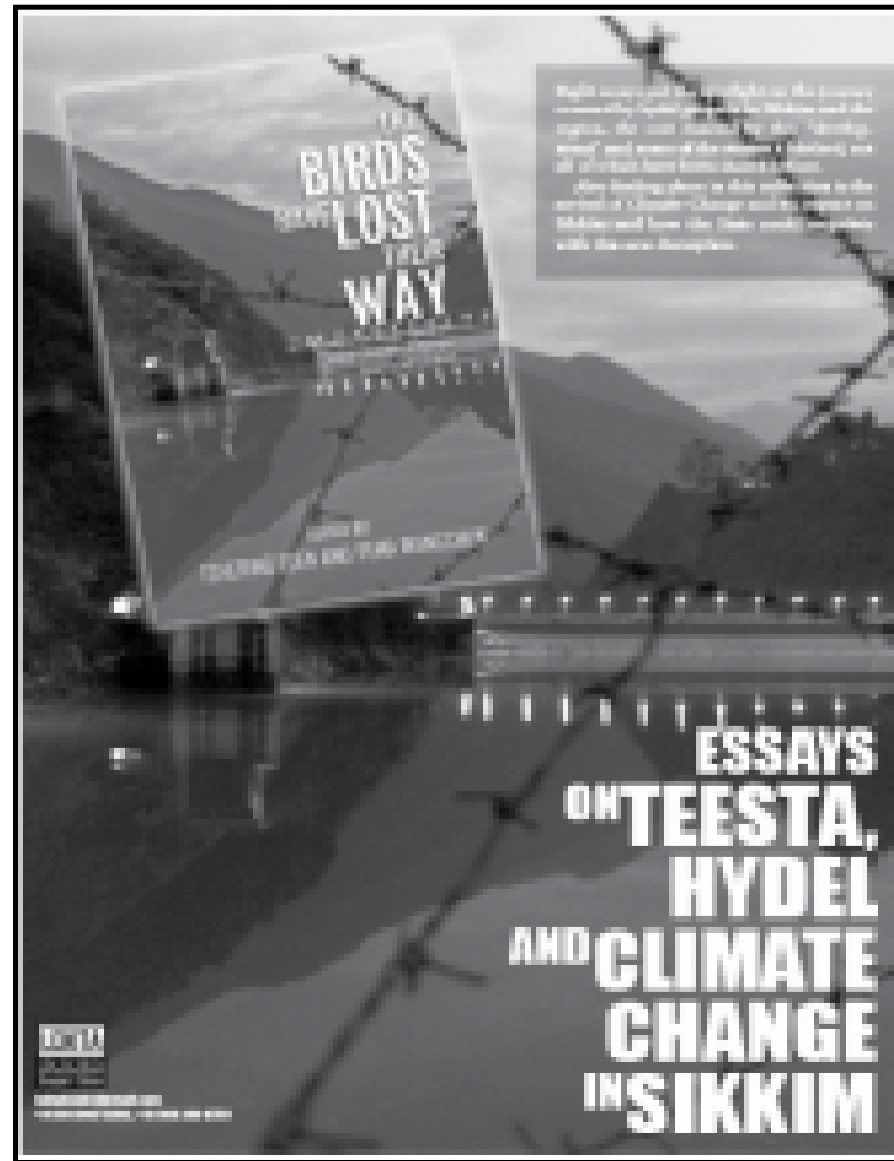
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20-year-old American Brooksby makes final in Newport

**NEWPORT, JUL 18 (AP):** American Jenson Brooksby beat Jordan Thompson, 6-3, 7-6 (3) to advance to the final of the Hall of Fame Open.

The 20-year-old Brooksby face Kevin Anderson, who ousted top-seeded Alexander Bublik, 4-6, 7-6 (3), 7-5, in the first semifinal.

Brooksby is the second-youngest player to reach the final in the tournament's 45-year history on Newport's grass courts, the only tourney played on grass in North America.

"I was playing better at the end of the second set and brought that confidence to the tie break," Brooksby said.

Brooksby will be playing in his first ATP Tour final. The 35-year-old South African is seeking his seventh tour title.

The matches were held prior to induction ceremonies into the International Tennis Hall of Fame.

"It's a great step forward for me, said Anderson, who had knee surgery last year. "Getting through a bunch of matches this week is a step ahead in the progress."

The "Original 9" a group of trailblazing women who started their own tour in 1970 highlighted the 2021 class along with former Australian star Lleyton Hewitt, who was unable to attend because of travel restrictions due to the COVID-10 pandemic. He's expected to be honored, in-person, next summer.

The Original 9's move led to establishment of the Women's Tennis Association, that started in 1973.

Also, the Hall was set to enshrine its class of 2020: Croatia's Goran Ivanievic and Spaniard Conchita Mart nez. Last year's ceremony and the tournament were postponed due to the pandemic.

Brooksby captured the final three points of the match that ended with fog rolling in and temperatures dipping a bit from the low 80s. Thompson hit a forehand that was called out and upheld on a challenge, ending it in 2 hours, 1 minute.

