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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## Recoveries outnumber new Covid cases for fourth time this week

TWO MORE COVID DEATHS TAKE TOLL TO 281

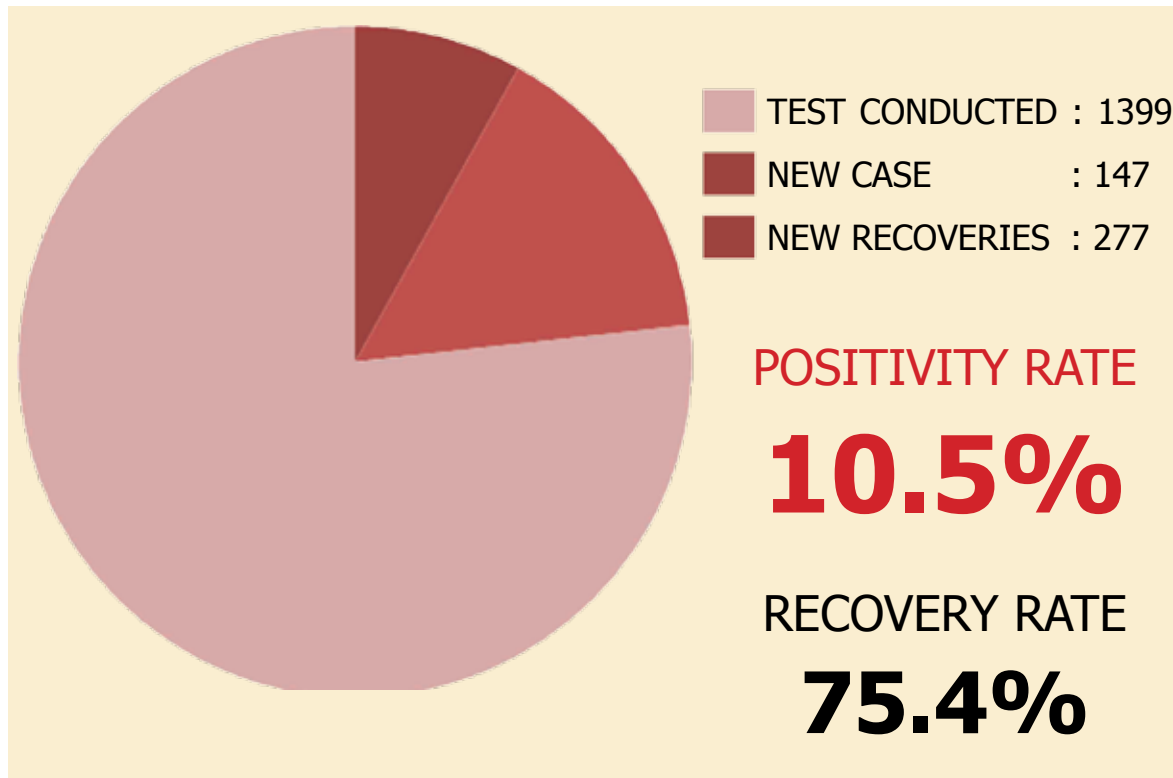
**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 11 JUN:**

Sikkim registered more Covid recoveries than new cases again today, for the fourth time this week, bringing some comfort to a state ravaged by a runaway sweep of the virus' second wave which has kept Sikkim on tenterhooks for the past month and a half.

As per the 'Daily Report of Covid-19' released by the Integrated Disease Surveillance Project of the Health Department released at 8AM this morning collating Covid statistics of the previous 24 hours, 277 more formerly Covid-positive patients in home isolation have been discharged. Over the same 24-hour period, Sikkim detected 147 new infections.

Since Sunday, 07 June, Sikkim has recorded a total of 979 new cases while the number of recoveries over the same period has been encouraging 1,359.

Sikkim's count of recovered cases of CO-



VID-19 so far now stands 13,655 while its cumulative tally of confirmed cases is 18,090. There are currently 3,908 active cases of Covid in the State, 3,724 of whom are either asymptomatic or have very mild symptoms and are hence kept in facility of home isolation.

Of all the active cases, there are only 184 with symptoms severe enough to require medical intervention and are admitted in hospitals here, 26 of them admitted only today. There are also 27 Covid patients in ICU.

The 147 new cases were picked up from the testing of 1,399 samples

in different parts of the State on Thursday giving Sikkim a daily test positivity rate of 10.5%.

While 97 of the cases were found in RT-PCR testing of 771 samples, 50 more persons tested positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 626 samples.

Of the new cases, 57

were registered in East District, 21 in West District, 42 in South District and 27 in North District.

On a sombre note, Sikkim lost two more lives to Covid and the COVID death toll here has increased to 281. Both the COVID deaths were reported from STNM Hospital.

### Vaccination starts for state priority group in South

**NAMCHI, 11 JUN [IPR]:** Vaccination for citizens falling under the state priority group in districts and PHCs started from 09 June onwards.

Online slots for general population falling under 18 to 44 will be made available in districts from tomorrow onwards. For 45 years and above, special sessions are being created on certain days in all Covid Vaccination Centres (CVCs) without documents.

