



**CHRIS HARRISON TO ADDRESS
BACHELOR SCANDAL ON
GOOD MORNING AMERICA**

pg 08

**VACCINE NATIONALISM WILL BLOCK OUR
PATH OUT OF THE PANDEMIC – SO HOW
DO WE RESIST OUR TRIBAL INSTINCT?**

pg 04

**'VACCINE, VACCINE': DOLLY SINGS
'JOLENE' REWRITE BEFORE SHOT**

pg 08



SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 61 | Gangtok | Thursday 04 March 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | ₹ 5

*First nomination
filed for
Gyalshing Nagar
Panchayat*

GYALSHING, 03 MAR (IPR): The procedure for filing nominations to contest the upcoming Municipal Elections started from 01 March at the Office of the District Collector cum Municipal Electoral Returning Officer (West).

As per the information from ADC West, Agawane Rohan Ramesh (IAS) who is designated as Assistant Returning Officer, no nominations were filed by the candidates on the first and second day of five different Municipal wards of Gyalshing Nagar Panchayat namely 01-Kyongsa, 02-Byadung, 03-Nayabazar, 04-Central Gyalshing and 05-New-Gyalshing.

However on the third day of filing nomination, Devendra Prasad Sharma as an independent candidate has filed the nomination for 05-New Gyalshing at the office of Assistant Returning Officer, West today.

It must be mentioned here that the last day of filing the nomination is on 08 March, scrutiny will be done on 09 March and the last date of withdrawal is 11 March.

*Five more file
nominations
in GMC*

GANGTOK, 03 MAR (IPR): On the third day of filing nominations, a total of five independent candidates have filed their nominations for Municipal Election 2021 at the Office of Municipal Returning Officer East, today.

Rameshwar Tamang has filed his nomination for Lower MG Marg-Lall Bazaar ward of Gangtok Municipal Corporation. Palzor Lepcha has filed his nomination for Bojoghari-2nd Mile ward of Gangtok Municipal Corporation.

Mohan Lall Sarda and Sunita Sirohia have filed their nominations for Upper MG Marg ward under Gangtok Municipal Corporation. Kishore Tamang has filed his nomination for Burtuk ward of Gangtok Municipal Corporation.

THIRD DAY OF CM'S WEST SIKKIM TOUR

Will give priority to demands collected in tour: CM

GYALSHING, 03 MAR (IPR):

On the third day of the Chief Minister's tour to West Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang (Golak) visited Tashiding Monastery where he offered prayers and interacted with the Monastery Committee. The CM assured every possible support towards the development of the monastery in all aspects.

On the way to Yuksam, the CM paid a visit to Siddheshwar Mahadev Temple at Gerehang where he offered prayers and assured support towards the augmentation of the temple. He also interacted with the labourers of Gerehang, Labing and Chota khola in addition to the school family of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya at Labing.

The entourage then headed towards Yuksam for an interaction programme with the people of Yuksam and its adjoining Gram Panchayat Units.

Addressing the gathering, the CM delivered a short speech extending heartiest greetings to the people of the Constituency and expressed immense



debt of gratitude to the party's functionaries and volunteers of the organization.

In his speech, the CM reiterated that the motive of visiting such remote and difficult areas of Sikkim is to meet and

render support to the poor and helpless people of these geographically odd areas.

"My visit and interaction is

especially meant for the people who may not be able to go to the capital to pursue their official works," he remarked.

He also stated that in the coming Assembly Session, the government will earmark the budget giving priority to the demand for public works received during the tour.

The CM also directed the general public to prepare applications separately for various departments, as it may be difficult if demands pertaining to several departments are mixed up.

Highlighting the worth and significance of the visit, the CM remarked that such visit by the Chief Minister along with the Cabinet colleagues, HODs and Officers to these difficult areas will certainly be beneficial for the local people.

Speaking on the health sector, the CM informed about the availability of specialist doctors in STNM hospital and the district hospitals across the state in addition to several other facilities like dialysis and others, initiated by the

new government. He urged the people to know the value of these specialised health workers and the facilities and have optimal use of their potentiality, specially meant for the poor and helpless people of the far flung areas of the state.

At the outset, CM also paid a visit to the Rinpoche Serta Khentse at Yuksam and had a brief interaction there.

The Chief Minister also distributed wheel chairs, air mattresses, blankets, inductions, pans, cookers, torchlights and sweets to the people of Yuksum-Dubdi GPU, Thingling-Khechupelri GPU, Melli-Aching GPU and Topung-Timbrong GPU including the needy at Yuksam Residency.

The medical camp was also set up under the Garib Jan Kalyan Prakosta providing free medical treatments, medicines, health insurance along with Medical Specialist, Orthopaedist, Dentist and ENT specialist for public convenience in terms of healthcare

Sikkim's active cases count drops to 29 even as 1,487 more get vaccinated against Covid

**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 MAR:**

Sikkim's tally of confirmed cases of COVID-19 reached 6,150 today with three new cases of novel coronavirus being reported here in the last 24 hours. Also today, 1,487 more people, ranging from healthcare and frontline workers to senior citizens received their Covid vaccine shots at vaccination centres across the State.

Meanwhile, the number of recovered Covid cases further improved to 5,889 with the discharge of 11 more patients from isolation facilities on Tuesday. With this, the number of active cases has further dropped to 29.

In his daily health bulletin on Wednesday, Health Department State IEC Officer, Sonam Gyaltsen Bhutia, informed that the three

new cases were detected from the testing of 209 samples yesterday.

All three cases were caught in RT-PCR testing of 191 samples, while the four samples tested by TrueNat and 14 through rapid antigen testing returned negative. Of the three new cases, two were from East District and one from South.

One person from 6th Mile-Tadong in Gangtok and one from Singtam Bazaar in East District and one person from Rabongla in South District have tested positive for COVID-19.

While providing the vaccination details for the day, Mr Bhutia informed that 1,487 persons were vaccinated for COVID-19 on Wednesday across Sikkim.

Among these were 372 healthcare workers, 241 frontline workers, 55 in the 45 to 59 age-

group [with co-morbidities] and 819 above 60 years of age.

114 healthcare workers, one frontline worker, 3 in the 45-59 age-group and 22 above-60 were vaccinated at Central Referral Hospital, Tadong, while 125 healthcare workers, two frontline workers, 14 person in the 45 to 59 year bracket and 37 above-60 at STNM hospital and 80 healthcare workers, 62 frontline workers, 06 people aged 45 to 59 and 205 above-60 years were vaccinated at the Urban PHC, Gangtok.

Similarly, 17 frontline workers, five in the 45 to 59 age category and 11 above-60 at Mangang District Hospital, 12 healthcare workers, two frontline workers, five persons in the 45-59 age and 198 senior citizens aged 60 and above at

turn to pg02

'Buddha Trails' to run along Singalila in April

**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 03 MAR:**

The ever-popular Sandakphu trail along the India-Nepal border in Darjeeling is all set to host the second edition of 'The Buddha Trails,' a trail-running event on 03 April.

Buddha Trails 2021 is part of the trail-running series of The Hell Race and is an event approved by the International Trail Running Association.

Addressing a press conference here today, Hell Race founder and Race Director, Vishwas Sindhu, detailed that Sandakphu event will be raced in three categories - 65 KM, 30 KM and 12 KM - of which, the 65 KM and 30 KM segments



have been approved by the International Trail Running Association [ITRA].

"We give points to trail runners on the basis of their performance in this event and on the basis of these points, ITRA selects runners for the World championship and other international level events,"

he explained.

He added that 12 KM trail-run was the "fun leg" being introduced for the first time for runners who want to experience trail-running but have still not built up the legs and stamina for the extended segments.

turn to pg02




29TH FOUNDATION DAY

SIKKIM DEMOCRATIC FRONT

4TH MARCH 2021

एसडीएफ पार्टीको २९औं स्थापना
दिवसको ऐतिहासिक पर्वको उपलक्ष्यमा
सिक्किमेली जनगणमा हार्दिक बधाई
तथा शुभेच्छा - शुभकामना व्यक्त गर्दछु ।

— पवन चामलिङ
अध्यक्ष
सिक्किम डेमोक्रेटिक फ्रण्ट

NLA principal arrested under POCSO

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 03 MAR:

Principal New Light Academy, Lobsang Lama, who is former councillor of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration close to the Bimal Gurung camp was arrested today in Namchi on charges framed under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act [POCSO].

Senior police officials confirmed that the accused was arrested this afternoon following a complaint filed by a minor.

COVID-19: India records 14,989 new cases

NEW DELHI, MAR 3 (PTI): India's total tally of COVID-19 cases rose to 1,11,39,516 with 14,989 new infections being reported in a day, while the active cases were recorded above 1.7 lakh after a month, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Wednesday.

The death toll increased to 1,57,346 with 98 daily new fatalities, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The COVID-19 active caseload has increased to 1,70,126 which comprises 1.53 per cent of the total infections, the data stated.

The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 1,08,12,044 which translates to a national COVID-19 recovery rate of 97.06 per cent, while the case fatality rate stands at 1.41 per cent.

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. 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.

According to the ICMR, 21,84,03,277 samples have been tested up to March 2 with 7,85,220 samples being tested on Tuesday.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com

Junior Olympic Games concludes at Rhenock

AARON RAI

GANGTOK, 03 MAR:

The first block level Inter School Junior Olympic Games under 'Sports for Peace & Development 2021' of Khelo India concluded today at the playground of Tarpin Secondary School under Rhenock constituency of East Sikkim.

More than 300 students of Tarpin Secondary School, Sudunglakh Secondary School, Mulukey Secondary School and Rhenock Junior High School participated in the games.

The games, which had started on 26 Feb, was organized by the Department of Sports and Youth Affairs Rhenock BAC with the support of Ministry of Youth Affairs, Government of India. Students under the age of 17 and under 14 participated in the block level sports competitions in athletics, archery, boxing,



football, table tennis, taekwondo, badminton and karate.

The chief guest in today's program was Area MLA, Bishnu Kumar Khatiwada who was accompanied by Rhenock BDO, RK Gurung, Panchayat President, Bhusan

Adhikari amongst others.

MLA, Mr Khatiwada in his address congratulated and thanked the organizing team. He said that many talents in the area have been identified through the program and he is confident that they will make the constituen-

cy and state proud in the coming days.

He said that the current government is a government that believes in all-round development and implements programs that do so. He advised the children of Sikkim to take full advan-

tage of the opportunity and shine in sports.

State boxing coach, Pratima Gooroong, who is in charge of the games, thanked the headmasters of different schools, Panchayats, BDO, MLA, students and the Sports department.

No nominations in South so far

NAMCHI, 03 MAR (IPR): On the third day of filing nominations, no nominations were received for the Municipal Elections, 2021 to Namchi Municipal Council and Naya-Bazar Jorethang Nagar Panchayat.

The seat reservations for Namchi Municipal Council Chairperson and Vice Chairperson are OBC-Central List and Unreserved-Women, respectively. Similarly, the seat reservation for Naya-Bazar Jorethang

Nagar Panchayat, Municipal President and Municipal Vice President are OBC- State List and OBC, Central List-Women.

Candidates shall file their nomination papers in the prescribed format before the Municipal Returning Officer (South), M Bharani Kumar between 11.00am and 3.00pm. The last day of filing the nominations is 08 Mar, 2021, scrutiny will be done on 09 Mar, 2021 and the date of withdrawal is on 11 Mar, 2021.

India to commemorate 'Chabahar Day' on Thursday



NEW DELHI, MAR 3 (PTI): India will commemorate 'Chabahar Day' on Thursday on the sidelines of the Maritime India Summit 2021 being held here, the Ministry of External Affairs said Wednesday.

The virtual event will see the participation of ministers from Afghanistan, Armenia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and the Uzbekistan.

India will commemorate 'Chabahar Day' on March 04, 2021 on the margins of the Maritime India Summit-2021 which is being held from March 2-4, 2021, the MEA said in a statement.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will address the ministerial level opening session, while Mansukh Manda-

viya, the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Minister of State for Chemical & Fertilizers, will deliver the keynote address, it said.