"It definitely was a little different. I wasn't expecting it, going from hot and humid," he said of the quick weather change. "The court was a little slippery. I know he did talk to the referee to try to get play stopped."

Anderson, the eighth seed, forced the third set by winning the final three points of the tie-breaker.

"Even though I was getting more fatigued, I found my serve in the second half of the match, Anderson said.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.Com

# Olympics: Blast from past

**NEW DELHI, JUL 18 (PTI)** With the Tokyo Olympics approaching, PTI takes a look at interesting facts and trivia about the Games from its previous editions.

Here are some highlights and fun facts from the Olympics Games held in 1932, 1936 and 1948.

1932, LOS ANGELES OLYMPICS

=====

\*An Olympic Village was built for the first time and became a model for future games, in Baldwin Hills, occupied by male athletes. Female athletes were housed at a hotel. \*The three-tiered victory podium was used for the first time at the Summer Games.

\*It was also the first time the national anthem from the gold medalist's country was played and the flag of the winner was raised.

\*In field hockey, only three nations took part. USA lost both matches, 1-24 to India and 2-9 to Japan, but still won a bronze medal.

\*Olympic Boulevard, one of the LA's most well-known streets, was renamed to honor the Games. It was formerly called the 10th Street.

\*Due to an official's error, the 3,000 m steeplechase went for 3,460 m, or one extra lap.

\*Colombia made its first appearance at the Olympic Games.



1936, BERLIN OLYMPICS

=====

\*The Berlin Games are best remembered for Adolf Hitler's failed attempt to use them to prove his theories of Aryan racial superiority.

\*The 1936 Games were the first to be broadcast on television. Twenty-five television viewing rooms were set up in the Greater Berlin area, allowing the locals to follow the Games free of charge.

\*A new 100,000-seat track

and field stadium was built for the Games, as well as six gymnasiums and other smaller arenas.

\*The 1936 Games were the first to employ the torch relay.

\*USA's Jesse Owens won four gold medals in the sprint and long jump events, and became the most successful athlete to compete in Berlin.

\*USA's Marjorie Gestring, 13, won the gold medal in springboard diving. She re-

mains the youngest female gold medalist in the history of the Summer Olympic Games.

\*Twelve-year-old Inge Sorensen of Denmark earned a bronze medal in the 200m breaststroke, making her the youngest medallist ever in an individual event.

\*Japanese pole vaulters Shuhei Nishida and Sueo Oe tied for second place and after that, they refused to compete against each other and then they decided

to cut the two medals in half and paste half silver and half bronze into one.

\*Basketball, canoeing and field handball all made their first appearances.

\*Basketball was played on outdoor tennis courts made of clay and sand.

1948, LONDON OLYMPICS

=====

\*The 1948 Games were held after a 12 year hiatus, caused by the outbreak of World War II. \*Germany and

Japan, the defeated powers in World War II, were not invited to participate.

\*The Soviet Union did not participate, but the Games were the first to be attended by communist countries, including Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Poland.

\*They were known as the "austerity games" because of budgetary restraints.

\*There was no Olympic Village; the male athletes were housed at an army camp in Uxbridge, while the women stayed in dormitories at Southlands College.

\*Starting blocks for athletes in sprint races (100m to 400m) were introduced for the first time.

\*Dutch athlete Fanny Blankers-Koen, a 30-year-old mother of two children, won four gold medals. She entered four sprint events and won all four. \*American Bob Mathias became the youngest gold medalist in the decathlon, winning the event at age 17, only four months after taking up the sport.

\*Hungarian shooter Karoly Takacs, whose right hand was shattered by a grenade in 1938, taught himself to shoot with his left hand and 10 years later, he won an Olympic gold medal in the rapid-fire pistol event at the 1948 Games.

\*Americans, led by diver Sammy Lee, won every men's swimming and diving event.

## Adam Peaty liberated and confident of breaking his own world record at Tokyo



**SEAN INGLE TOKYO, 18 JUL [THE-GUARDIAN]:** Adam Peaty has warned his rivals that he is in such good shape he could break his own world record in Tokyo when he seeks to become the first British swimmer to retain an Olympic title.

Team GB's biggest banker for gold in Tokyo, who begins the defence of his 100m breaststroke title in Saturday's heats, also insists he feels "liberated" after the birth of his son George last year – and ready to attack his world record of 56.88sec.

"It sounds very cliched but I'm very obsessed with continuous improvement and continually pushing the boundaries of what is possible," said Peaty. "I don't want to end my career and go 'I should have done that, or I should have done this'. And while getting a world record is obviously very, very hard, it's never impossible. I think it's within my reach if I get my preparation right during these next six days.

"I wasn't in my best form when I swam 57.66 at the European championships. I still had my hairy moustache and wasn't mentally in those

championships. But we've done a lot of power and strength development and leaned down a bit since then. And I know that I grow 10%, if not more, at an Olympic Games."

Peaty is so far clear of his rivals he holds the top 20 times in history – with no one else breaking 58 seconds. And he has not lost a 100m breaststroke race in major competitions for more than seven years. So it is no surprise that he is confident that, barring a lightning strike or act of God, he will win again.