### Forest Dept team visits Hurchurey Dara, urges people not to feed wild animals

**ARPAN PRADHAN  
GANGTOK, 11 JUN:**

A team from the Forest Department's Wildlife Division [East] visited Hurchurey Dara, Namnang, today following a video shared by Summit Times on its Facebook page on 10 June where fruits could be seen strewn across the tourist spot, possibly placed there by some people for the monkeys to feed on.

The team, led by BO, Manila Rai, inspected the view point and found that most of the fruits had been consumed by wild animals. She said that recently also



there have been incidents where monkeys have created nuisance in urban areas and the Department personnel have been called to remove the monkeys from these areas.

She urged people to support the Department by not feeding wild animals in order to prevent man-animal conflict.

The Divisional Forest Officer, Wildlife Division

[East], Dechen Lachungpa has also issued a press release requesting people not to feed monkeys in order to prevent man-animal conflict in the future.

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## Vaccination and testing pick up pace in Kamrang

**BIKASH CHHETRI  
NAMCHI, 11 JUN:**

The vaccination drive for those aged between 18-44 years started at Kamrang Primary Health Centre in South Sikkim today.

Out of 200 Covishield doses sent to Kamrang PHC, one hundred and fifty-seven doses were administered today, six of these to those in the state priority list, all of them teachers of Tinzir Primary School.

Also today, Covid-19 tests were carried out for shopkeepers of Kamrang and nearby areas at Namchi District Hospital.

Only one new case was detected in the screening and the shopkeeper opted to isolate at home in Middle Kamrang. A total of four cases of Covid have been reported from Kamrang thus far, all of whom are in home isolation.



Meanwhile, the vaccination drive at Kamrang PHC will continue on Saturday for people from Middle Kamrang and the day after for Upper Kamrang. It will be Tinzir's turn at Kamrang PHC on 17 June.

Nodal Officer for Covid-19 District Task Force, Dr Junita Yonzon of Namchi District Hospital informs that 16,000 Covid vaccines have been allocated for South District by the government.

She informs that vaccination started from Sub-Centers with first priority, while at PHCs and the District Hospital has a priority list of eight categories.

Around 25 per cent of vaccine recipients in Namchi District Hospital today were from outside the priority list, she adds.

She also informs that online registration for individuals in age group of 18-44 will open from 12 June 2021.

## India records 91,702 new COVID-19 cases, 3,403 fresh fatalities

**NEW DELHI, JUNE 11 (PTI):**

The daily COVID-19 count in India remained below the one-lakh mark for the fourth consecutive day with the country reporting 91,702 fresh cases, while the daily positivity rate dropped to 4.49 per cent, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Friday.

With the fresh cases, the total tally of cases has climbed to 2,92,74,823.

However, recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for 29th consecutive day. The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,77,90,073, the data stated.

The COVID-19 death toll climbed to 3,63,079 with 3,403 fresh deaths, while the case fatality rate has increased to 1.24 per cent, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The active cases further declined to

11,21,671 comprising 3.83 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 94.93 per cent.

A net decline of 46,281 cases has been recorded in the COVID-19 caseload in a span of 24 hours.

Also, 20,44,131 tests were conducted on Thursday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 37,42,42,384.

The daily positivity rate was recorded at 4.49 per cent. It has been less than 10 per cent for the 18th consecutive day, the ministry said, adding the weekly positivity rate has also declined to 5.14 per cent.

Cumulative, 24,60,85,649 COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered so far under the nationwide vac-

cination drive India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16. 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. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4.

The 3,403 new fatalities include 1,915 from Maharashtra, 358 from Tamil Nadu, 194 each from Karnataka and Kerala.

A total of 3,63,079 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 1,03,748 from Maharashtra, 32,485 from Karnataka, 28,528 from Tamil Nadu, 24,748 from Delhi, 21,597 from Uttar Pradesh, 16,642 from West Bengal, 15,367 from Punjab and 13,285 from Chhattisgarh.

## Covid-19, Not Bhaichung-15 is the enemy

JIWAN RAI

The burning of an effigy of Bhaichung Bhutia in Namchi is more than a recognizably malignant act, which is indicative of the blind rage amassing in our society. Lamentably enough, that blind rage seems to have been metastasizing across our society. Anger in and of itself is not evil. But when it is expressed recklessly without waiting for an open dialogue on the issue that caused the anger, it is unpardonably wrong. What makes it even more hideous was the picture of Bhaichung Bhutia with a bloody bandage wrapped around his head. What was this awfully violent portrayal meant to signify? Pardon me if my eyes failed me! Questioning the wisdom of an administration is not only a civil right, but it is also a virtue so endangered in our country. The 'effigy burner' or the 'wisdom behind the act' should have conceded that Bhaichung was not against building a hos-

pital. His displeasure was purely about the government's decision to sacrifice a playground, so rare in Sikkim, for the construction of a hospital building. He also asked the government to choose its battle right now. He simply said that 'better Covid management', not 'hospital building' is the need of the hour. What is so maliciously wrong about what he said?