The ministerial-level opening session will be followed by two webinar sessions -- 'Development of Port Infrastructure: Unleashing Opportunities' and 'Boosting Business through Trade Promotion and Regional Connectivity'.

The location of the Chabahar port has strategic advantage and high potential to provide connectivity among India, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, and boost trade.

North holds prep meeting for Municipal Elections



MANGAN, 03 MAR (IPR):

A preparatory meeting for the upcoming General Municipal Elections 2021 was held in the chamber of the Municipal Returning Officer, Tenzing, T. Kaleon, today.

ADM (Asst. Municipal Returning Officer), Sonam Lepcha, SP (North), Ongmu Bhutia and administrators and heads of the district were present in the meeting.

Deputy Director (Election Department) provided the details of segregation of duties, the number of forms taken and the number of nominations filed until today, i.e 02.03.2021.

The list of Nodal Officers for election related activities were appointed and Mr. Kaleon urged them to take their responsibilities and duties seriously and in a

systematic manner. Basic amenities and requirements for polling stations and technical aspects, man-power as well as vehicular managements were discussed. Designated areas for meetings, for placing posters etc. were also identified.

SP (North) advised the officials to coordinate and work in tandem and to leave no room for error.

Infosys, Accenture to cover Covid vaccination costs for employees



BENGALURU, 03 MAR [REUTERS]: Information Technology major Infosys Ltd and consulting and outsourcing services provider Accenture Plc said on Wednesday they would cover COVID-19 vaccination costs for their employees in India, as the country expands its massive vaccination drive.

India's vaccination campaign ramped up on Monday, with people above the age of 60, and individuals 45 or older suffering from certain medical conditions, now eligible for shots.

Vaccines administered at government health facilities will still be free, while private facilities cannot charge more than 250 rupees per dose, the government has said.

"Infosys is looking at partnering with health care providers to vacci-

nate employees and their immediate families as eligible," Chief Operating Officer Pravin Rao said in an emailed statement.

For Accenture, costs for employees and dependents who are eligible and choose to receive the vaccination will be covered, the company said.

So far, the government has procured the two COVID-19 vaccines - AstraZeneca's shot being developed by the Serum Institute, and Bharat Biotech's COVAXIN - at fixed prices and distributed them free of cost.

Several companies, including autos-to-technology conglomerate Mahindra Group and consumer goods giant ITC Ltd, had already started considering buying COVID-19 vaccines for their employees as early as in January.

Covaxin 81% effective, works against UK variant, claims Bharat Biotech

NEW DELHI, 03 MAR

[NDTV]: Covaxin is 81 per cent effective in preventing Covid and can work against the UK variant of the virus, Bharat Biotech said Wednesday as it revealed Phase III trial results for a vaccine that was cleared in January amid concerns over its safety and efficacy.

"... Covaxin demonstrated 81 per cent interim efficacy in preventing COVID-19 in those without prior infection after the second dose," Bharat Biotech said in its statement.

The company said the "first interim analysis is based on 43 cases, of which 36 cases of COVID-19 were observed in the placebo group versus seven cases observed in the BBV152 (COVAXIN) group". The data has yet to be peer-reviewed.

Bharat Biotech said it expects to share further details as additional data becomes available.

"An additional interim analysis is planned for 87 cases, and the final analysis is planned for 130 cases. All data from the second interim and final analyses will be shared via pre-publication servers as well as submitted to a peer-reviewed journal for publication," the company said. The trial, which began in November last year, involved 25,800 participants - between 18 and 98 years old - across 25 sites, who were randomly divided into two groups.

The participants included 2,433 people over the age of 60 and 4,533 with co-morbidities.

One group was given

the vaccine and the other got a placebo. 43 people (seven from the group that got the vaccine) were found to have coronavirus. Interim analysis also showed that severe, serious, and medically attended adverse events occurred at low levels and were balanced between vaccine and placebo groups, Bharat Biotech said.

The company also said that "analysis from the National Institute of Virology indicates that vaccine-induced antibodies can neutralise the UK variant strains and other heterologous strains".

Data from the third stage of trials - which measures the vaccine's success in protecting against the coronavirus - has been widely anticipated amid concerns over Covaxin's safety and efficacy, particularly as mutated, and more infectious, strains of the virus are circulating in the world. Covaxin is one of two Covid vaccines to have been cleared for emergency use.

The other is Covishield, which was developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University and is produced by Pune-based Serum Institute. Covishield has an efficacy rate of 70 per cent after the second dose.

Both vaccines were cleared by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) in early January, at a time when late-stage trial data for Covaxin was not available; it was cleared on the basis of Phase I and II data that confirmed its "safety and immunogenicity".

Sikkim's active cases..

Namchi District Hospital and 21 healthcare workers, 54 frontline workers, three persons aged 45 to 59 and 12 above-60 at Gyalshing were also vaccinated for COVID-19.

A total of 16 healthcare workers, 34 frontline workers, five in the 45 to 59 age-group and 124 above-60 at Jorethang CHC received their vaccination for COVID-19, while 13 persons aged between 45 to 59 and 95 above-60 at Dikchu PHC, 64 frontline workers and six above-60 years at Chungthang PHC, 02 healthcare workers, 06 frontline workers, 01 person of 45 to 59 years and 45 persons of 60 years and above at Yangyang PHC and 02 healthcare workers and 64 persons of 45 to 59 years category at Namthang PHC were also vaccinated for COVID-19 on Wednesday.

'Buddha Trails' to...

The starting point of the run is Rimbick from where it will follow the Gurdum-Sandakphu-Phalut-Rammam and back route.

The cut off time for 12 KMs run is two hours, while the cut off time for 30 KMs is six hours and for 65 KMs 14 hours.

Mr Sindhu mentioned that registrations for the event had opened in January and will continue till 15 March. The organizers expect around 200 runners in the three categories.

"The trail run this season will also provide runners with the rare opportunity to see rhododendrons in bloom and flowers of spring all along their route and a majestic view of four above-8000 meter peaks - Everest, Khangchendzonga, Lhotse and Makalu," he said.

He invited runners from Sikkim to sign up for the run, highlighting that this event could open doors for them to international level competitions down the line.

He further mentioned that the event was also extending a 25% discount in registration fee for runners from Sikkim and would consider waiving it for talented runners if they come from economically more humble backgrounds.

Interested runners can register online on the Hell Race website or contact Amar Subba, Sikkim's Marathon Man, for registration.

Five runners from Sikkim have already registered for The Buddha Trails 2021.

Mr Subba is himself signed up in the 65 KM category and underlined that the Buddha Trails 2021 offered a good platform for local runners to experience trail running.

Likewise, women runners from Sikkim, Bharti Gurung, Dichen Ongmu and Asha Phurba Tamang urged runners from Sikkim, especially women, to come forward and participate to get the essence of trail running. They also expressed their excitement on being part of the event for the first time.



SKM receives 62 more from SDF at Namthang-Rateypani

RANGPO, 03 MAR: A day ahead of their party's 29th foundation day, 62 families from different wards of Namthang-Rateypani constituency claiming to having been aligned to Sikkim Democratic Front thus far, left the par-

ty and joined Sikkim Krantikari Morcha today.

The joining ceremony was held in the presence of area MLA, Minister Sanjeet Kharbeel, Poultry Board chairperson Krishna Gurung, NHPC vice

chairperson Hari Chettri, student wing general secretary Kavita Sapkota, South District SKM vice convener Harun Subba, CLC president Hari Dangal and other party members.

[from SANJAY AGARWAL]

Training for Panchayati Raj functionaries at Ravangla

BIKASH CHETTRI
RAVANGLA, 03 FEB:

Three-day Block Level Refresher Training for Panchayati Raj functionaries on local self-governance was organized at Ravangla BAC by State Institute of Rural Development and Rural Development Department.

The training was divided into three batches out of which the first batch from Kewzing Bakhim and Ralong Namlung GPU attended the training from 20-22 Feb. Training for the second batch for Legship, Rabong Sangmoo and Rayong Tinkitam GPU was held from 23 to 25 Feb.

The last batch for Barfung Zarong and Borong Phamtam GPU was held from 01 to 03 March. This training was inaugurated by BDO Ravangla BAC, LB Rai as chief guest.

Field Facilitator, Uday Chamling was present



as Resource Person who took sessions on Local Self Governance, Sikkim Panchayat Act 1993, Disaster Management, revenue generation and

office management.

Trainees were taken for exposure visit to Lungchok Kamerey GPU under Sumbuk BAC, where the panchayat

president, Deoraj Rai gave a presentation. He also highlighted activities and initiatives of the Gram Panchayat.

The valedictory pro-

gramme of the training was held today with BDO Ravangla as chief guest and Assistant Director Panchayati Raj Ravangla BAC, Sochen Bhutia as special guest.

In the valedictory programme, Panchayat Development Assistant (PDA), Borong Phamtam GPU, Som Bahadur Rai placed the field visit report with experience sharing on Office Management.

Panchayat Account Assistant (PAA) Barfung Zarong GPU, Lakpa Tenzing Sherpa shared his experience of the field visit on Own Source of Revenue (OSR). Panchayat Member Sada Ward, Dhan Bahadur Rai and Panchayat Vice President of Barfung Zarong GPU Sarita Thatal also shared their opinions regarding the training.

Certificates were awarded by the chief guest to all the trainees.

Subadra Dangal defends PhD thesis

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 MAR:

Youngest daughter of Kashinath Dangal & Chandra Maya Dangal of Takshang, Subadra Dangal, East Sikkim, has successfully defended her PhD thesis at the Vinayaka Mission Sikkim University on 25 Feb, a press release informs.

Her PhD research work on "Socio-Economic Status of Working Women in Pharmaceutical companies of Sikkim" was supervised by Prof Jashwant Sokhi and co-supervised by Dr Uday Chettri.

Subadra Dangal has



published various research papers in several reputed national and international journals. She is also the sitting Zilla Panchayat Member from Amba Taza Territorial Constituency in East Sikkim.

Not bothered with PM's Bengal rallies: Trinamool leader



NEW DELHI, 03 MAR [PTI]: The Trinamool Congress on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is free to visit the state for the BJP's election campaign "20 times or more" to see for himself the development under the Trinamool government and compare it to that of the states ruled by the BJP.

West Bengal minister and party spokesman, Bratya Basu, told reporters that PM Modi is welcome to attend as many meetings as he wishes to and come to the state as many times, he wants to see for himself how Bengal has left behind states like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh on development parameters.

Mr Basu was replying to a query whether the eight-phase assembly polls in the state, beginning on March 27, would enable BJP heavyweights to address multiple meetings in different parts of the state.

"We don't bother. Maybe they (Narendra Modi and Amit Shah) want to see for themselves how much Bengal

has progressed after Trinamool came to power in 2011...how roads look like, how power cut has become a rarity, how people in rural areas are getting better amenities and how states like UP and MP are lagging behind," Mr Basu said.

BJP sources said PM Modi will address multiple rallies during the eight-phase polls in the state stretching a little over a month. Leaders like Amit Shah and JP Nadda will also address several meetings as well as other BJP heavyweights like Yogi Adityanath.

Asked about two-time TMC MLA from Pandabeswar and former Asansol mayor Jitendra Tiwari joining the BJP on March 2, Mr Basu said, "It is the culture of the saffron party to admit people having tarnished reputation with open arms".

"Previously the local MP had protested publicly, but perhaps after being reprimanded by his higher-ups he will be mum this time despite having bitter memories," he added.

World Wildlife Day celebrated at Namchi college

SUMMIT REPORT
NAMCHI, 03 MAR:

World Wildlife Day was celebrated by Department of Zoology, Namchi Government College on 03 March.

The programme was attended by the faculty and students of I, II and V semester of science stream, a press release informs.