"I guess it is just a by-product of what I have done over the past seven years," he said. "Without sounding arrogant, if you are as dominant as I have been – I haven't lost a major championship in the 100m in a long time – it is nice going into a Games with that heritage. I have that history of performing when it matters, and going into these Games I am the most liberated I have been.

"Let us hope that a lightning strike doesn't hit me," he added. "But anything can happen in sport. We all know that. And sometimes the greats do fall. But I

believe that this Olympics is not my time yet. I just love to race, I love to scrap. That's why I swim. Because it gives me something that I can't get in normal life."

Peaty also insisted that he remembers what it was like to lose – and uses the thought of defeat as motivation to push him on. "I play it out in my head quite a lot, me losing," he said. "I think it's kind of a healthy balance I've got that I do think what it's going to be like if I touch in second or third. But for me, those thoughts are suppressed when I race. I've got to be 110% confident in my own ability."

And the 26-year-old also believes it helps that he feels more liberated than ever after becoming a dad. "I also think the lockdown last year gave me that kind of a second wind," he said. "I always felt like I was charging, charging, charging, but now I can switch off very easily. It might be to do with having a kid. I feel I've got more energy when it comes to holding camp because I haven't got a kid screaming or needing to feed. It is also about having a bit

of maturity in this last year." Peaty also gave a nuanced and thoughtful response to those who question whether the Olympic Games should go ahead during a global pandemic.

"It's a hard question," he replied. "You do have to think about the people who live here. And, at the opposite end of the spectrum, you have the athletes who have trained for five years, every single day, getting up at 5am and going to bed at half 10 with a screaming baby. They commit their whole lives to this three-week-long event. You're never going to get the right answer.

"I'm biased because I want them to happen, I want to race. But I can feel for those who don't want the Games to happen at all. For me, I'm double vaccinated. I've taken every single measure to make sure I'm not going to spread it to anyone else if I did have it. I wear double masks. That's all I can do. Some athletes are coming out here without any vaccinations. You've got to ask them the same question. Unfortunately, it's not an easy one to answer."

## ‘Comeback kid’ Mark Cavendish poised to join Tour de France immortals

**JEREMY WHITE**

**LONDON, 18 JUL [THEGUARDIAN]:**If Mark Cavendish sprints to his 35th Tour de France stage win in Paris on Sunday, he will have completed one of the most remarkable of sporting comebacks, in a race renowned for its gladiatorial brutality and suffering.

Cavendish understands only too well how ruthless cycling can be. Written off by many and considered yesterday's man before this year's Tour began, he has now won 34 Tour stages and will surpass the great Eddy Merckx's record of victories if he wins Sunday's stage.

It is a triumph over adversity – a return from exile that compares with Tiger Woods and his victory in the 2019 Augusta Masters.

"Mark Cavendish is the greatest sprinter in the history of the Tour and of cycling," the Tour de France director, Christian Prudhomme, said as this year's race reached its final phase. "His comeback is just amazing."

The 36-year-old's successes have spanned 13 years but, before his explosive return to the French race this July, he had not won a stage in one of Europe's three Grand Tours of Italy, France and Spain since 2016.

"Seeing a guy win stages 13 years apart is almost unheard of," Prudhomme said. "Cavendish's career is phenomenal with great highs and great lows, but he found his way again and I just want to say to him: 'Hats off'."

Cavendish was called into his Belgian team less than a week before the 2021 Tour began. After star sprinter Sam Bennett was left out by the Deceuninck-Quick-Step team, Cavendish was unexpectedly drafted in. It proved a rude awakening.

"In all honesty, after the first 20 kilometres on the first day, I thought to myself, 'what the fuck have you done?'" he admitted. "The speed they were going – I was like, 'what I have wished for here?'" But then, less than a year ago, Cavendish couldn't get close to competing for victory. Riding at the back of the professional peloton in lost races, he was reduced and diminished by years of illness and clinical depression.

Most experienced cycling pundits, watching his decline, shook their heads and quietly wished he'd call it a day.

Now, assuming he can be the first man out of the final bend of this year's Tour, exiting the Place de la Concorde before turning on to the Champs Élysées, he is on the brink of making history. Even more remarkably, his success

will come at the expense of Merckx, five-time Tour winner, former world champion and winner of numerous other races.

Cavendish's Deceuninck-Quick-Step manager, Patrick Lefevere, the very definition of an ashen-faced, grizzled team boss, was one of many of his backroom staff reduced to tears by the British rider's comeback.

"We have more than 100 wins in Grand Tours, but I never saw the whole staff crying," Lefevere said. "Everybody went on his emotions."

"Cavendish is the champion of emotion," Prudhomme said. "He has also had to fight hard. More than once he was on the canvas. I remember the finish at La Rosière [ski resort] in 2018, when he was outside the time limit. He didn't want to quit because he loves the Tour."

"We were worried because he was a long, long way behind and the police were ready to close the road to him. We had to argue with them not to do that. I thought we were seeing him at the Tour for the last time. I said to myself: 'He deserves better.'"