I have no idea about the past records of effigy burning in Sikkim. If this was a first, then it is shrouded in the cruelest irony – the first effigy in Sikkim was burnt of an international sports icon for the 'crime' of expressing his concern about a rare playground disappearing. Even if it is not a first, the irony is not any less cruel. The other reason that makes the act an unforgettable mistake is the timing. It came tauntingly at a time when the people of Sikkim have been completely locked in their homes for three weeks fighting Covid-19. What a spectacle it was

in the middle of the famous Central Park Square of Namchi! Slogan shouting, effigy burning and demonstrations in the middle of a complete lockdown not only show the inverse priority of the effigy burners but what is more worrisome is the lack of teeth in the law to punish the protocol breakers. It is taking too much time to arrest them despite the video circulating. If the arrests have been made, great job!

Be that as it may, it is high time that Sikkim paid attention to any concerns raised on behalf of our young children. I dare the Sikkimese people to muster up their courage to protest any governmental policies that take away open spaces and playgrounds from our entertainment-starved children and youth. We have slept for far too long. Sikkim is one of the worst hit states in terms of substance abuse, alcoholism, depression and suicide. These are bone-chilling realities. But all we do about them is to cry, criticize, conduct

some religious ceremonies and talk. The reasons behind such trends are understandably complex but it is not so absurd to accept that one of the reasons behind the increasing depression among children is the complete lack of recreational parks, playgrounds and open spaces. The playfulness of children is their instinct and yet we have caged it.

The UN convention on the Rights of the Child advocates for child-friendly cities, towns or communities. It calls for the voices, needs, priorities and rights of children to be made an integral part of public policies, programs and decisions. The children themselves must have the right to express their "opinions and influence decisions that affect them." When playgrounds are being taken away from them, children

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### ViewPoint





# COVID-19 Coordination Committee formed for Pakyong



## SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 11 JUN:**

A meeting on formation of Sub-Divisional Level COVID-19 Coordination Committee SDLC for Pakyong Sub-Division was convened by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Pakyong, Himmat Rai on 10 June in the Conference Hall of ADC Development (Pa-

kyong), a press release informs.

The Sub Divisional Level COVID-19 Coordination Committee was formed to facilitate and assist the Constituency Level COVID Task Forces and most importantly to coordinate COVID-19 management in the Sub-Division.

The meeting decided

to strengthen the mechanism for the effective enforcement of orders of Government, coordinate the relief of Government, proposal to provide PPE kits and other logistics to ASHAS, administrative support to Pakyong PHC, providing timber logs and wood to Jalipool Crematorium Centre by Forest (T) Pakyong, Case Study

on incidence of COVID in the wards, work with targeted effort to make COVID Free GPU-Block and Sub Division.

The meeting further emphasised on team work for better coordination in COVID management and effective implementation of law and order in the Sub Division. The meeting was at-

tended by MO Incharge, Dr Rohini Tamang, BDO Pakyong, Nilkantha Bhandari, SHO Jigme Bhutia, Revenue Officer, DR Acharya, AE Buildings, Kailash Sharma, ACF (T) Satish Vasistha and other officials from various line departments and was chaired by Tenzing Bhutia, ADC-Development, Pakyong.

## Two booked for threatening docs at CRH

**SHEKHAR KHAWAS**  
**GANGTOK, 11 JUN:**

Two persons have been booked on charges of threatening and verbally abusing doctors at CRH Tadong this evening.

It is learnt that the two accused, hailing from Chanatar, Rangpo, had come to CRH Tadong for their father's treatment. An altercation broke out between the two and some doctors present.

According to Medical

Superintendent, CRH, Dr Yogesh Verma, the two verbally abused, threatened and made obscene gestures at a lady doctor. He also said that the two accused were found to be in an inebriated condition when checked at the Tadong Police Outpost.

The MS filed an FIR at Sadar Thana, Gangtok, today and a case under sections 506, 341, 34 of the IPC has been registered against the accused.

## Lakshadweep filmmaker faces sedition FIR for criticising Delhi-appointed administrator

Thiruvananthapuram, 11 Jun [NDTV]: Lakshadweep filmmaker Aisha Sultana has been named in a case of sedition and hate speech for her comments criticizing Administrator Praful Khoda Patel's Covid handling and alleging that the Centre had used a "bio-weapon". The FIR was filed on the complaint of the BJP's chief in the Union Territory.

Aisha Sultana had, during a news debate on a regional channel, blamed Covid cases in the island on Praful Patel's decisions and remarked that the Centre had used "bio-weapon" against Lakshadweep. The Administrator has been accused by protesters including Lakshadweep Parliamentarian Mohammed Faizal in the past of doing away with quarantine protocols that were a must for people to enter Lakshadweep.

"Lakshadweep had zero cases of COVID-19. Now it is reporting a daily spike of 100 cases. What the Centre has deployed is a bioweapon. I can say this clearly that the central government has deployed bioweapon," she had said on a Malayalam TV debate earlier this week.

The comment had BJP workers protesting on the streets; C Abdul Khader Haji, the BJP's Lakshadweep chief, complained to the police accusing her of "anti-national" comments "tarnishing the patriotic image of the central gov-

ernment".

Aisha Sultana has been strongly criticising the Administrator's controversial decisions, which have spurred protests and anger in the islands.

The filmmaker defended her comments on Facebook. "They have filed a sedition case against me but I want to reiterate that truth will win. Case was filed by a BJP worker from Lakshadweep. I will continue my fight for the land where I was born. We don't fear anyone. My voice is going to be louder now," she wrote.