Principal, Namchi Government College, Deepak Tewari was the chief guest of the day. Dr. Kamal Poudyal, head of the Department of Zoology gave the welcome speech and highlighted the importance of the day and also stressed on the need for generating awareness on Biodiversity Conservation.

Shradaya Subba [B.Sc I Semester] of Namchi Government College spoke on the significance of observing World Wildlife Day and also highlighted the theme of the day "Forest and Livelihood; Sustaining People and Planet".

This was followed by



the address of Vice Principal, Dr TP Dhungel, where he focussed on the need to protect the environment. Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology, Ananta Rai, gave a presentation on "Herpetofauna and its Conservation in Sikkim Himalaya". She made the gathering aware about the herpetofauna around us.

Sanjay Rai, Students Co-Ordinator, NSS and founder of VOICE NGO gave a presentation on "Wildlife and the Environment". Yangchen Bhutia, Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology, Namchi Government College spoke on "Wetland Birds in Four Major Wetlands of Sikkim" and

stressed on the significance of wetland habitat of Sikkim.

This was followed by extempore competition wherein faculty members from other departments judged the competition. The open quiz on biodiversity was conducted with some PPT slides show, which was conducted by Assistant Professor, Department of Zoology, Jacinta Sharma, wherein the students openly participated and winners were awarded certificates and gifts.

The programme ended with the address by the principal of the college Deepak Tewari on the importance of wildlife and environment.

Rongli school starts Shiv Lata Education Scholarship

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 MAR:

Manzil Chettri and Anmol Rai became the first recipients of the 1st Shiv Lata Free Education Scholarship initiated by Riverine Elementary School, Rongli, a press release informs.

The two were selected from eleven students who had passed the Class V exams from different schools both government and private. The students had to sit for an examination held two weeks back in order to get the scholarship.

The scholarship is supported by family members of Late Siba Narayan Pradhan and Late Nirlata Pradhan. Siba Narayan Pradhan was a former Headmaster of Middle English School, Rongli that is today known as Kumari Pema Tsedeun Secondary School.

The Shiv Lata Scholarship gives opportunity for free education at Riv-



erine Elementary School from class VI and above. Each year two students will get the scholarship which will give the BPL category students access to better education.

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha In-charge for Chujachen, Damber Pradhan, was the chief guest of the day.

The day long program had a cultural presentation, fashion show, talent hunt performed by the students of Riverine Elementary School. Vice Principal of the school, Santosh Rai, was the host of the day.

CS assures support to NHPC Chairman

SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 03 MAR:

Chairman and Managing Director, NHPC, Abhay Kumar Singh, called on Chief Secretary, SC Gupta in the presence of Additional Chief Secretary, GP Upadhyaya at Gangtok, Sikkim, on 02 Mar, a press release informs.

He was accompanied by senior officers of NHPC Teesta-V Power Station, Teesta-IV and Teesta-VI Hydro Elec-



tric Projects. During the meeting, Chief Secretary assured all possible co-operation and assistance

of the State Government to NHPC for development of hydro power projects in Sikkim.

World Hearing Day observed at Mangan



MANGAN, 03 MAR (IPR): An awareness programme on World Hearing Day 2021 was organized and observed by the Health Department, Mangan, North Sikkim, today.

District Medical Superintendent, Dr Rinzing D Bhutia, ENT Specialist, Dr Chiten Topgay Bhutia, Health Educator, Rinchen Namgyal Bhutia and the

staff of Mangan District Hospital attended the event along with ASHA workers of the surrounding areas.

Dr Chiten T Bhutia was the resource person for the programme. The theme for this year's World Hearing Day was "Hearing Care for All."

Information regarding hearing care, government schemes, noise pol-

lution and all ear related topics were deliberated and discussed at length. The importance of good hearing and communication, people at risk of hearing loss and other such details were also spoken about.

The programme ended with an interactive Question and Answer session.

Memorial Service

The memorial service of late Chandra Mati Rai [Caroline], retd Accountant of Building & Housing Department, Namchi, South Sikkim, who left for her heavenly abode on the 16th of February 2021, falls on the 04th of March 2021 [Thursday].

All relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to join us in offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence at Tharpu, below Hotel Hangkhim, Melli Road, Namchi, South Sikkim.

We also would like to express our gratitude to all those who stood by us during the time of our bereavement.

S K Paul Rai [Husband]

Goodwin Rai [Daughter]

Silvanus Sherpa [Son-in-law]

Treza Rai [Daughter]

Lorato Rai [Daughter]

Contact No. 8768870693, 8553226165, 9775863431, 9593673056



RUCHI DIAGNOSTIC CLINIC

Behind telephone Exchange Near Old STNM Hospital. Gangtok

PH: 03592-203333, 204876, 8509373970

EXISTING FACILITIES:

- ULTRASOUND
- DIGITAL X-RAY
- ECHOCARDIOGRAPHY
- COLOR DOPPLER
- PATHOLOGY
- MICROBIOLOGY
- BIOCHEMISTRY
- ENDOSCOPY
- B M D
- E C G
- DENTAL O P G
- GASTRO CLINIC
- PAEDIATRIC CLINIC
- MEDICAL CLINIC
- ORTHO CLINIC
- E N T CLINIC
- GYNEA CLINIC
- PHYSIOTHERAPY
- SPECIALISED TESTS

BLOOD COLLECTION CENTRES AT :

- Sushruta Medical, Ranipool.
- Arihant Medical, Opp. CRH gate, 5th Mile.

COMPLETE E N T FACILITIES UNDER ONE ROOF

ENT O P D Monday to Friday
10.00 am to 2.30 pm

1. ENT OPD CLINIC
2. ENT ENDOSCOPES
3. MICROSCOPIC PROCEDURES
4. MINOR O T PROCEDURES
5. VERTIGO MANAGEMENT
6. AUDIOMETRY, TYMPANOMETRY AND HEARING AIDS.

CONSULTANT ENT SURGEON
DR. ONGDEN GYATSO, MS (AIIMS)

GASTRO CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am to 9.00 am

MEDICAL CLINIC & O P D

9.30 am

ORTHO AND GYNEA

CLINICS & O P D

3.00 pm

PAEDIATRIC CLINIC & O P D

8.00 am And 6.00 pm

VACCINATION CLINIC

Pride with Self-Reliance

Follow through on initiatives to inspire merit

Story goes that a senator in Ancient Rome was put in chains and debarred from ever holding a public post again after he was found distributing bread to beggars. No, this was not done just because the Romans detested beggars or not care for poverty but was done more because they feared that by making himself popular in this manner, the senator would one day grow to become an all powerful tyrant. The Romans, it is thus obvious, valued freedom more than Welfare.

A millennium later, we have managed to inverse the equation and actually demand welfare as a matter of right. Elections see politicians outbidding each other on populist measures, and this is not a fixation unique to Sikkim or even the country and is being increasingly deployed with electoral success across the world, even the so called First World. The democracy that we celebrate every five years with the right to decide is pawned to parties which have the best 'welfare' schemes. Sops, freebies, potentially undeserved windfalls and even more protectionism return in amped-up decibels as elections approach.

While a government which is concerned about the welfare of the underprivileged is undoubtedly preferred, what would have been best was if this concern manifested itself with schemes which brought relief with self-respect instead of just dispensing lazy hand-outs. It is a no brainer to accept that for the long run manufacturing dependence is not as desirable – for the people, not votes - as facilitating sustainable reliance. But to make such assurances is no longer politically wise; not in India, not in Sikkim. But fact remains that this remains the only way to real progress. But, for that to happen, apart from the political will, what is required in even larger measure is the people's recognition of competition and merit as being of more significance than protection. This is not to suggest that quotas are a failed model; they have an important role to play to correct centuries of denial but more a comment on how the corrective measures should not end with protection, but should in fact take off from it to inspire bigger ambitions.

Further, Sikkim has had it easy for quite some time now. It will not remain so for ever. The State has to have an economy of its own, its own industries, its own private sector (not just investments from outside). The economic pressures on the purse-strings in Delhi and the increasingly federal make-up of national politics will see to it that the Central largesse that Sikkim enjoys so lavishly is slowly turned off (it is already drying up). It won't happen immediately, but it will happen one day. There will be those who will continue to expect the State Government to bail them out, but even the State's coffers will become miserly once the doles from Delhi dry up and liabilities here pile up. The only way to ensure that public services and amenities remain operational will be if the people pull their weight more efficiently. The State Government has been trying to get this message across by earmarking years for youth revolution and skill development. These were expressions of intent. For these initiatives to succeed, the youth have to be interested in getting revolutionized and get their skills enhanced. Awareness and skill enhancement camps will remain token efforts till the time the youth don't demand better and deploy the skills they acquire into productive and profitable enterprises. It is not enough to aim at self-sustaining efforts any more or even just supporting start-ups. The bar has to be raised to target lucrative undertakings; sustenance enterprises might just become possible then. And that will still be the first step, Sikkim has to march on in leaps and bounds from thereon to stay proud, something that will come only with self-reliance.

WRITE US:

Readers are invited to comment on, criticise, run down, even appreciate if they like something in this paper. Letters carrying abusive/indecorous language and personal attacks, except when against people responsible in this newspaper (who are fair game), will have to be ignored. Letters which carry forward a conversation or initiate a dialogue will command immediate attention and receive prominence. Mail us at: news@summittimes.com

Vaccine Nationalism Will Block Our Path Out of the Pandemic – So How Do we Resist Our Tribal Instinct?

HANNA ZAGEFKA
theconversation.com

Most nations are currently focusing their efforts to defeat the pandemic within their own borders, under pressure to help their citizens first. But this is a global problem and governments need to work together to eradicate COVID. To avoid hardening attitudes against helping other countries, governments need to change how they talk about the pandemic. They must resist the urge to blame other countries. The emphasis must now be on the need for a global response.

We are psychologically driven to help people from our own tribe, or in-group, over members of out-groups. This is what we are now witnessing in the allocation of resources to fight COVID. Around the world, governments are trying to vaccinate their own populations first. There is, so far, little talk of helping other countries.

My research involving over 2,000 Britons suggests that the UK population supports their government's prioritisation of domestic vaccination. Most people surveyed supported investment in measures that would benefit British (in-group) people over offering financial aid to other countries in the EU or sub-Saharan Africa.

When asked whether they would donate money to help others who are struggling due to the pandemic, over 60% of British participants indicated that they would donate to help other British people, whereas less than 40% indicated that they would donate to help people in other countries.

If governments are to start cooperating more internationally, it is essential to shift public opinion away from such in-group favouring biases. But the survival of democratic governments depends on their popularity with the electorate. So it is vital for decision makers to draw on approaches that can counter-act our human impulse for tribalism, and build public support for sharing resources across borders.

Hoarding vaccines is, ultimately, self-defeating.

Vaccinating the entire population of one country is not going to guarantee lasting protection if the virus is allowed to run rampant in other parts of the world, mutating into potentially vaccine-resistant variants.

But the desire to protect the in-group is deep seated. When things go wrong, we find it much easier to blame others than look inwards. More than half of our research participants blamed other countries – not Britain – for the ongoing pandemic.

SHOULDERING A FAIR SHARE OF BLAME

My research points to actions that can stop

Being honest about each nation's own role in perpetuating the pandemic is also vital. British participants who were more aware of their own country's role in spreading the virus were more likely to support global coordination and resource-sharing to defeat CCOVID. Honesty about failings, such as the delay in locking down in spring 2020, could help encourage an honest perspective about the British contribution to the problem. That, in turn, could boost public support for the need to act beyond British borders.

EMPHASISING OUR COMMON FATE

Being open to joint action to overcome this global crisis was also more common among participants who were aware of our interdependency with other nations. Clear messaging on this front will also be essential.

Current broad public optimism about the success of the British national vaccination programme is understandable but we must be clear that can only get us so far. To lend weight to the importance of an international perspective, politicians must go beyond platitudes and lip service. Words must be backed up, in practical terms. That means vaccine resource sharing.