For better and sometimes for worse, the fiercely competitive Cavendish has always worn his heart on his sleeve. In October last year, struggling for results, he was caught in tears after one race by a Belgian camera crew.

"That's perhaps the last race of my career," he said, red-eyed, before quickly leaving the scene.

Now, however, buoyed by renewed success, his fire is definitely back. He can often be prickly. Last Friday, he was filmed berating a mechanic over a problem with his bike set-up. "Sort it out!" he yelled angrily, as shocked fans looked on, before storming back onto his team bus.

A few hours later, he apologised on social media. "My bike had some problems when I got on it this morning," he said. "Despite this, I should not have reacted in the way that I did and not so publicly."

"Although they know how short I can be when I'm stressed, no one, especially those you care about, deserves to have a voice raised to them."

But he is also renowned as having a forensic eye for detail, obsessive over order and neatness. Merckx himself remembered when Cavendish once stayed overnight at his house with some team mates. "Mark was the only one who cleaned his room, and left it neat and tidy," Merckx said approvingly.

# German Chancellor to visit flood-affected areas as death count tops 180

**SCHULD, 18 JUL [AFP]:** Chancellor Angela Merkel is to visit flood-ravaged areas in Germany on Sunday to survey the damage and meet survivors, after days of extreme downpours in western Europe left at least 183 people dead and dozens missing.

Merkel is scheduled to travel to the village of Schuld in Rhineland-Palatinate state, one of the two hardest-hit regions in western Germany, where the swollen Ahr river swept away houses and left debris piled high in the streets.

At least 156 people have died since Wednesday in Germany's worst flooding in living memory, police said.

In Rhineland-Palatinate state alone, police reported 110 dead and 670 injured.

At least 27 people have also lost their lives in neighbouring Belgium.

Rescue crews in both countries were sifting through rubble to find victims and survivors, often in dangerous conditions.

The historic downpours also battered Switzerland, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

As the waters began to recede in Rhineland-Palatinate and neighbouring North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW), concern shifted south to Germany's Upper Bavaria region, where heavy rains inundated basements and led rivers and creeks late Saturday to burst their banks.

One person died in Berchtesgaden Land, a spokes-



woman for the Bavarian district told AFP. And in the eastern state of Saxony, authorities reported a "significant risk situation" in several villages near the Czech border.

In Austria, emergency workers in the Salzburg and Tyrol regions were on high alert for flooding. The historic town centre of Hallein, near the German frontier, was under water.

Merkel has called the floods a "tragedy" and pledged support from the federal government for Germany's stricken municipalities.

Speaking alongside US President Joe Biden at the White House on Thursday,

Merkel said her "heart goes out to all of those who in this catastrophe lost their loved ones".

Her finance minister, Olaf Scholz, pledged more than 300 million euros (\$354 million) in emergency aid for people who lost homes and businesses, with the cabinet to discuss a much larger reconstruction package on Wednesday.

The scale of the flood impact was gradually becoming clear in Germany, with damaged buildings being assessed, some of which will have to be demolished, and efforts under way to restore gas, electricity and telephone services.

In some areas, soldiers used armoured vehicles to clear the

debris clogging streets.

In NRW, divers were sent in to search submerged homes and vehicles.

Local authorities in NRW and Rhineland-Palatinate said dozens of people remain unaccounted for across both states.

They have stressed, however, that disruption to communication networks made a precise assessment difficult, and the real number of missing could be lower.

Roger Lewentz, interior minister for Rhineland-Palatinate, said more than 670 people were injured.

"I've lived here my whole life, I was born here, and I've never seen anything like it,"

said Gregor Degen, a baker in the devastated spa town of Bad Neuenahr-Ahrweiler, near Schuld.

Across the border in Belgium, the death count jumped to 27 with many people still missing.

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Prime Minister Alexander de Croo visited the flooded areas of Rochefort and Pepinster together on Saturday.

"Europe is with you," von der Leyen tweeted afterwards. "We are with you in mourning and we will be with you in rebuilding."

Belgium has declared Tuesday a day of official mourning.

## South Korea to bring home sailors aboard virus-hit destroyer

**SEOUL, JUL 18 (AP):** South Korea is sending military aircraft on Sunday to replace the entire 300-member crew of a navy destroyer on an anti-piracy mission off East Africa after nearly 70 of them tested positive for the coronavirus, officials said. Two transport planes will bring home 300 sailors aboard the destroyer Munmu the Great, Joint Chiefs of Staff and Defence Ministry officials said, requesting anonymity citing department rules.

They said 68 sailors have so far tested positive and the results on 200 of the 300 crew are still pending.

South Korea has taken part in anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden

since 2009. According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, about 150 navy personnel will replace the crew and sail the destroyer to South Korea. Officials said the ship was to be replaced with another destroyer next month following a six-month rotational deployment.

On Sunday, South Korea's health authorities reported 1,454 new cases, taking the country's total to 177,951 with 2,057 deaths.

South Korea has recently imposed its toughest distancing rules on its populous capital region, where most of the recent cases have been found. Authorities are considering more stringent restrictions in other areas as well.