The case against her has drawn strong reactions on social media.

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor alleged harassment through the misuse of the word "sedition".

Praful Patel, who was appointed Lakshadweep Administrator in December, has been facing protests over a series of decisions that he insists will help develop Lakshadweep as a major tourist draw to match the Maldives.

Among the changes he plans are a new detention law that gives the administration sweeping powers to detain anyone for up to a year, another law that seeks to grant arbitrary powers to the administration to acquire land and a proposed ban on the killing of cattle. Lakshadweep's residents, who are mostly Muslim, feel the rules target their food habits.

## SRM students score big on placements, despite pandemic



## SUMMIT REPORT

**KATTANKULATHUR, 11 JUN:**

The Covid crisis notwithstanding, SRM Institute of Science and Technology has kept up its reputation for high scores in campus recruitments this year too, with leading IT and core engineering companies coming up with over 7111 offers to the graduating class of 2021.

The highest offer, Rs.35 lakhs per annum, came from Bengaluru-based WorkIndia Information Technology and Service, rated among the topmost blue-collar job portals in the country. More than 600 companies have already visited the campus (virtually) since the commencement of the placement season. Many more are expected as the 'season' continues till the end of June 2021.

The centralized placement process organised at the Kattankulathur campus brings students from the SRM campuses including Modinagar, Ramapuram and Vadapalani, said Director, Career Centre at SRMIST, N VenkataSastry. "Top companies are drawn to the SRM due to the cosmopolitan composition of the students and quality of students" he added.

About 2000 Super

Dream (Rs.10 L Pa+) and Dream (Rs.5 L Pa+) offers have been made so far. Students are also recruited by companies from the Core Engineering sector. "At the conclusion of 'Day One' processes, Cognizant-1018, TCS-983, Wipro-634, Infosys-602 offers were made," said VenkataSastry.

Various prominent recruiters visited the campus for hiring this year such as WorkIndia, MotorQ, Amazon, Arcesium, DE Shaw, Paypal, Direct i, Barclays, Amadeus, Nielsen, Commvault, Oracle, Adobe, Capgemini, Deloitte, Bank of America, ZS Associates, Fractal Analytics, EY and many others. Even among the core sectors, companies such as HeroMotocorp, Reliance Industries, Akzonobel, HUL, IFB, Siemens, Titan, Ceat, Hitachi ABB, Fiat, Linde, Schneider, TATA Chemicals, L&T Group, Cummins, KPIT, Adani Group, Nilkamal among many others supported our endeavour to provide core opportunities to our students.

A clear leader on the educational map of India, the SRM Institute of Science and Technology is located in Kattankulathur, about 35km from Chennai. The 250-acre campus is home to over

50,000 students from all over India and abroad. It has state-of-the-art laboratories for engineering and technology students, a full-fledged medical college, hospital and research centre beside a School of Public Health which is a nodal centre for implanting the National Family Health Survey in

Tamil Nadu and Pudukcherry. Semester Abroad programme at SRM enables students to do internships at Harvard and other top-notch foreign universities.

SRMIST is accredited with the highest grade of A++ by NAAC and graded as Category I university with 12 B status. All Engineering, Pharmacy, Architecture, and MBA programmes are approved by AICTE. SRMIST has secured the third rank in the Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA). SRMIST is ranked globally by QS and rated with '4 Star' globally and awarded India centric QS IGAUGE Diamond rating.

The fountainhead of this institution started in 2002 is a farmer-turned-educationist Dr TR Paarivendhar, who is the Founder Chancellor of SRM Group of Institutions, Member of Parliament and a philanthropist.

## Martam's SWO helps society grapple with Covid



## SUMMIT REPORT

**GANGTOK, 11 JUN:**

Society Welfare Organisation [SWO] of Martam in West District has been working to provide relief to people during this pandemic. By following the slogan of 'Affno Gaon Affai Bachaw', the organisation

has carried out sanitization and cleanliness drives and other activities in different parts of West District since last month.

It is informed that SWO reached relief materials to Sribadam Loving Home for Girls and Kaluk Children's Home today.

Likewise, the organisation also provided essential commodities to families in need under Martam GPU on 10 June and sanitized private homes, government and private offices and schools under Dentam sub-division on 08 June.

## 5 feared trapped in Meghalaya mine for 12 days, Navy called for help

**SHILLONG, 11 JUN**

[NDTV]: The Meghalaya government has sought help from the Indian Navy as the rescue operation for trapped miners inside an illegal coal mine hasn't made any headway so far. Five labourers have been trapped for the last 12 days inside the illegal coal mine that was flooded after a dynamite explosion in East Jaintia Hills district.

"We have written to the Ministry of Defence to provide us Navy divers for assisting in the rescue operation," Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma said.

He added that the state government is exploring all options to rescue the trapped miners.

Mr Sangma had earlier termed the rescue operation to be very difficult and said that despite

efforts by the district administration as well as other agencies, including NDRF, there are no positive results yet.

A total of 100 rescuers from the NDRF, SDRF and the Fire Service are waiting for the water level to come down to about 10 meters in depth because they could not operate in such water level.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) had in 2014 imposed a blanket ban on rat-hole coal mining across the state. But still illegal mining is taking place in the state in violation of the order, officials said.