Faced with a rampant virus, the temptation for all governments is to focus on protecting their own populations – to stick within in-group borders. For many nations, this approach is being justified by the argument that we need to make ourselves safe before helping others. But this can only be a short-term strategy. Unless we change the narrative, the longer-term strategy is at serious risk.

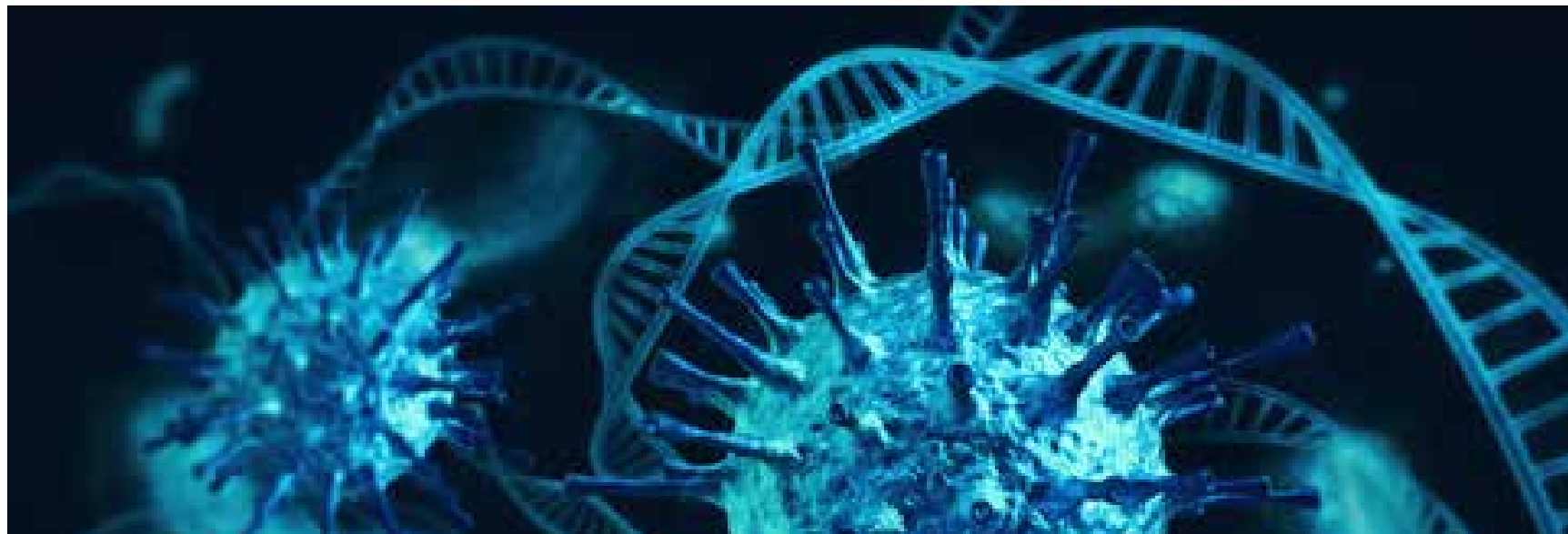
If we keep stoking in-group tribalism, governments risk resistance from a vaccinated electorate with little to no desire to help any out-group members in other countries. Faced with a COVID-ravaged economy, exhausted public health system and record levels of public debt there will be emotive arguments that we cannot afford to share our resources. We might prefer our own tribe but, to the virus, the world's population is one big tribe. There is no out-group.

[the writer is Professor of Social Psychology, Royal Holloway]



feeding self-defeating in-group tribalism. For a start, governments need to stop pinning the blame for the pandemic on other countries, as for example both the US and China have done.

In my studies, participants who blamed other nations for starting or spreading COVID were less willing to offer help across national boundaries. Blaming other nations not only reduced willingness to support those scapegoated nations, it decreased willingness to assist all other out-group countries, even those perceived as blameless.



Coronavirus: What Happens When a Person is Simultaneously Infected With Two Variants?

MAITREYI SHIVKUMAR
theconversation.com

Scientists in Brazil recently reported that two people were simultaneously infected with two different variants of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. This co-infection seemed to have no effect on the severity of patients' illness, and both recovered without needing to be hospitalised.

Although this is one of the few such cases recorded with SARS-CoV-2 – and the study is yet to be published in a scientific journal – scientists have observed infections with multiple strains with other respiratory viruses, such as influenza. This has raised questions about how these viruses may interact in an infected person, and what it could mean for generating new variants.

Viruses are masters of evolution, constantly mutating and creating new variants with every cycle of replication. Selective pressures in the host, such as our immune response, also drive these adaptations. Most of these mutations won't have a significant effect on the virus. But ones that give an advantage to the virus – for example, by increasing its ability to replicate or evade the immune system – are cause for concern and need to be closely monitored.

The occurrence of these mutations is down to the error-prone replication

machinery that viruses use. RNA viruses, such as influenza and hepatitis C, generate a relatively large number of errors each time they replicate. This creates a "quasi-species" of the virus population, rather like a swarm of viruses, each with related but non-identical sequences. Interactions with the host cells and immune system determine the relative frequencies of the individual variants, and these coexisting variants may affect how the disease progresses or how well treatments work.

Compared with other RNA viruses, coronaviruses have lower mutation rates. This is because they are equipped with a proofreading mechanism that can correct some of the errors that occur during replication. Still, there is evidence of viral genetic diversity in patients infected with SARS-CoV-2.

The detection of multiple variants in a person could be the result of co-infection by the different variants, or the generation of mutations within the patient after the initial infection. One way to discriminate these two scenarios is by comparing the sequences of the variants circulating in the population with those in the patient. In the Brazilian study mentioned above, the variants identified corresponded to different lineages that had been previously detected in the population, implying co-infection by the two variants.

MIXING IT ALL UP

This co-infection has opened concerns of SARS-CoV-2 acquiring new mutations even more rapidly. This is because coronaviruses can also undergo large changes in their genetic sequence by a process called recombination. When two viruses infect the same cell, they can swap large parts of their genomes with each other and create completely new sequences.

This is a known phenomenon in RNA viruses. New variants of influenza are generated by a similar mechanism called "reassortment". The genome of influenza virus, unlike coronavirus, comprises eight segments or strands of RNA. When two viruses infect the same cell, these segments mix and match to produce viruses with a new combination of genes. Interestingly, pigs can be infected with different strains of influenza viruses, and have been referred to as "mixing vessels" that shuffle them into new strains. The 2009 H1N1 pandemic virus emerged from a reassortment of a human, avian, and two swine influenza viruses.

With coronaviruses, which only contain one RNA strand in each virus particle, recombination can only occur between RNA strands derived from one or more viruses in the same cell. Evidence of recombination has been found both in the laboratory and in a patient infected with SARS-CoV-2, suggesting that this could

drive the generation of new variants. In fact, the ability of SARS-CoV-2 to infect human cells is proposed to have developed via recombination of the spike protein between closely related animal coronaviruses.

It is important to note that this requires the two viruses to infect the same cell. Even if a person is infected with several variants, if they replicate in different parts of the body, they will not interact with each other. Indeed, this was seen in patients, where different quasi-species of coronaviruses were found in the upper and lower respiratory tracts, suggesting that viruses in these sites were not directly mixing with each other.

The evidence so far does not suggest that infection with more than one variant leads to more severe disease. And although possible, very few cases of co-infection have been reported. More than 90% of the infections in the UK currently are by B117 – the so-called Kent variant. With such a high prevalence of one variant in the population, co-infections are not likely to occur. Still, monitoring this landscape allows scientists to track the emergence of these new variants of concern and understand and respond to any changes in their transmission or vaccine efficacy.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer in Molecular Biology, De Montfort University]

13,000 more troops cleared for Nepal, Bhutan

borders, Tri-junction area

NEW DELHI, 03 MAR [PTI]: The government has sanctioned a dozen fresh battalions of the Sashastra Seema Bal or SSB, comprising over 13,000 personnel for the force that guards the Nepal and Bhutan borders, to "fortify" defences along these fronts including the tri-junction area in Sikkim that adjoins Bhutan and Tibet, news agency PTI reported quoting officials said.

Though the Union Home Ministry has denied the creation of a new field frontier for the border force, it has allowed the SSB to create one out of three new sector - responsible for the operations of about 5-6 battalions - and it is expected to come up in the Delhi-NCR region.

The Sashastra Seema Bal, with an estimated strength of about 90,000 personnel, is the designated force to guard the 1,751-km open Indian front with Nepal and the 699 km one with Bhutan. SSB Director General Kumar Rajesh Chandra told PTI that the 12 new battalions will be raised in phases, three units each over the next four years. A battalion has a strength of over 1,000 personnel.

"It is very supportive of the government to have given the sanction to raise new battalions and establishments for the SSB. The new manpower will ensure that border security is strengthened," Director General Chandra said.

As per an official proposal of the border force approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the new battalions will be used to reduce inter-border outpost distance, strengthen trade and transit routes along the Nepal and Bhutan and fortifying SSB's strength in the tri-junction area in Sikkim. The tri-junction area is the plateau between India, Bhutan and Tibet and the SSB is deployed just below it on the southern side as part of its mandate to guard the front with Bhutan.

The militaries of India and China had witnessed an over 70-day standoff in the Doklam at the tri-junction in 2017.

The new manpower will also help the SSB, as per the proposal, in upgrading the existing border posts at "strategically important" locations along the two fronts and providing armed security to the eight integrated check posts along these fronts.

Officials said the blueprint for sanction of new battalions and establishments for the force was drawn after Union Home Minister Amit Shah reviewed the operations of the SSB in October 2019 and directed it conduct a "vulnerability assessment and gap analysis" of the two borders it secures. The SSB, after completing this task, informed the MHA that it would require 12 new battalions, a frontier headquarter and at least three sector headquarters that would be used to enhance logistical and administrative support to its border units and some of those deployed for internal security duties in the hinterland.

Confusion reigns as Nepal's officialdom keeps changing entry protocols for tourists as peak season begins

SANGAM PRASAIN

KATHMANDU, 03 MAR [KATHMANDU-POST]: Tourists and travel traders both are bewildered by the myriad entry protocols being issued, changed and withdrawn by Nepali officialdom even as the tourism industry struggles to recover from the coronavirus catastrophe.

A few weeks ago, the Department of Tourism recommended that the government amend the entry protocols for foreign tourists, particularly trekkers and mountaineers, saying the rules were vague. The Tourism Department issues permits for expeditions to the Himalayas.

No one has a clear set of rules—from Nepal's embassies, international airlines and tour operators to the Nepal Tourism Board and the Immigration Department—and they have been fixing the entry protocols in their own ways.

"A few weeks ago, the Nepali embassy in Austria refused to issue visas to some Austrians after we submitted documents showing hotel reservations for seven days for isolation purposes," said Thaneshwor Guragain, manager of Seven Summit Treks, Nepal's largest expedition organiser.

"So we submitted paperwork showing hotel bookings for 10 days, and then they issued the visas," he told the Post.

As per the Department of Tourism, the prior approval documents required for entry to Nepal are a negative polymerase chain reaction (PCR) report taken less than 72 hours before departure, hotel booking for at least seven days' quarantine in Nepal and insurance of at least \$5,000 against Covid-19 per person. Tourists must go into hotel quarantine for a minimum of seven days upon arrival in Nepal.

Tourists are also required to take a PCR test on the fifth day of hotel quarantine at their own expense, and they will be allowed to go on their expedition or trek if they test negative.

So far so good.

But Tribhuvan International Airport has issued another circular saying that all passengers coming from the United Kingdom or South Africa as the first port of embarkation or transit have to go into quarantine

for five days only. New variants of the coronavirus have been found in these two countries.

But the quarantine requirement for tourists coming from other countries is seven days, and the Post asked the general manager of the airport Pratap Babu Tiwari why it was so.

"We have issued the circular based on the Health Ministry's guidelines. We don't know why there is a five-day quarantine requirement for tourists coming from the United Kingdom and South Africa."