## Tokyo 2020 composer apologises for historical bullying of disabled classmates

**JUSTIN MCCURRY TOKYO, 18 JUL [THE-GUARDIAN]:** A Japanese composer whose music will be performed at the opening ceremony of the Tokyo 2020 Olympics has apologised after reports he had bullied school classmates, including those living with intellectual disabilities.

Keigo Oyamada, who is among the composers contributing to the Games' launch on Friday, said he was very sorry his involvement with the Olympics and Paralympics had "made many people feel very uncomfortable". On his website, he wrote: "I apologise from the bottom of my heart."

The latest embarrassment to hit the Games comes after the resignation of the organising committee's former pres-

ident, Yoshiro Mori, who was forced to step down in February after sexist comments about female sports administrators. The following month, the creative director of the opening and closing ceremonies, Hiroshi Sasaki, resigned after likening the popular female celebrity Naomi Watanabe to a pig.

Oyamada, who is better known as Cornelius, sparked fury on social media after reports resurfaced of magazine interviews he gave in the 1990s when he discussed, apparently without remorse, bullying at least one disabled classmate. Online accounts in English and Japanese said Oyamada, 52, had forced one boy to eat his own faeces and masturbate in front of other students.

## US hits Iran for delay in nuclear and prisoner swap talks

**MATTHEW LEEAP WASHINGTON, JUL 18 (AP):** The Biden administration lashed out at Iran on Saturday for accusing it of delaying a proposed prisoner swap to force a quick resumption of indirect nuclear talks.

The State Department slammed as outrageous comments made by Iran's deputy foreign minister who alleged the US and Britain were holding the swap hostage to the negotiations over salvaging the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA.

In a pair of tweets from his verified account, Seyyed Abbas Araghchi said the nuclear talks in Vienna could not resume until Iran's hardline president-elect is inaugurated in early August. We're in a transition period as a democratic transfer of power is underway in our capital, he said.

The nuclear talks must thus obviously await our new administration. This is what every democracy demands, Araghchi said.

He added that the US and Britain need to understand this and stop linking a humanitarian exchange ready to be implemented with the JCPOA.

Keeping such an exchange hostage to political aims achieves neither, said Araghchi who is Iran's chief negotiator at the Vienna talks.

TEN PRISONERS on all sides may be released TOMORROW if US&UK fulfill their part of deal.

A sixth round of nuclear talks ended last month without agreement ahead of Iran's

presidential election won by Ebrahim Raisi. The US has repeatedly said it is ready for a seventh round as soon as Iran is ready while also calling for the immediate release of American citizens detained in Iran.

In response to Araghchi's remarks, State Department spokesman Ned Price categorically rejected the claim, denied there was already an agreement on a swap, and said the US was prepared to continue talks on prisoners even while waiting for the resumption of the nuclear negotiations.

These comments are an outrageous effort to deflect blame for the current impasse on a potential mutual return to compliance with the JCPOA, Price said.

We stand ready to return to Vienna to complete work on a mutual return to the JCPOA once Iran has made the necessary decisions.

Price called Araghchi's reference to the possible imminent release of 10 prisoners on all sides just another cruel effort to raise the hopes of their families. If Iran were truly interested in making a humanitarian gesture, it would simply release the detainees immediately," he said.

Price did not address Araghchi's claim that Iran is in the midst of a democratic transfer of power but he did decry his reference to the US and Britain holding the prisoner exchange hostage." He said it is the Iranian government that has been unjustly detaining four innocent Americans for years."

## Haiti faces uncertain future as mourning first lady returns



**PORT-AU-PRINCE (HAITI), JUL 18 (AP):** Haiti's political future on Sunday grew murkier after the surprise return of first lady Martine Moïse, who was released from a hospital in Miami where she was treated for injuries following an attack in which the president was assassinated.

Martine Moïse did not make any public statements after she descended a private jet wearing a black dress, a black bulletproof vest, a black face mask and her right arm in a black sling as she mourned for President Jovenel Moïse, who was killed July 7 at their private home.

Some experts like many in this country of more than 11 million people were surprised at how quickly she reappeared in Haiti and questioned whether she plans to become involved in the country's politics.

The fact that she returned could suggest she intends to play some role, said Laurent Dubois, a Haiti expert and Duke University professor. She may intervene in one way or another.

Martine Moïse arrived just hours after a prominent group of international diplomats issued a statement that appeared to shun interim Prime Minister Claude Joseph, the man currently running the country with the backing of

police and the military. Joseph's name was never mentioned in the statement made by the Core Group, composed of ambassadors from Germany, Brazil, Canada, Spain, the US, France, the European Union and representatives from the United Nations and the Organization of American States.

The group called for the creation of a consensual and inclusive government, adding, To this end, it strongly encourages the designated Prime Minister Ariel Henry to continue the mission entrusted to him to form such a government.

Henry was designated prime minister a day before Jovenel Moïse was killed. He did not respond to requests for comment.

The UN, OAS and US State Department did not offer further explanation when contacted.