Police have arrested the owner of the coal mine and charged him for violation of the NGT order banning unscientific mining and transportation of coal.

Meghalaya is estimat-

ed to have coal deposits of about 560 million tonnes. Mostly, illegal migrant workers from Assam and Tripura are engaged in mining activities.

The indiscriminate and unscientific mining, absence of post-mining treatment and management of the mined areas are making the fragile ecosystems more vulnerable to environmental degradation, according to the NGT.

This is the second mining incident taking place in East Jaintia Hills district, infamous for its illegal 'rat hole' coal mines, this year. Six people had been killed while working inside a coal mine in the district in January this year.

In 2018, East Jaintia Hills made headlines when 15 migrant miners from Assam had died inside an abandoned coal mine.

## Forest Dept team...

"It is a big request to the people not to feed monkeys since the basic rule is "animals in the wild should not be fed". All wild animals are designed to source their own food without human intervention. It is also requested to the big malls not to throw their rotten vegetable waste all along the Namrang khudside or for that matter anywhere else. Food waste attracts wild animals and feral dogs and this is the cause of man-animal conflict. To tackle incidence of man-animal conflict is very challenging for us and such insensitive people are aggravating the situation. If you want to feed animals, you can handover food items

## Covid-19, Not...

should be asked what their opinions are. One of the prerequisites of a child-friendly community is that they "meet friends and have places to play and enjoy themselves". Sikkim has missed the bus on this big time. This new government doesn't seem to realize the need either. What is worse, now even expressing any concern is to invite the ire of others and ask for your effigy to be burnt. Nothing can be a poorer commentary on our social priorities than this.

The SKM party did criticize Bhaichung Bhutia for suggesting that the hospital could be shifted to Karfector and explained why that is not possible. Also, the party's south district executives assured the public that there will be another playground ready before the hospital is constructed. Although the government has not said a word on this, these are positive remarks and Sikkim must welcome them.

The concerns that Bhaichung Bhutia raised were being addressed by the SKM party and rightly so. It was good to see some detailed response coming

to the Himalayan Zoological Park, near Ganesh Tok, after seeking their advice and the team will take care of the feeding," the release states.

The release mentions that monkeys in the wild spend about 20 hours searching for food, but when food is easily available they use those free available hours procreating leading to a population explosion.

Anyone found feeding wild animals and throwing food waste shall be prosecuted under the provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Further the public is requested to report anyone found dumping such food waste, the release adds.

from those who thought that Bhaichung was wrong. That's how Sikkim should settle conflicting views and opinions. Why was the matter dragged to such a low where an effigy 'needed' to be burnt right in the middle of a lockdown? Remember, the lockdown has hardly been effective and the south district is not doing very well in restricting its Covid spread.

Every new hospital is a blessing. But so is every new playground. Right now, the Covid-19 battle is our focus. A story is told of an American President who, before becoming President, was leading a team of soldiers in a war. There was infighting among his soldiers and they were losing the battle. He called his men to his army tent one night and looking at each of them in the eye he reminded them of this crucial truth, "The enemy is not within us. The enemy is out there". Consequently, his united soldiers went on to win the battle. Sikkim needs to know that the enemy is not within us. It is outside us. Burning the effigy of one of our own citizens is not the way.

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## Namchi's Covid vaccination site shifted to Bhaichung Stadium

**NAMCHI, 11 JUN (IPR):** COVID-19 vaccination for State Specific Priority group was shifted to a side of Bhaichung Stadium from today onwards. The vaccination centre which was func-

tioning at the Conference Hall of Namchi District Hospital has been temporarily shifted to a part of the stadium due to a huge turnout of people getting vaccinated at District Hospital.

It may be mentioned that all prioritised beneficiaries can avail the vaccination service on production of duly signed certificates.

*Delhi man fakes own kidnapping, demands 3 lakh from father: Police*

**NEW DELHI, 11 JUN [PTI]:** A 23-year-old man, who allegedly faked his own kidnapping to demand 3 lakh from his father, was traced to Punjab's Jalandhar, the police said Thursday.

On June 3, Delhi's Shahbad Dairy police station received a call about the kidnapping. The police reached the spot and recorded the statement of Veer Pal Singh - the father of the man, a senior police officer said.

Mr Singh told the police that his son Aman had gone to the market on June 1 and had not returned home since, officials said.

Mr Singh told the police that he received a call from his son on June 3 who told him that he has been kidnapped and the kidnappers have demanded a ransom of 3 lakh, the officer said.

He received three calls from his son, asking him to transfer the money to his bank account, they said, adding that a case was registered following that. During the investigation, the location of the mobile phone from which Aman had called was checked and was found to be in Punjab's Jalandhar following which a team was sent there.

The team interrogated some friends of Aman in Jalandhar. Finally, he was traced on Saturday and brought back to the national capital on Sunday, the police said.

"During the interrogation, Aman told the police that he wanted to sell a car and discussed the matter with his friend Ankit, a resident of Jalandhar, who told him that he had a purchaser for the vehicle," Deputy Commissioner of Police (outer north) Rajiv Ranjan Singh said.