Another senior airport official told the Post that tourists coming from other countries, including India, are not required to go into quarantine for seven days. "Who monitors them?" he said. "It's not possible either."

For mountaineers, self-isolation and a PCR test on the fifth day are mandatory, said Mira Acharya, director at the Department of Tourism. "If they test negative on the fifth day, aspiring mountain climbers can apply for a permit on the eighth day," Acharya said. "We monitor them regularly. This is possible because there are only a few climbers applying for permits currently. We won't be able to monitor them if the number grows."

Acharya admitted that there was confusion regarding the quarantine period. "To avoid confusion, we decided to implement the protocols issued in September 2020 after a meeting with the tourism secretary."

An official at the department who did not wish to be named told the Post that the department's seven-day quarantine requirement could be legally challenged. "There is no clear protocol. What set of rules should we implement—10 days, seven days or five days?"

But the Health Ministry says nothing has changed in the quarantine provision.

"As per our directives, everybody—foreigners or Nepalis returning from abroad—is required to go into quarantine for at least 10 days, except in special circumstances," Dr Samir Kumar Adhikari, joint spokesperson for the Health Ministry, told the Post. "We have not made any changes in our directive for people coming from abroad."

But Pradip Koirala, joint-sec-

retary at the Tourism Ministry, said that the government recently amended the quarantine provision, setting five days of quarantine for all passengers.

"The amendment says all passengers are required to go into quarantine for five days, but it is not clear what 'all passengers' means," he said. "Obviously, there is confusion."

Koirala said they had been planning to table a proposal at the Cabinet to create a uniform rule. "And until the issue is sorted out, the Tourism Ministry decided to implement the seven-day quarantine requirement for foreign tourists."

Expedition organiser Guragain said, "There's confusion everywhere. Some of our clients have cancelled their bookings due to the hassles involved in entering Nepal. The rules keep changing."

Some officials at the Department of Tourism said they submitted recommendations to the government to amend the entry protocols for foreign tourists a week ago but nothing has happened.

"It won't be a surprise if the government issues new entry rules for tourists after Nepal's spring tourism season ends."

The spring season that runs from March to May-end is the peak tourist season in Nepal, and it is the only time when there is a window to climb the world's tallest mountain, Everest.

On Sunday, a group of icefall doctors, or experts who fix the ropes and ladders to create a climbing path up to Camp 2 on Everest, left for the base camp.

"Based on industry reports, there are lots of inquiries coming for Everest. We are expecting at least 300 climbers only on Everest, slightly less than the 2019 figure," said Acharya. "But their arrival will depend on how the government treats them."

The Department of Tourism had issued Everest climbing permits to a record 381 fee-paying climbers in 2019. The 2020 Everest season was completely washed out due to Covid-19.

"Obviously, if the government makes their travel hassle-free, we may have 300 climbers, and their arrival will give a much-needed boost to the country's tourism economy

that has seen almost zero income since last March," said Acharya.

Ang Tashi Sherpa, owner of Sherpa Lodge and Coffee Shop in Lukla, the gateway to Mt Everest, is not much excited about this spring season which began on Monday. This is when Nepal's tourism season gets going, and climbers and trekkers would be thronging the iconic Annapurna and Everest regions.

The Covid-19 pandemic turned 2020 into a total disaster for Nepal's tourism industry. And travel traders were very hopeful that tourists would come back in 2021.

But Sherpa sees another disastrous year ahead. "We survived with zero income last year. There were hopes that tourists would come back in droves this spring," Sherpa told the Post. "But things don't look as good as we had anticipated."

Nepal's tourism has two distinct seasons. March to May in spring is the peak time for mountain climbing, including the 8,848.86-metre tall Everest, while September to November is popular for trekking.

Mountain tourism is a mainstay of Nepal's economy. Foreigners pay \$11,000 to obtain a permit to climb Everest and spend anywhere between \$40,000 and \$90,000 during the entire expedition.

In 2019, the government earned \$5.07 million in royalties from the issuance of climbing permits, with Everest accounting for \$4.05 million.

Travel trade entrepreneurs said that they were still worried about the government's policy which may change in the blink of an eye. "That results in a big loss for us," said Guragain, explaining that all documents related to hotel bookings and Covid-19 insurance need to be submitted to apply for visas as on-arrival visas are not available.

"If the government changes these rules after a week or month, it will be a loss for the agencies as they have to refund the money."

Seven Summit Treks said they had obtained approval letters for 70 mountaineers, 45 of whom are coming to climb Everest. "We are expecting more, but visas are a problem."

According to tourism entrepreneurs, Nepal has around 37 embassies and diplomatic missions abroad while tourists come here from 205

countries. "This means that tourists from countries where there are no Nepali missions are prevented from visiting Nepal."

Tourism entrepreneurs say that tourists from the UK are restricted but they are still coming. "We don't know if the Tourism Department will issue permits to British citizens," they said.

Acharya said that things were complicated. "British citizens may come from other countries or even from India. We don't know what to do in such cases."

Fed up with the government's inaction despite repeated assurances to assist the tourism industry, around 37 different tourism organisations recently announced plans to take to the streets.

They have warned that if the government fails to address the industry's grievances and to chart out a plan to draw tourists, they have no alternative but to protest.

Their demands include removing the five-day mandatory quarantine for foreigners who have a negative PCR report taken within 72 hours before departure, resuming the on-arrival visa facility at Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, cancelling the \$5,000 Covid-19 insurance coverage requirement to travel to Nepal and opening the border with China.

Last October, Nepal opened the door a crack for trekkers and mountaineers, nearly seven months after the country imposed a complete lockdown.

Travel trade entrepreneurs are asking why the government is imposing quarantine for foreign tourists when tens of thousands of political demonstrators are allowed to freely march through the streets.

According to the statistics of the Department of Immigration, only 230,085 foreign tourists visited Nepal last year, about the same number that came in 1986. Most of them arrived before the country slapped entry restrictions on March 20.

The year 2021 started on a disappointing note. Nepal received less than 9,000 foreign visitors in January. The disappointment continued in February with 9,146 arrivals, a steep 87.6 percent year-on-year drop.

BJP to finalise first list of candidates for five assembly polls on Thursday

NEW DELHI, 03 MAR [NDTV]: The central election committee of the BJP will meet on Thursday to finalise its first list of candidates for five assembly polls, with top party leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, expected to attend the meeting.

The party is likely to clear its candidates for the first phase of the polls, scheduled for March 27, in Assam and West Bengal.

The BJP core groups of the two states will deliberate with the central leadership, including party president JP Nadda, to narrow down the list of probables before the CEC picks the candidates.

Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal, minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and state party chief Ranjeet Kumar Dass will be part of deliberations for their state, while key organisational leaders from West Bengal, including state party chief Dilip Ghosh, will attend the meeting to discuss the names of candidates for their state.

Elections in Assam will be conducted in three phases on March 27, April 1 and April 6, while polling in Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will take place in a single phase on April 6.

Elections for the West Bengal assembly will be held in eight phases, up from seven last time, beginning with polling for 30 seats on March 27.



gle phase on April 6.

The second phase of the West Bengal assembly elections has been scheduled for April 1 and will cover 30 constituencies, followed by the third phase on April 6 for 31 seats, fourth on April 10 for 44 constituencies, fifth on April 17 for 45 seats, sixth for 43 seats on April 22, seventh phase on April 26 for 36 seats and the last and eighth

phase on April 29 for 35 seats.

The BJP has high stakes in West Bengal and Assam. While in Bengal, it has mounted an aggressive all-out campaign, deploying a number of leaders drawn from various states and considered adept in poll campaigning, to end the 10-year-old reign of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

In Assam, where the party came to power for the first time in 2016, the BJP has been pulling out all the stops to retain power, with the Congress joining hands with regional parties to capture its old bastion.

So far, 8,092 healthcare workers have been given the second dose of the vaccine, she said.

Arunachal reports one new COVID-19 case, tally at 16,838

ITANAGAR, MAR 3 (PTI):

One more person tested positive for COVID-19 in Arunachal Pradesh, taking the tally in the northeastern state to 16,838, a senior health department official said on Wednesday.

The fresh case from Tirap district was detected through rapid antigen test, State Surveillance Officer (SSO) Dr Lobsang Jampa said. A CRPF staff-

er, who had recently returned from West Bengal, was diagnosed with the disease, the SSO said, adding he was asymptomatic.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has two active cases, while 16,780 people have recovered from the disease and 56 died.

Altogether, 4,06,705 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in the state, including 523 on Tuesday, and the positive

ty ratio stands at 0.02 percent, Jampa said.

Meanwhile, State Immunisation Officer Dimong Padung said over 32,000 health and frontline workers have received vaccine shots in the state thus far.

The health department has been carrying out the inoculation drive four days a week - Monday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

visit us at: www.summittimes.com

VIDEO NEWS SECTION

Sikkim SCAN | CapitalTIMES | Neighbourhood WATCH | Sports & Specials | ElseWhere | EICETERA

To book ad-space, contact SummitTIMES at

BANGKOK:
For circulation details Contact: +91-9748979495, +91-9647702492
& for Advertisement booking at +91-9933427903 or at office no 03992
208/6B, Mall road advertise@summittimes.com

SILIGURI:
Mr. Mani Rai, M/s. Space Ads, B.R. Ambekar Building, Room No.7, Tel: 983983997, E-mail: contact.syrup@gmail.com/irahad.sl1123@gmail.com

KOLKATA OFFICE:
Irrahad Ali/Intezar, Synapse, 6, Madan Street, Mezzanine - 2, 2nd floor, Kolkata - 700072. Ph. 033-22124348/ fax 033-22124337/ mob. +91-9830547774/ +91-9832556698

Phone
03592-208498
+91-9832556698
+91-9832080753

www.summittimes.com
news@summittimes.com
summittimes16@gmail.com
advertise@summittimes.com

Address:
Santa Bhawan Complex, Church Road
Near Diesel Power House (DPH)
Gangtok, East Sikkim, 737101

England must be braver but India will not let up with a world final in sight

ALI MARTIN
LONDON, 03 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: After two months in the sub-continent, England's Test cricketers are within touching distance of the departure lounge. Ben Stokes, Jonny Bairstow, Jofra Archer and Mark Wood will stay on for a Twenty20 series that has seemingly taken priority with the selectors but, otherwise, the red-ball players will soon be home.

Such thoughts inevitably creep in during regular tours, let alone ones undertaken in the biosecure bubbles of the pandemic era. But they will need putting to one side with the fourth Test that starts on Thursday at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad, scene of last week's two-day affair with the slippery pink ball, very much a live one.

England's victory in the first Test in Chennai feels like a distant memory after a couple of disorientating turns in the spin cycle but win this one and it secures a 2-2 series draw. Considering resources, and that every team to visit India since Alastair Cook's side won in 2012 have ended up thwarted, it would be a serious feat. And after winning 2-0 in Sri Lanka, England's Test winter would end very much in credit.

"The last week [of a tour] there is a part of you that wants to be with your loved ones but we know how important this game is, what an achievement it would be and what an opportunity we have," said Joe Root after training on Tuesday. "That massively outweighs everything else and has our full focus for the next seven or eight days.

"It would be a phenomenal achievement from the players to have found a way in some very foreign and difficult conditions so it's a great motivator for us."



In an unusual turn of events, England will be cheered on by Australia's cricketers. India must avoid defeat to make the final of the World Test Championship – otherwise Tim Paine's men will meet their trans-Tasman rivals New Zealand in June. The points system has been mind-bending and the pandemic has scuppered a number of fixtures, yet the competition's additional context should still be felt in the coming days.

To help out their Australian friends, England's batsmen will need to have undergone a hard reset when it comes to facing the dual threat of Ravichandran Ash-

win and Axar Patel. The pair boast a combined 42 wickets in the series so while the switch back to the red SG ball may reduce the possibility of deliveries shooting through off the plastic lacquer, they were presenting problems before the day-night Test.