Given the current state of Haitian politics, Dubois said he believes the arrival of Martine Moïse could have an impact.

She's obviously in a position to play a role ... given how wide open things are, he said, adding that the Core Group's statement is striking because it makes no reference to Joseph. One has to wonder whether the developments in the investigation have anything to do with this. They're all these puzzle pieces that are just changing moment to moment. Right now it seems

very hard to figure out how to put these together. Authorities in Haiti and Colombia say at least 18 suspects directly linked to the killing have been arrested, the majority of them former Colombian soldiers. At least three suspects were killed and police say they are looking for numerous others. Colombian officials have said that the majority of former soldiers were duped and did not know of the assassination plot.

A day after the killing, US State Department spokesman Ned Price had said Joseph was the incumbent in the position and was serving as acting prime minister before the assassination: We continue to work with Claude Joseph as such, he said.

On July 11, a delegation of representatives from various US agencies travelled to Haiti to review critical infrastructure, talk with Haitian National Police and meet with Joseph, Henry and Haitian Senate President Joseph Lambert in a joint meeting.

The deepening political turmoil has prompted dozens of Haitians to visit the US embassy in Port-au-Prince in recent days to seek a visa or political asylum.

We can't stay anymore in the country, said Jim Kenneth, a 19-year-old who would like to study medicine in the US We feel very insecure.

### CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONS & SAFETY TIPS

**DON'T LOWER THE GUARD**

LOCKDOWN HAS BEEN LIFTED, BUT UNFORTUNATELY, THE THREAT OF COVID-19 HAS NOT YET SUBSIDED.

As we adapt to the new normal, here is a reminder of the precautions you must take-

**WEAR A MASK**  
Always wear a mask to prevent droplets from going outside

**GET A FLU VACCINATION**  
Get your flu shot to develop an immune response before flu season begins, particularly if you have comorbidities

**WASH YOUR HANDS**  
Wash your hands often, for about 20 seconds each with soap & carry a sanitizer

**MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING**  
Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people

**GET TESTED**  
Get tested if you have symptoms of COVID-19. Stay at home until you get the result.

**COVER YOUR MOUTH & NOSE WHILE SNEEZING, OR COUGHING**  
Before stepping outside, make sure to carry a handkerchief or a packet of tissues.

**FOLLOW PRECAUTIONS BEFORE STEPPING OUT**  
Carry your sanitizer, water bottle and, most importantly, avoid crowded areas.

**CHECK YOUR TEMPERATURE**  
Monitor your temperature on regular basis



**GREEN MACHINE!** Megastar Kim Kardashian hits Dover Street Market in NYC wearing an army green crop top and Supreme x The North Face pants.

## Britney Spears says won't perform while her father controls career



Britney Spears on Saturday said she would not perform again while her father retains control over her career, and said the conservatorship she has been under for 13 years had “killed my dreams.”

Her remarks, in a lengthy Instagram post, were the latest in a series of emotional public comments about the conservatorship that controls her personal and financial affairs and which she has begged to be brought to an end.

“I’m not gonna be performing on any stages anytime soon with my dad handling what I wear, say, do, or think,” the Piece of Me singer wrote.

“I’d much rather share videos YES from my living room instead of onstage in Vegas...

I’m not gonna put on heavy makeup and try to try on stage again and not be able to do the real deal with remixes of my songs for years,” she added.

The pop star’s father, Jamie Spears, has sole control of his daughter’s \$60 million estate under the court-appointed conservatorship that he set up in 2008.

Spears, 39, who has undisclosed mental health issues, has not performed in public since late 2018 at the end of a world tour and an extended concert residency in Las Vegas.

Spears this week appointed a new lawyer to represent her in her bid to bring the conservatorship to an end, calling it abusive.

life and inspire you to be the best version of yourself.

So, offer a prayer of gratitude for all that you have and all that you are yet to receive from the Universe. PS: You are blessed in more ways than you can count, beautiful.

Tip: When the cup is about to runneth over.

Cancer:

It’s been a rollercoaster ride, Cancer, with one karmic lesson after another. But it feels oh-so-good to be on the side! Yes, this is the calm after the storm, beautiful. Your official movement into balance. So, keep things simple this weekend. Take all the time out you need to integrate. Remember, you don’t have to do it all alone. Your soul crew will be more than happy to render their support at a time like this.

Tip: This is the calm after the storm, beautiful.

Leo:

The trouble is, we try to control every aspect of our life. We play tug of war with the forces instead of accepting what’s coming through. Just for today, you’re being asked to let go of your idea of perfection. To accept where you are in your journey and what’s being shown to you in this moment. What the cards want you to know: trusting the law of divine timing will help you make space for miracles.

Tip: Trust the law of divine timing instead of trying

to rush things.

Virgo:

It’s been a roller coaster ride, Virgo, and a terribly exhausting one at that! So instead of pushing yourself to keep going further, hit the pause button. Take that much needed breather. A yin yoga session or a therapeutic massage are some of the ways in which you can unwind. If spending time outdoors is an option, reconnect with Mother Gaia. Meditating in the open is a good way to get your body and being into balance.