On June 1, Aman went to Hisar in Haryana where his friend Ankit, the actually owner of the car - Ravi - along with the purchaser met, the police said. The purchaser gave 2 lakh in cash to Aman but Ravi snatched the cash and fled along with the car, the police said.

## Assam launches welfare schemes for Covid orphans, widows

**GUWAHATI, 11 JUN [PTI]:** Assam on Thursday introduced welfare schemes for children orphaned by Covid and those who have lost their spouses to the virus. Announcing the two major Covid welfare schemes, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said he aims to inoculate the entire state by August 15 with at least the first dose of the vaccine.

Mr Sarma, during a media interaction marking the completion of one month of his taking charge as the chief minister, spoke about the state's COVID-19 vaccination drive and fight against drugs among other things.

Thursday marked the initiation of the Mukhya Mantri Sishu Seva Yojana under which 11 children, orphaned due to Covid, received a financial assistance of 3,500 for this month and a fixed deposit of 7,81,200 against which, they will get 3,500 every month from July till they are 24 years old. They have also been given a laptop each.

"After the age of 24, they will get the principal amount, too. Verification is going on and soon other children will also



receive the benefit under the scheme that covers orphaned children with family support and without family support," Mr Sarma said after officially handing over the cheques in Guwahati.

Under the scheme, those widowed due to COVID-19, will be given a one time financial assistance of 2.5 lakh while 1,130 - 830 from Arunoday Scheme and 300 from the widow pension scheme - will be given every month.

The Chief Minister's Relief Fund has received 118 crore in donation from corporates like Reliance and Tata, Mr Sarma said.

"Of the total money received, 50 crore has

been spent for procuring vaccines while the rest was used for the two schemes," he said.

The Chief Minister said that all the payments under the welfare schemes, both recent and existing ones, will be sent to the beneficiaries on the 10th of every month.

After the Centre stepped in to supply vaccines to the state governments from June 21, Assam has saved about 650 crore earmarked for procuring vaccines, he further said.

Assam may receive 3.5 lakh vaccine doses daily before July 1 from Centre which will help inoculate the state's entire population by August 15 with at least the first

dose, the chief minister said.

"Currently, we are focussing our vaccination more on epicentres which are in the A-6 cities - Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Tezpur, Cachar and Nagaon - to contain the contamination," Mr Sarma said.

On the ongoing anti-drugs campaign where the state police has cracked down on drug peddlers, Himanta Biswa Sarma said Assam has in the last one month recovered narcotics worth around 24 crores, of which heroin was worth 7.89 crore, marijuana 6.1 crore, unprescribed drugs 9.02 crore along with cough syrups, opium, and morphine.

## Rise in child labour after 20 years amid Covid: Report

**NEW DELHI, 11 JUN [PTI]:** The number of children in child labour has risen to 16 crore worldwide -- first increase in two decades -- with millions more at risk due to COVID-19, according to a new report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UNICEF.

The report -- "Child Labour: Global estimates 2020, trends and the road forward" -- released ahead of the World Day Against Child Labour on June 12, says the progress to end child labour has stalled for the first time in 20 years, reversing the downward trend that saw it fall by 94 million (9.4 crore) between 2000 and 2016.

The report points to a significant rise in the number of children aged

5 to 11 years in child labour, who now account for over half of the total global figure.

The number of children aged 5 to 17 years in hazardous work -- defined as work that is likely to harm their health, safety or morals -- has risen by 6.5 million to 79 million since 2016, the report said.

"The number of children in child labour has risen to 160 million (16 crore) worldwide -- an increase of 8.4 million (84 lakh) children in the last four years -- with millions more at risk due to the impacts of COVID-19," the report said.

UNICEF India Representative Dr Yasmin Ali Haque said the coronavirus pandemic has clearly emerged as a child rights crisis, aggravating the

risk of child labour as many more families are likely to have fallen into extreme poverty.

"Children in poor and disadvantaged households in India are now at a greater risk of negative coping mechanisms such as dropping out of school and being forced into labour, marriage, and even falling victim to trafficking," she said.

Children have lost parents and caregivers to the virus, leaving them destitute, without parental care, she said. "These children are extremely vulnerable to neglect, abuse and exploitation."

"We must act fast to prevent the COVID-19 pandemic from becoming a lasting crisis for children in India, especially those who are most vulnerable," she said.

## Covid positivity rate drops to below 5% in Karnataka, Bengaluru clocks 1.84%

**BENGALURU, 11 JUN [NDTV]:** The Covid positivity rate in Karnataka, which had climbed to about 40 per cent last month when the state battled the deadly second wave of infections, dropped to below 5 per cent today.

Over the past 24 hours, 8,249 new Covid cases and 159 deaths have been reported in the state and the number of active cases currently stands at 2,03,769.

State Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar tweeted that the total number of recoveries in the state has crossed the 25-lakh mark with 14,975 people recovering over the last 24 hours.

"With 1,69,695 tests & 8,249 cases Karnataka's positivity rate drops below 5% to 4.86%," he tweeted.

The minister added that state capital Bengaluru had recorded 1,154 cases over the past 24 hours and the positivity rate there stands at 1.84 per cent.

The new numbers will come as a relief for the residents of the state, where daily case counts



had crossed the 50,000-mark last month when the second wave pushed up cases and deaths in several parts of the country.