Since being rolled for scores of 112 and 81 in the third Test, England's batsmen have had plenty of time to stew. Root ordered a complete break from cricket for a couple of days (albeit one with few distractions in the bubble) and since resuming training the message has been to become more positive in their approach.

"To have won six of our last eight Tests in Asia shows we have the tools and the ability to win in these conditions," said the captain. "It is important we harness that and have it in the front of our mind, and be a bit braver and play with a bit more freedom.

"That doesn't mean going out there and trying to slog it or be ultra-aggressive. It is not being scared of the conditions. It is embracing them for what they are. If we get the balance of that mindset right we'll give ourselves a far better chance than last week."

How England line up might yet hinge on a sickness bug in the camp,

but there seems no compelling case to change numbers one to seven. The spare batsmen Rory Burns and Dan Lawrence were only recently dropped and though Bairstow registered a pair on his return, the much mucked-about Yorkshireman deserves the chance to atone. Ollie Pope has struggled also but he will not learn much by not playing.

Thereafter it comes down to the bowlers. India's Ajinkya Rahane suggested a pitch similar to those in the second and third Tests – the home side are not interested in the draw if so – and it would be strange if Dom Bess did not return. England's ill-judged seam at-

tack barely broke sweat during the day-nighter, so who drops out will be chiefly tactical. If this is Stuart Broad, who took pride from creating a couple of (dropped) chances during his six overs last week, it would mean England returning to the attack that prevailed in the first Test. The only other variable is if Olly Stone or Wood replaces Archer for the pace role but again there is no workload issue forcing a switch.

India have had less soul-searching to do but are guaranteed to make one change, with the fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah having left the camp for personal reasons. Mohammed Siraj played in the second Test and could return, although the slightly more hostile Umesh Yadav is fit again after a calf issue and, given an imposing home record, could be preferred.

England may feel jaded but it is worth remembering their opponents have not been exempt from bubble fatigue. Granted, there is a different mindset when 4,200 miles from home but after nine weeks in Australia, followed by only five nights sleeping in their own beds, India's players know just as much about the walls of the hotel room closing in.

That said, be it through the scars inflicted by Ashwin and Patel or the form of Rohit Sharma with the bat, Virat Kohli's men clearly have more going for them if conditions remain consistent with those of the previous two Tests. They also have a greater incentive, with Rahane, a vice-captain not prone to hyperbole, calling the World Test Championship the equal of the World Cup.

If that is the belief of the players more broadly, coupled with the extra frisson it has given this series finale, the concept is perhaps worth persisting with.

Manish Kaushik enters quarters of Spanish boxing tourney

NEW DELHI, MAR 3 (PTI): Olympic-bound Indian boxer Manish Kaushik (63kg) advanced to the quarterfinals of the Boxam International Tournament with a facile opening round win in Castellano, Spain.

The world championship bronze-medalist defeated Spaniard Ammari Raddouane 5-0 on Tuesday night to make the last eight, where he will be up against Kazakhstan's Sufiullin Zakir -- a two-time Asian silver-winner.

Kaushik, also a Commonwealth Games silver-medallist, is returning to the ring a year after qualifying for the Olympics in the Asian Qualifiers in Jordan. He was laid low by a knee injury.

Later on Wednesday, six-time world champion M C Mary Kom (51kg) will open her campaign against Giordana Sorrentino of Italy in the quarterfinal stage along with five others.

A 14-member Indian contingent (eight men and six women), including nine Olympic qualified and other top boxers, is taking part at the 35th edition of the tournament. All 14 of these boxers have made the quarterfinals already.

Boxers from 17 countries, including Russia, USA, Italy, Kazakhstan and Spain, are participating in the event.

Brazilian Marcelinho aims for first-ever ISL trophy

Margao, Mar 3 (PTI): From spectacular goals to single-handedly winning matches, Brazilian forward Marcelinho has given fans a lot to savour in the Indian Super League but he is yet to win the elusive title.

With Mohun Bagan, a genuine contender for the title, making it to the playoffs, Marcelinho is now just a couple of games away from winning his first-ever ISL trophy.

Mohun Bagan missed out on the League Winners Shield, but given Antonio Lopez Habas' record in the knockout stages, it is hard to look past the Kolkata side. "I've never won a title in India," Marcelinho said.

"But I'm trying to focus on the moment. I try to focus on the quality to help my team -- my experience, set-pieces, movement. I do not think in the long term," Marcelinho told ISL Media.

The 33-year-old forward had a season that went from bad to worse to excellent. The first half was spent warming the benches at Odisha FC where he did not often see eye to eye with coach Stuart Baxter.

But after Mohun Bagan offered him a way out in the January transfer window, his impact has been sensational.

"Here, it's easy because of the way they play," said Marcelinho, who was the Golden Boot winner when he was



with then Delhi Dynamos in 2016. "There is a winning mentality and an opportunity to play good football. Everything is connected well in this team. There is quality in all the departments and we try to be compact."

The former Atletico Madrid 'B' player is also quick to credit both his teammates and his coach for helping him give the best for his team.

"The likes of (Roy) Krishna, and (David) Williams, they are not only good players but good people," he said.

"On the field, everything's too easy with them. They know where I'm running. When you have players like that playing with you, your job becomes easier."

Knowing coach Habas for a long time also helped Marcelinho. "He knew

me when I was in Delhi. When I was in Hyderabad, he tried to call me to his team. He put a lot of confidence in me and it is this confidence that makes me comfortable.

"In Odisha, everything I did, the coach questioned. I think, when the coach trusts a player, he leaves the player to do what he wants to do. Here, the coach makes me feel really special."

The situation is in stark contrast to what he experienced at Odisha, where he frequently cut a frustrated figure. It was clear from the onset that despite his many gifts, he was not what Baxter wanted.

"I think from the beginning, the coach was very confrontational," Marcelinho said. "I told him I'm not too defensive and I'm not comfortable

to play in this situation. So play me in a free role or in attack. But he took that in a confrontational way and he tried to remove me from the team.

"To sit on the bench was a new experience for me. I'm a professional and I have to accept these situations. But if you put a key player on the bench, there are consequences for everybody," he said. Given his past reputation of a confrontational player, Marcelinho admitted that he has made mistakes in the past, but said he's now a changed man.

"When I was captain, I was more energetic and I was trying to be a leader. And I made some mistakes, some tackles and things. But now, I'm more calm. I try to control my emotions and not create problems for the team by getting yellow cards," he said.

Newcastle face an almighty battle to stay in the Premier League

MARTIN LAURENCE

LONDON, 03 MAR [THEGUARDIAN]: Rewind a few weeks and it looked as if Newcastle had seen the light at the end of a long and gloomy tunnel. After a run of 11 games without a win in all competitions, nine of which were defeats, they went to Goodison Park and beat Everton 2-0. "They showed more fighting spirit, more concentration and more motivation," said a frustrated Carlo Ancelotti as Newcastle moved nine points clear of the relegation zone. Steve Bruce's side had also shown some fighting spirit in their previous game, firing off 15 shots in the second half against Leeds, only to lose 2-1. Finally, they were displaying some attacking verve.

The team's inability to create chances had heaped the pressure on to Bruce, even if Mike Ashley's seemingly everlasting presence was always likely to prevent a sacking, so a thoroughly deserved victory at Goodison was a bolt from the blue. Though a home defeat to Crystal Palace followed, Newcastle again dominated the shots department, with 21 to six, before they pulled off a remarkable 3-2 win over Southampton with nine men.

It was no coincidence that Allan Saint-Maximin made his long-awaited return to the starting XI for the victory over Southampton. Very much the maverick in an otherwise ordinary squad, he set up both goals as Newcastle raced into an early two-goal lead. Miguel Almirón scored twice as he continued his personal renaissance, and things were looking up, at least until Callum Wilson was forced off through injury.

Wilson was Newcastle's one reliable source of goals. They had scored 22 goals in the league before his injury and he had either scored or set up 68% of them. So the news that he would be missing for around six weeks was a massive blow. Newcastle have picked up just one point from their three matches since his injury, although their performances against Chelsea, Manchester United and Wolves suggested they would be able to hold off Fulham's steady challenge and stay up. That was until Almirón and Saint-Maximin were

forced off during their 1-1 draw with Wolves at the weekend, with Bruce confirming that both will miss the rest of the month. Neither of them is particularly prolific – Almirón has four goals and one assist to his name this season, with Saint-Maximin providing two goals and three assists – but their absence, coupled with that of Wilson, leaves Newcastle's squad in disarray for the coming weeks. Bruce is now picking from a squad in which Jeff Hendrick is the top scorer, with two goals, and Joelinton has the most assists, with just two.

Without Wilson, Almirón and, perhaps most importantly, Saint-Maximin, it's hard to see where Newcastle will find a goal, let alone a win. The squad has been stripped of 59% of their goals and 60% of their assists, so reverting to a tiresome and tedious type is the only real option available to Bruce in the coming weeks. Avoiding defeat to West Brom and Brighton in particular will be pivotal, but managing that feat without their three most dangerous players will be easier said than done.

It is difficult to overstate how important these players are for Newcastle. Almirón had a torrid start at the club, failing to score in his first 24 league appearances and registering just one assist in that time, but his workrate and pace have always been assets. Newcastle are much more likely to win when he plays. In fact, their win rate goes up from just 25% without him in the starting XI to 32.3% with him.

Saint-Maximin is even more important. His end product often leaves a lot to be desired, but his direct dribbling gives Newcastle a massive boost in every game he plays. He is the vertical thrust to a side that otherwise plays in deep, horizontal lines. Of the 18 wins Newcastle have managed since the start of last season, 14 have come in the 35 matches Saint-Maximin has started. That's a pretty impressive 40% win rate with him in the team. By contrast, the team have won just four of the 29 matches he has not started (13.7%). Not only do Newcastle score considerably more goals with Saint-Maximin starting (1.23 per game up from 0.76) but they concede fewer (1.4 down from 1.83).

Australian AG Porter denies rape accusation, won't resign

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA (AP): Australia's attorney-general denied having sexual contact with a 16-year-old who had accused him of raping her 33 years ago and said Wednesday he would not resign as the nation's top law officer.

Christian Porter instead said he would take leave to care for his mental health after the allegations recently became public.

"I'm going to take a couple of short weeks leave just for my own sanity," Porter told reporters. "I think that I will be able to return from that and do my job."

The accuser took her own life last year, and her allegations against Porter became public last week when they were sent anonymously to Prime Minister Scott Morrison and other lawmakers.

Media had reported the alleged rapist was one of the 16 men in Morrison's 22-member Cabinet, but Porter was widely identified online.



The 50-year-old former criminal prosecutor said he decided to speak out after police said Tuesday there was insufficient admissible evidence to proceed with a criminal investigation.

Prominent lawyers and the woman's friends have called for an independent inquiry to test the evidence against Porter. Morrison has noted Porter's denials and said the allegations should be left with police to handle.

Porter said any inquiry into the allegation

would require him to "disapprove something that didn't happen 33 years ago." Buy Michael Bradley, the alleged victim's former lawyer, said there would "trial by media" in the absence of a formal inquiry.

"We should all not want that to happen, but it's going to happen if the allegation and his response are not tested in a proper formal process," Bradley said.

Porter said the reported rape allegation did not warrant him

standing down from his job. "If I stand down from my position as attorney-general because of an allegation about something that simply did not happen, then any person in Australia can lose their career, their job, their life's work based on nothing more than an accusation that appears in print," Porter said.

"If that happens, anyone in public life is able to be removed simply by the printing of an allegation," he added. Porter said he was 17 when he

competed alongside the then-16-year-old accuser on a four-member school debate team in January 1988. He said he had not heard from her since.

"I did not sleep with the (alleged) victim. We didn't have anything of that nature happen between us," Porter said.

"I remember the person as an intelligent, bright, happy person," he added.

The woman has not been named. Police are preparing evidence to help a coroner determine the cause of her death.