Tip: Take time to decompress.

Libra:

It’s one of those days, Libra. You’re one with the flow and are feeling inspired to bring a little more art and little more magic into everything you say and do. So, connect with your inner child in a conscious manner and know that joy and laughter are the most sacred gifts you can offer the Universe. As such, love and romance are also going to be important themes for you this weekend. Give yourself the permission to express what’s in your heart freely, and know that your amour will be delighted to meet you halfway.

Tip: You’re one with the flow.

Scorpio:

The brightest of days gives way to the night, and the

# Director Kate Herron says she is not returning for 'Loki' S2

Loki season one director Kate Herron says she is not part of the second season of the Marvel Studios series, starring Tom Hiddleston as the titular anti-hero.

The renewal was announced in the end credits for the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) show’s season one finale, when the God of Mischief’s case file is branded with the stamp: “Loki will return in Season 2.”

In an interview with Deadline, Herron said she is elated that the audience loved her work on the series, but she would now focus on other “stuff”.

“I’m not returning. I always planned to be just on for this, and to be honest, Season 2 wasn’t in the that’s something that just came out, and I’m so excited. I’m really happy to watch it as a fan next season, but I just think I’m proud of what we did here and I’ve given it my all. I’m working on some other stuff yet to be announced,” Herron said.

Asked if she will be working on any Marvel movie project, the filmmaker

said she would love to work with the studio again. “I’m just focused on my own stuff at the moment. I love Marvel and I’d love to work with them again, but my outing with ‘Loki’ is what I’ve done with them,” she added.



“Loki”, Marvel Studios’ third series at Disney Plus, centred on Hiddleston’s witty master of magic, who lands at Time Variance Authority (TVA) following the events of 2019’s feature film ‘Avengers: Endgame’. While the movies

have mainly touched upon Loki’s mischievous side, the series gave an insight into what hides beneath the wickedness of the fan-favourite villain.

Marvel Studios chief Kevin Feige served as executive producer on the

## James Gunn says 'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3' is a heavier story

Filmmaker James Gunn has teased that the third chapter in the “Guardians of the Galaxy” movie series has a “heavier story”.

Gunn previously directed “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 1” (2014) and “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2” (2017), featuring a ragtag group of superheroes from the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU).

The director said he will start work on “Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 3” after wrapping “Peacemaker”, the HBO Max spin-off series to the upcoming DC movie “The Suicide Squad”.

“I’m still shooting ‘Peacemaker’, but I’m starting to work on ‘Guardians

3’. For ‘Guardians 3’, the script has basically been written for a long time,” Gunn told Entertainment Weekly.

“I’ve been playing with it in little ways over the years, but it’s basically stayed the same since three years ago. It’s pretty heavy actually. It’s a heavier story, so it’s an emotional process to go through,” he added.

“Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3” will feature Chris Pratt as Peter Quill / Star-Lord, Zoe Saldana as Gamora, Dave Bautista as Drax the Destroyer, Bradley Cooper as Rocket and Vin Diesel as Groot. The movie will release globally in 2023.

## Bigg Boss team finds replacement for Salman Khan?

Bigg Boss Hindi is coming up with a revolutionary format this year. Streaming platform Voot has launched Bigg Boss OTT which will start soon. In this format, the reality show will premiere on Voot for the first six weeks and then moves to the television.

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan is expected to host the television version but it is heard that the makers were brainstorming about the celebrity host for the OTT version. If the ongoing reports are anything to go by, Sidharth Shukla and Shehnaaz Gill will be hosting the digital version. Sidharth and Shehnaaz are popular contestants of Bigg Boss Hindi season 13. In fact, the former also ended up as the winner of the show. Fans were in awe of this couple and fondly call them SidNaaz.

The other day, Voot’s official Twitter handle tweeted, “Haye, kasamlage,

hum toh bahot excited hai to share a dhamaakedaar news with you. Can you guess what we’re up to and who is the couple? (Find hint in the hashtags



Woman tipping hand) We’re so excited to tell you, stay tuned for the BIG reveal. #Voot #SidNaaz #ComingSoon.”

The hashtag featured SidNaaz title and since then, fans are assuming that the celebrity couple will be hosting Bigg Boss OTT.

However, Voot is yet to reveal the surprise and fans are eagerly waiting for the platform to end this long suspense.

## Indian film on student activism wins Cannes award



Mumbai-based filmmaker and Film and Television Institute (FTII), Pune, alumnus Payal Kapadia on Saturday won the L’Œil d’Or: Le Prix du documentaire, an award for best documentary, at the Cannes Film Festival for her film A Night of Knowing Nothing, which foregrounds student protests in the country.

“I’m really honoured to receive this prize as there have been wonderful filmmakers who have got it in the past. Our film is quite experimental, so we were a bit surprised too,” Kapadia told The Sunday Express after receiving the award.

The plot revolves around an FTII student, named L, who falls in love with K but is separated, as K has to return to his village home. “Initially, we were shooting our friends and talking a lot about matters of love, and the impossibility of certain relationships because of caste or religious differences. We realised that talking about young people in India cannot be done without discussing discrimination. So, writer Himanshu (Prajapati) and we culled out a fictional narrative from all the stories we had documented,” Kapadia had said after a screening of the film at Cannes earlier this week.