The state government, however, is not taking chances. The lockdown restrictions in the state have been extended by a week, till June 21. The 11 districts, where the positivity rate is still high, continue to have stringent curbs in place.

For districts where the positivity rate has dropped below 15 per cent, the state government has given some relaxations.

The night curfew from 7 pm to 5 am continues to be in force across all districts. The weekend curfew also will continue.

Speaking to the media yesterday after the state government decided to extend the lockdown, Health Minister Dr Sudhakar had said the government would hold a meeting before June 21 to take stock of the Covid situation and accordingly decide on what curbs should continue.

He had said that while daily case count in capital Bengaluru had dropped, people should continue to follow Covid-appropriate behaviour to prevent another spike. "Without the cooperation of the citizens, it will be very difficult. Till the two doses of vaccines are given to all the people, the chances of (cases) spiking is like a hanging sword, so we need to be extremely careful," he had said.

## Black Fungus Cases Grow 150% In 3 Weeks To 31,000, Deaths Over 2,100

**NEW DELHI:** Black Fungus, a potentially fatal condition that is increasingly seen in recovering Covid patients, with 31,216 cases and 2,109 deaths in the country has grown over 150 per cent over the last three weeks, putting additional stress on an already embattled healthcare system fighting off the deadly second surge of Covid wave.

The increase in numbers is driven, in part, by severe shortage of the key drug - Amphotericin-B - to treat affected patients.

Maharashtra with 7,057 Black Fungus cases and 609 deaths leads the states; it is followed by Gujarat with 5,418 cases and 323 deaths. Rajasthan is the third state with 2,976 cases but Karnataka occupies third spot with 188 deaths.

Contrast this with numbers on May 25: Maharashtra had 2,770 Black Fungus cases, while Gujarat reported 2,859 cases on the same day.

Uttar Pradesh, the most populous state, has reported 1744 cases and 142 deaths while the neighbouring Delhi has logged 1,200 cases and 125 deaths. Similarly, on

May 25, UP had 701 cases, while Delhi reported 119.

At 96, Jharkhand has the least number of cases, while West Bengal with 23 has the lowest deaths.

The Maharashtra government has capped the daily rates of its treatment in private hospitals and nursing homes. Areas in the state have been classified under A, B and C categories and different rates have been fixed for the three.

Earlier this week, the Bombay High Court directed the centre to submit details of the quantity of anti-fungal drugs allocated to various states for treating Black Fungus.

In the course of hearing on a plea, the court suggested allocation of more quantity of Amphotericin-B to Maharashtra given the number of cases reported in the state. It further added that the centre must give publicity to the do's and don'ts of Black Fungus and ensure that citizens followed them "scrupulously".

On its part, the centre last month asked all states to declare Black Fungus an epidemic. The Health Ministry has asked states to

list under the "Epidemic Diseases Act" the rare but potentially fatal infection.

This means all confirmed or suspected cases of Black fungus have to be reported to the Health Ministry.


Prime Minister Narendra Modi has termed the unseen and shifting enemy a "new challenge".

"In recent days we have a new challenge of Black Fungus. It is important to prepare systems to tackle it," he said last month.

The disease, which can lead to blackening or discolouration over the nose, blurred or double vision, chest pain, breathing difficulties and coughing blood, is strongly linked to diabetes.

Experts believe the high concentration of diabetics in India can be one of the causes for the large number of cases.

The infection, worsened by the overuse of steroids, can start in the skin and invade the sinuses and other parts of the face. It requires surgery if it's not controlled with anti-fungal therapy. Without treatment, it can cause a lethal bloodstream infection resulting in death.



**What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?**

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

<p><b>Symptoms of nCoV</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Fever</li> <li>● Difficulty in breathing</li> <li>● Dry Cough</li> <li>● Severe acute respiratory syndrome</li> <li>● Pneumonia - like symptoms</li> </ul>	<p><b>Precautions to Prevent nCoV</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Wash your hands often with soap.</li> <li>● Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer</li> <li>● Observe good personal hygiene.</li> <li>● Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.</li> <li>● Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.</li> <li>● Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.</li> <li>● Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.</li> <li>● Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Treatment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Treatment is symptomatic and supportive, based on the patient's clinical condition.</li> <li>● No vaccinations available as of now.</li> <li>● Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected.</li> </ul>	<p>If you seek help, you may call :</p> <p>-Toll free no. 104 District surveillance Officer EAST : 7029372100 WEST : 9593297809 NORTH : 9641957468 SOUTH : 7407691463 New STNM AMS : 9434711402</p>

**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM**



## When the Monsoon Arrives

*Not just the taps, even planning runs dry*

It's that time of the year again. The time of living in fear, hopefully planning ahead, and stocking well. Monsoons are expected to be 'normal' this year but the advance rains, which have already encircled Gangtok with slides and slips and already claimed a life, the jitters should have set in with the boisterousness of the evening showers. Once the monsoon sweeps in properly, expect disruptions to become more routine and no matter how injured the people might have become to news of landslides and road blocks, such occurrences continue to irritate.