The case has added to intensifying scrutiny of attitudes toward sexual harassment and violence in Parliament after a staffer made an unrelated allegation two weeks ago that she had been raped by a senior colleague in a minister's office.

The government notified Parliament House staff in an email this week of a new confidential complaints hotline for the reporting of serious workplace incidents.

COVID-19 vaccine deliveries to African nations pick up speed

NAIROBI, KENYA (AP): More African countries received the long-awaited first deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines on Wednesday, with Kenya and Rwanda benefiting from the global COVAX initiative that aims to ensure doses for the world's low-and middle-income nations.

African and other health officials have been frustrated with the sight of a handful of rich countries rolling out vaccines after snapping up large amounts for themselves. "We will be known as the continent of COVID" if Africa doesn't quickly reach its target of vaccinating 60% of its population of 1.3 billion people, the director of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, John Nkengasong, said last week. The continent last month surpassed 100,000 confirmed deaths.

So far Ghana, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Angola and Congo also have received their first vaccine doses via COVAX, with several other countries including Mali, Senegal, Malawi and Uganda set to receive them this week.

But COVAX has faced delays related to the severely limited global supply of vaccine doses as well as logistical issues.

And COVAX alone will not supply Africa's 54 countries with the doses needed to reach the 60% population coverage for achieving so-called herd immunity, when enough people are protected through infection or vaccination to make it difficult for a virus to continue to spread.

That's why some countries such as South Africa, the hardest-hit African nation, are also pursuing COVID-19 vaccines via bilateral deals or via the African Union's bulk-purchasing program.

Despite the various challenges, some health officials expressed jubilation as the first vaccine doses via COVAX arrived.

"We have been fighting the pandemic with rubber bullets but what we have acquired today is equivalent, metaphorically speaking, to bazookas and machine guns," Kenyan Health Minister Mutahi Kagwe said. Kenya received 1.02 million doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India. The minister said the vaccines will be administered to some 400,000 medical workers and the rest will go to other front-line workers such as teachers and police officers.

Kenya, East Africa's commercial hub, has more than 106,000 confirmed virus cases including more than 1,800 deaths. Many health workers for months have been disgruntled over the inadequate supply of personal protective equipment. They also say they were never paid the allowances that the government promised them for the extra work and risk while combating COVID-19.

Rwanda received 240,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine, with 102,960 Pfizer doses expected later Wednesday. The health ministry said these first doses will target front-line workers, those above 65 and people with underlying health conditions.

Health Minister Daniel Ngamije said Rwanda's goal is to vaccinate 30% of the population by the end of this year, and 60% by the end of 2022.

Rwanda has recorded 19,111 cases and 265 deaths.

French families sue over extensive nursing home virus deaths



PARIS (AP): A Paris court is holding a hearing Wednesday in a class-action effort to hold French health authorities and companies accountable after thousands with the virus died in nursing homes, and families were locked out and left in the dark about what was happening to their isolated loved ones.

The hearing is a first step in likely a years-long legal marathon. Families hope it shines a light on what went wrong last year as the virus devastated France's oldest generation and deprived their children and grandchildren of a chance to help or even say goodbye.

"We want to ensure that mistakes aren't repeated, that someone is held responsible," said plaintiff Sabrina Deliry, who has mobilized families around France since her mother's Paris nursing home was first locked down a year ago.

The hearing Wednesday involves a special measure to demand access to documents or other material involving decisions at nursing homes. It is among many legal efforts around the mismanagement of the pandemic that are working through the French justice system. Others include manslaughter charges, or target top government ministers, but this could be one of the most far-reaching cases.

It targets several nursing homes, the na-

tional health agency DGS, the Paris public hospital authority and others. Plaintiffs include family members of nursing home residents, doctors and associations.

Their complaint focuses on multiple issues at French homes for the elderly and disabled during the first half of 2020. Those flaws included mask shortages for residents and staff; testing shortages; the use of a powerful sedative called Rivotril on some residents while homes were locked down; and opaque decisions on which residents received hospital treatment for the virus and which were left to suffer or die in their nursing homes.

The national health agency, the Paris hospital authority and two of the nursing homes named did not respond to requests for comment ahead of the hearing.

After France recorded Europe's first virus infections and deaths a year ago, French officials shut down nursing homes to outsiders and kept residents inside. The government said it had to act fast to protect the country's most vulnerable populations. But many families say the lockdown deprived them of decision-making abilities for their loved ones, and that in some cases the enforced isolation worsened cognitive and other health problems.

Recognizing these concerns, President Emmanuel Macron relaxed

some rules for nursing homes ahead of everything else as France's first lockdown eased. But for many, the damage had already been done. And new waves of infections in the summer, fall and winter sent many nursing homes back into temporary, repeated shutdowns.

Official figures show that nearly 25,000 people with the virus have died in French nursing homes out of more than 87,000 lives lost nationwide — a death toll still climbing by hundreds every day. But thousands of other French nursing home residents who contracted COVID-19 died after being hospitalized, and studies suggest they make up as many as half of France's overall virus victims. That is among the highest proportions worldwide.

French officials say mask shortages at the outset of the pandemic were beyond their control and a global problem, and note that masks have been mandatory and widely available since last summer. Nursing home directors have defended their decisions to lock out visitors given the vulnerabilities of their residents.

Dr. Alain Masclet, head of group AR2S involved in the lawsuit, said the court process "will allow us to define what was forgotten, the shortages, the failures."

The goal, he said, should be to ensure: "Never again."

Myanmar authorities charge Associated Press journalist



YANGON, MYANMAR (AP): Authorities in Myanmar have charged Associated Press journalist Thein Zaw and five other members of the media with violating a public order law that could see them imprisoned for up to three years, a lawyer said Tuesday.

The six were arrested while covering protests against the Feb. 1 military coup in Myanmar that ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The group includes journalists for Myanmar Now, Myanmar Photo Agency, 7Day News, Zee Kwet online news and a freelancer.

Lawyer Tin Zar Oo, who represents Thein Zaw, said the six have been charged under a law that punishes anyone who causes fear among the public, knowingly spreads false news, or agitates directly or indirectly for a criminal offense against a government employee.

The law was amended by the junta last month to broaden its scope and increase the maximum prison term from two years.

AP's Thein Zaw, 32, was taken into custody on Saturday morning in Yangon, the country's largest city. He is report-

ed to be held in Insein Prison in northern Yangon, notorious for housing political prisoners under previous military regimes.

According to the lawyer, Thein Zaw was remanded into custody by a court and can be held until March 12 without another hearing or further action.

The AP has called for his immediate release.

"Independent journalists must be allowed to freely and safely report the news without fear of retribution," Ian Phillips, AP vice president for international news, said after the arrest. "AP decries in the strongest terms the arbitrary detention of Thein Zaw."

The Committee to Protect Journalists joined that call.

"Myanmar authorities must release all journalists being held behind bars and stop threatening and harassing reporters for merely doing their jobs of covering anti-coup street protests," said Shawn Crispin, CPI's senior Southeast Asia representative. "Myanmar must not return to the past dark ages where military rulers jailed journalists to stifle and censor news reporting."

Thein Zaw was ar-

rested as police charged toward protesters gathered at an intersection in Yangon that has become a meeting point for demonstrators.

Authorities escalated their crackdown on the protesters this past weekend, carrying out mass arrests and using lethal force. The U.N. Human Rights offices said it believes at least 18 people were shot dead Sunday in several cities when security forces opened fire on demonstrating crowds. The coup reversed years of slow progress toward democracy after five decades of military rule.

In December 2017, two journalists working for the Reuters news agency were arrested while working on a story about Myanmar's Rohingya minority. They were accused of illegally possessing official documents, although they argued that they were framed because of official opposition to their reporting.

Although their case attracted international attention, they were convicted the following year and were sentenced to seven years behind bars. They were freed in 2019 in a mass presidential pardon.

UK Treasury boss to extend job support, tax breaks in budget

LONDON (AP): Britain's treasury chief is expected to extend job support programs and temporary tax cuts to help workers and businesses hit by the coronavirus pandemic when he delivers his budget to Parliament on Wednesday.

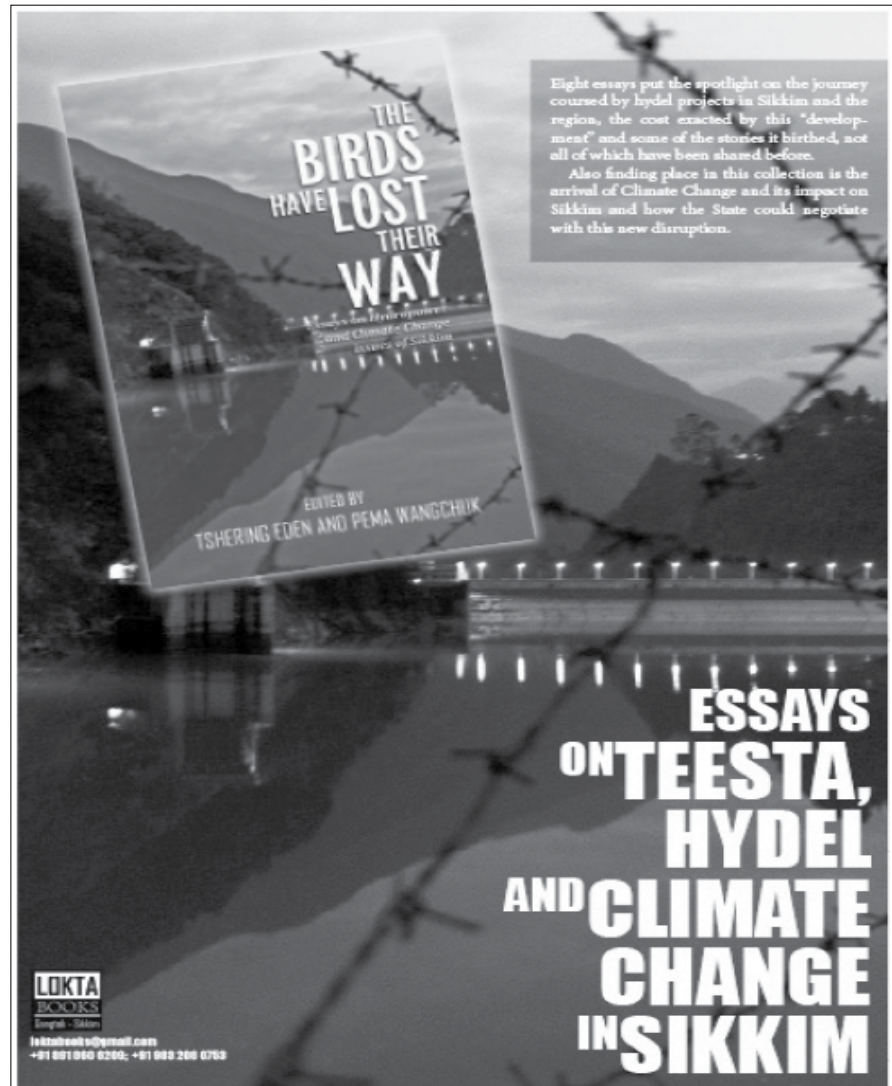
Rishi Sunak said in a tweet he will announce a three-part plan to "protect the jobs and livelihoods of the British people" when he speaks to House of Commons at

12:30 p.m. London time.

British media reports indicate Sunak will extend the furlough program, under which the government pays 80% of the wages for private employees unable to work during the pandemic. He also plans to expand grants for self-employed workers, while extending a temporary increase in welfare payments and tax relief for businesses.

While the pandemic has pushed public

borrowing to levels not seen since World War II, economists say the stimulus programs need to continue as large parts of the economy remain shut down by restrictions designed to control the pandemic. The government has announced plans to ease lockdown measures following the rapid roll out of COVID-19 vaccines, but many businesses are expected to remain closed until June 21.



Chris Harrison to Address Bachelor Scandal on Good Morning America

News Chris Harrison intends to speak out about his decision to temporarily step away from the Bachelor franchise amid ongoing drama.