Aries:

In this physical reality of ours, change is a constant and continuous process. Summer gives way to autumn, and before you know it, it’s winter once again. Let this be a reminder that it’s okay to grow out of old jobs, old friends, old houses. It’s okay to grow out of certain aspects of yourself that you once considered sacred. Unless you let go of the idea of how things should be, you will not be able to make space for new and wonderful things to come your way.

Tip: Let go.

Taurus:

Separation is an illusion, Taurus. You are a part of Source energy, and Source is dancing the dancing of life through you. It’s time to remember this connection, beautiful. It’s time to remember who you are and your truth. So, make a conscious effort to retreat into that space of silence. As you do, trust what is being revealed to you by your superconsciousness.

Tip: It’s time to remember your truth.

Gemini:

There are people who calculate their wealth in terms of the digits in their bank, but you’re not one of those people, Gemini. You understand that your true assets are love, abundance and happiness. Not to mention, the soul connections that bring joie de vivre to your

life and inspire you to be the best version of yourself.

So, offer a prayer of gratitude for all that you have and all that you are yet to receive from the Universe. PS: You are blessed in more ways than you can count, beautiful.

Tip: When the cup is about to runneth over.

Cancer:

It’s been a rollercoaster ride, Cancer, with one karmic lesson after another. But it feels oh-so-good to be on the side! Yes, this is the calm after the storm, beautiful. Your official movement into balance. So, keep things simple this weekend. Take all the time out you need to integrate. Remember, you don’t have to do it all alone. Your soul crew will be more than happy to render their support at a time like this.

Tip: This is the calm after the storm, beautiful.

Leo:

The trouble is, we try to control every aspect of our life. We play tug of war with the forces instead of accepting what’s coming through. Just for today, you’re being asked to let go of your idea of perfection. To accept where you are in your journey and what’s being shown to you in this moment. What the cards want you to know: trusting the law of divine timing will help you make space for miracles.

Tip: Trust the law of divine timing instead of trying

to rush things.

Virgo:

It’s been a roller coaster ride, Virgo, and a terribly exhausting one at that! So instead of pushing yourself to keep going further, hit the pause button. Take that much needed breather. A yin yoga session or a therapeutic massage are some of the ways in which you can unwind. If spending time outdoors is an option, reconnect with Mother Gaia. Meditating in the open is a good way to get your body and being into balance.

Tip: Take time to decompress.

Libra:

It’s one of those days, Libra. You’re one with the flow and are feeling inspired to bring a little more art and little more magic into everything you say and do. So, connect with your inner child in a conscious manner and know that joy and laughter are the most sacred gifts you can offer the Universe. As such, love and romance are also going to be important themes for you this weekend. Give yourself the permission to express what’s in your heart freely, and know that your amour will be delighted to meet you halfway.

Tip: You’re one with the flow.

Scorpio:

The brightest of days gives way to the night, and the

darkest of nights is followed by day. Both pleasure and pain exist in equal measure, Scorpio. So, accept the human experience in its entirety. Be grateful for all the colours in the spectrum—the good, bad and ugly. What the cards want you to remember is that you are on the brink of something beautiful, even though your physical reality will have you believe otherwise.

Tip: You are on the brink of something beautiful, beautiful.

Sagittarius:

The connection you share is both sensual and soulful—a rare and precious bond that cannot be put into words. So, stay open to where this connection is taking you, and know that your openness will hold space for your love to grow. Archers who’ve had to stay apart for certain reasons are being reminded that the Wheel of Fortune is turning in their favour. Trust the law of divine timing, beautiful. Trust that the Universe is working overtime to bring the two of you together.

Tip: Trust the law of divine timing.

Capricorn:

Your love is medicine, Capricorn. An elixir so sweet that it can bring hope to the lonely and the broken-hearted. But before you pour into the cup of another, fill your own. Making yourself a priority is an act of self-love, beautiful. As such, you’re also feeling drawn

towards ancient rituals this week, especially the ones that focus on honouring the divine feminine energy within. Channel your inner medicine (wo)man and get creative in your apothecary. Make lotions and brew potions that make you feel good about yourself. If it brings a smile to your face, know that you’re on the right track.

Tip: Making yourself a priority is an act of self-love, beautiful.

Aquarius:

Your words are your gift, Aquarius. Knowledge? Your light to the world. Today, you’re being asked to step into the role of the teacher/mentor, and share what you have mastered with those who are walking in the same path. The more you give, the more your ability to receive will increase. Keep this in mind as you move forward and onwards.

Tip: Your knowledge is your light to the world.

Pisces:

If everything was rainbows and butterflies at all times, we would not appreciate the highs. It is the lows that make us realise the value of bliss, ecstasy and joy. So, take a moment to be grateful for them—including the things that threatened to break you. What the cards want you to know: you are rising from your ashes, beloved.

Tip: Take a moment to be grateful for it all.