Chris Harrison is going to be the one sitting in the hot-seat in the coming days. Multiple sources connected to Good Morning America confirm The Bachelor host has been booked to appear on the morning show in the near future.

Additionally, a source connected to The Bachelor tells E! News, "Chris is speaking out about the controversy and wants to explain the actions he is putting forward to redeem himself. He wants to explain the work he's doing to help reconcile his actions."

News of Chris' television appearance comes after Emmanuel Acho was announced as the host for Matt James' After the Final Rose.

In a statement, Emmanuel shared, "I've accepted the Rose and am honored to be hosting the @bachelorabc After the Final Rose this year. It's been a pivotal season, and this episode will hopefully be one of the most storied shows in TV history. Empathy is needed and change is coming. Share the news! I'll see y'all then!"

The former NFL football player has tackled race and masculinity, as well as other topics, in his popular YouTube series "Uncomfortable Conversations

With a Black Man." He published a book of the same title last year.

These uncomfortable conversations are important to Bachelor Nation, which is experiencing a reckoning, of sorts.

In recent weeks, multiple contestants from past and present have had to address social media posts, which were offensive to various minority groups.



Rachael Kirkconnell, who participated in Matt's season, was accused of bullying a high school classmate. Additionally, social media users found photos of Rachael at an antebellum plantation themed fraternity event in 2018.

Bachelor Nation's Rachel Lindsay spoke about the controversy surrounding the 24 year old with Chris, who defended her from being attacked by what he described as the "woke police." He also questioned the validity of the criticism Rachael faced over the resurfaced photos, asking, "Well, Rachel is it a good look in 2018? Or, is it not a good look in 2021? Because there's a big difference."

His defensive attitude sparked widespread criticism, prompting the host to announce he's taking a break from hosting duties. He wrote in his announcement, "Now, just as I taught my children to stand up, and to own their actions, I will do the same. By excusing historical racism, I defended it. I invoked the term 'woke police,' which is unacceptable. I am ashamed over how uninformed I was. I was so wrong."

As for Rachael, she's apologized for her previous actions and vowed to focus on "learning how to be antiracist."

To learn more about the ongoing drama embroiling Bachelor Nation, check out all of our stories here.

Catherine Zeta-Jones joins Michael Sheen in 'Prodigal Son'

LOS ANGELES (AP): Catherine Zeta-Jones was already a fan of "Prodigal Son," so when the chance came to join the show, she jumped, lured by the prospect of working alongside Michael Sheen.

The Welsh actors were born in cities about an hour apart and moved in similar circles during their youth without ever knowing each other. She was born in Swansea and Sheen was born in Newport seven months apart.

"We have all these mutual friends, but we've never crossed. My mom and dad know his dad," she said Tuesday in a virtual Television Critics Association panel. "It's bizarre. That was, of course, a huge pull for me."

Zeta-Jones joins Fox's "Prodigal Son" in Tuesday's episode, directed by co-star Lou Diamond Phillips. Previously, the Oscar winner had done guest episodes and appeared in TV movies and miniseries, but never a regular series role.

She plays Dr. Vivian Capshaw and Alan Cumming appears in two episodes as a cocky Europol agent.

"It's a family drama with a twist of danger and it's a dark family," Zeta-Jones said. "I gravitate to kind of dark material."

Sheen's presence increased the comfort level for Zeta-Jones to come onto a set where the cast and crew had already been together for a season. He plays an incarcerated serial killer surgeon.

"As soon as Lou shouted, 'Cut,' Michael and I went into inside jokes, Tommy Cooper impressions," she said, referring to the British comedian.

Phillips said, "She came like a team player, she came to play. It was seamless."

Zeta-Jones told her agent she wanted to join the show on the same day she was watching "The View" talk show. "Whoopi Goldberg just randomly gives it this incredible kind of thumbs up and I'm like, 'Yes, that's what I'm talking about,'" she said. "That was like a stamp of approval that came from nowhere."

The show's second season is currently airing on Fox, and the first season began streaming Tuesday on HBO Max.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

email us: news@summittimes.com



GIRL'S NIGHT! The athlete, Lindsey Vonn rocks an olive green dress and brown stilettos after finishing dinner at Nobu Malibu with some friends.

Tom Brady Reveals Why Daughter Vivian Disapproved of His Recent Viral Moment

While chatting with James Corden on March 2, Tom Brady explained that 8-year-old daughter Vivian was recently "the voice of reason."

Tom Brady is lucky to have at least one sensible decision-maker in his corner, even if that person isn't yet old enough to see a PG-rated film.

The 43-year-old athlete appeared on The Late Late Show on Tuesday, March 2, where host James Corden asked about his infamous viral moment from last month. While he and his Tampa Bay Buccaneers teammates celebrated their recent Super Bowl LV victory, cameras caught Tom tossing the NFL's coveted Vince Lombardi Trophy from one boat to another in a situation that easily could have ended up with a the trophy nestling softly at the

bottom of the sea.

"I don't remember that quite as well," Tom joked about his lack of sobriety at the time. "First of all, I was not thinking at that moment. There was not a thought. It was, This seems like really fun to do."

The seven-time Super Bowl champion pointed out that there were plenty of reasons why the trophy was maybe not the best thing to throw at his pals.

"When you get your hands on one of those trophies, there are a lot of really sharp edges on the bottom where the stand is," he said. "Obviously, the ball is what it is. And then I found out later that had that been an incomplete pass, that would have went down like 80 feet."

James mentioned a voice heard off-camera shouting "No!" and wanted to know

the identity of this solitary clear-thinking individual.

"That's my little 8-year-old daughter: 'Daddy, no!'" Tom explained about Vivian, his daughter with wife Gisele Bündchen. "And who could imagine that an 8-year-old girl would have the most sense of anybody in that whole area at the time? She's the voice of reason. I mean, go figure. It was really cute."

Tom also shared the first thing Gisele said to him on the field after he clinched the Super Bowl victory last month. "I saw my wife, and I gave her a big hug, and just as I did it, she said, 'What more do you have to prove?'" the quarterback recalled.

Evidently, one thing he can still prove is that he won't always chuck a priceless sterling silver keepsake at an oncoming boat.

'Vaccine, vaccine': Dolly sings 'Jolene' rewrite before shot



NASHVILLE, TENN. (AP): Dolly Parton has written hundreds of songs over her decades-long career and it turns out her tune "Jolene" is the just right one for getting her COVID-19 vaccine.

"I even changed one of my songs to fit the occasion. It goes, 'Vaccine, vaccine, vaccine, vaccine, I'm begging of you please don't hesitate,'" the actor, singer and humanitarian sang in a social media post on Tuesday, just before receiving her shot.

The Grammy-winning legend turned 75 this year. In 2020, she donated \$1 million to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville,

Tennessee, for coronavirus research.

Parton had earlier told The Associated Press that she was going to wait until it became more widely available because she didn't want to look like she was jumping the line.

Parton wore a purple shirt with shoulder cutouts just for the occasion and a matching purple mask. She put on a typical show, laughing, cracking jokes with the doctor and making sure her hair was looking good.

"That didn't hurt. Just stung a little bit," she said afterward. Then she smiled at the camera saying, "I did it! I did it!"

Aries:

This is a big, big day for you, Aries, and you may only realise this in retrospect! You are letting go of the old courageously and welcoming the new with both arms. You have a sense of where you want to go, and the time to start working towards that big dream is now. It's a good idea to collaborate with like-minded people who share the vision you have been holding in your mind's eye. This may be the start of something beautiful in the realm of romance as well. So, breathe out the fear and let love happen to you.

Tip: It's time to step into the new.

Taurus:

Chaos could be a constant, both on the personal and professional front. Here's the thing, Taurus: not everybody is going to work in accordance with your rules and not everything is going to work in accordance with your plan. So choose flexibility over rigidity, and know that in doing so, you will find a creative solution. Remember, it's all important for you to pick your battles at this point. Nothing good can come from acting from a space of triggers.

Tip: Choose flexibility over rigidity.

Gemini:

Your journey towards personal freedom begins the minute you start questioning everything you have grown up with. Read that again, Gemini, as you ask yourself the

question, "Am I stuck in a loop?" The cards are urging you to honour the stirrings of your heart and to take a step in the right direction (even if you cannot explain your impulses logically). There is a light at the end of this tunnel, and you're inching closer towards it. Keep going.

Tip: Honour the stirrings of your heart.

Cancer:

There are people who do the same thing every day for years on end, but you're not one of those people. Person freedom and individuality have always been important to you, and, today, you're being asked to take a step towards this freedom. Yes, you will have to leave the past behind. Yes, you're going to have to break up with the idea of comfort too. Trust that what you will gain out of this experience is far greater than what you could potentially lose.

Tip: Out of your comfort zone is where the magic is at!

Leo:

The onset of spring is bringing with it hope and optimism, Leo. You can feel yourself stepping into the new. A phase where your dreams and desires will begin to come true. Yes, this could mean a new opportunity work-wise or the chance to get back to your books. If a raise is something you have been working towards, trust that what you've been praying for will come through. In the realm of love,

the cards are pointing towards a soulmate reunion. If you

and your beloved have been living apart for some reason, time and tide will change everything soon.

Tip: It's all about hope and optimism around here.

Virgo:

Your body is not a machine, Virgo. We repeat: your body is not a machine. It has its own limitations. Limitations that you seem to be dishonouring at this moment. So consider changing the approach a little. Bring a little more love and a little more gentleness into the equation. Begin to work with, rather than against, your sacred vessel. Trust that this will transform your relationship with yourself.

Tip: Work with, rather than against your sacred vessel.

Libra:

There is never a dearth of love, money or opportunities. A Universal truth you are beginning to understand on a deep level, Libra. You are truly thankful for where you are today and for all the ways in which the Universe has shown up for you. You know that your job is to simply show up for what you believe in. Everything you need, whether it's help or resources, will be provided to you as you go along. T

Tip: There is never a dearth of love, money or opportunities.

Scorpio:

Oops, you did it again! You got attached to an emotionally unavailable somebody who is doing more harm than

good. Ask yourself whether or not this relationship is worth your time, and if it is, find a way to work things out. Taking a softer approach will turn things in your favour at this time. On the upside, things on the creative and professional front are looking up for you. That mysterious smile on your face tells us you're working on something that's close to your heart. PS: This is what being in alignment feels like, Scorpio!

Tip: You're beginning to work on something that's close to your heart.

Sagittarius:

Let go of the could've-would've-should've narrative. Let go of the need to blame others. Take responsibility for where you are as you consciously make peace with your past. Things transpired the way they did in order to teach you an important soul lesson. Some of you may feel like you need to address the issue with the person concerned before putting things to rest. Trust that your higher self knows what's best for you at this moment.

Tip: Make peace with the past.

Capricorn:

It's time to get off the metaphorical treadmill, Capricorn. It's time to pause, breathe, and ask yourself the pertinent question, "Why am I doing what I am doing?" Chances are, you're trying to live somebody else's story or to fulfill a dream that isn't yours. But it's never too late to realign,

is it? It's never too late to follow your true path. Trust that listening to the little voice inside your head will prove to be the secret to both success and happiness.

Tip: Check in with yourself.

Aquarius:

We've all had our share of turmoil—heartbreaks and shattered dreams too. Should that keep us from believing in the power of love? Anything but! Today, you're looking into the rearview mirror with newfound wisdom and making peace with the fact that everything transpired for a reason. Life is offering you the opportunity to open your heart again. Say yes to the unknown despite the risks it entails, and know that the Universe has got your back.

Tip: Open your heart to love.

Pisces:

When something (or somebody) is right for you, you'll know instantly. When it isn't, the Universe will keep giving you the signs you need. The real question is: Are you paying attention to what's being revealed to you? Pisces, it's time to recognise what isn't in alignment with your truth. Often, we lower our standards or compromise on our ideals because we don't believe we are worthy of attracting what we truly desire. If this is a pattern you're struggling with, do the inner work.

Tip: It's time to let go.