Not just irritate, they should shock, but irritation is all that they achieve in Sikkim. The weather has become a matter for concern again in Gangtok, with every evening that the skies open up creating apprehension over the status of water supply the next day and worries about the health of sections which have already sunk. The dangerous conditions through which workers toil to keep the Selep reservoir supplied is quickly forgotten when the taps run dry and complaints and criticisms pour out. That said, while the workers deployed to maintain the supply lines coming from Ratey Chu to Selep deserve medals for their toil, what needs deeper criticism/analysis is the role played by engineers and senior officials tasked with the responsibility to keep water supply flowing in the capital. It is accepted that the terrain is difficult and the weather temperamental, but this was always the case. Once the slopes started acting up, better engineering options should have been deployed and clearer planning implemented more in advance to mitigate the impact of nature with solutions offered by science. That has obviously not happened, and the situation continues to be grappled one shower at a time.

A similar short-sightedness also plagues the emergency water distribution system which moves along roads, conveniently forgetting that Gangtok sits on a hill and a substantial number of people live too many flights of steps away from the roads to be able to run up and down with buckets of water. And while the water supply woes ebb and flow in the capital, the status of the national highway and the state roads slips away from the priority lists. The roads are prone to collapse big time with every monsoon, more so this season given the already keen intent displayed by the skies to keep the coming months wetter than usual. One needs to also keep in mind that work gangs and resources will be constricted because of the pandemic and restrictions on movement.

The State roads will definitely remain temperamental and landslides will definitely occur. Sikkim lives in a terrain where this is bound to happen, but what makes it a certain is the annual ritual of knee-jerkism that defines Sikkim's response to a cyclical phenomenon. Many retaining walls have been commissioned, several lakhs paid out for rehabilitation and relief, but when it comes to long-term policy decisions, the State is still feeling its way around. The Departments have not changed their style of working and the people continue devising new ways of putting more lives and property at risk. The jhoras, despite the now peeling signages making dumping in them illegal, still attract enough garbage every evening to clog and spill; the drainage patterns and sewage disposal still runoff on the streets, the catchment areas remain as denuded even as plantation drives get announced and undertaken.

### 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](mailto:news@summittimes.com)

# David Diop: His Haunting Account of a Senegalese Soldier that Won the Booker Prize

CAROLINE D. LAURENT  
*theconversation.com*

Born to a French mother and a Senegalese father, David Diop has won the prestigious annual International Booker prize for translated fiction. He shares the prize with his translator Anna Moschovakis for the novel, *At Night All Blood is Black* (2018). The book tells the story of a Senegalese soldier who descends into madness while fighting for France in the first world war. It has been a bestseller in France and won several major literary awards. Literature scholar Caroline D. Laurent, a specialist in Francophone post-colonial studies and how history is depicted in art, told us why the novel matters.

WHO IS DAVID DIOP?

Diop is a Franco-Senegalese writer and academic born in Paris in 1966. He was raised in Dakar, Senegal. His father is Senegalese, his mother French and this dual cultural heritage is apparent in his literary works. He studied in France, where he now teaches 18th-century literature.

*At Night All Blood is Black* is Diop's second novel: his first – 1889, *l'Attraction universelle* (2012) – is about a Senegalese delegation at the 1889 universal exhibition in Paris. His next book, about a European traveller to Africa, is set to come out this summer.

WHAT IS AT NIGHT ALL BLOOD IS BLACK ABOUT?

It tells the story of Alfa Ndiaye, a Senegalese tirailleur (infantryman) and the main narrator of the novel (he uses the first-person pronoun 'I' in most of the text). He is fighting on France's side – and on French soil – during World War I.

The novel starts with the narration of a traumatic event that the African soldier has witnessed: the long and painful death of his best friend, Mademba Diop. The traumatic event directs Alfa's vengeance, that could also be perceived as self-punishment. He kills German soldiers in a similar way, reproducing and repeating the traumatic scene. He then cuts one of their hands off and keeps it with him.

This results in Alfa being sent to a psychiatric hospital where doctors attempt to cure him. It deals with the concepts of war neurosis and shell shock that appeared then (what we now refer to as post-traumatic stress disorder).

The form of the novel associates elements of an inner monologue as well as a testimony. This allows the reader to see, through the perspective of a colonial subject, the horrors of war.

In this sense, Diop writes a nuanced text: he describes the violence perpetrated and experienced by all sides. Alfa Ndiaye becomes a symbol of the ambivalence of war and its destructive power.

WHY DOES THE BOOK MATTER?

It's important because it addresses what I would refer to as a silenced history: that of France's colonial troops. Though the colonial troops, and especially the Senegalese tirailleurs, a corps of colonial infantry in the French Army, were established at the end of the 1800s, they became 'visible' during World War I as they took part in combat on European soil.

Despite this, the involvement of African soldiers during the two World Wars is rarely taught in

sentation was to create fear on the French side as well as on the German side (Die Schwarze Schande – the Black Shame – presented African soldiers as rapists and beasts).

Diop appropriates this in order to complicate it: while Alfa's violence in killing his enemies follows this logic, one realises that this causes – and was caused by – great distress. Moreover, Diop also inverts this vision as he questions who is human and inhuman: Alfa asserts that his Captain, Armand, is



French schools or discussed in the public sphere. The violence exercised during recruitment in French West Africa, their marginalisation from other troops and the French population notably through a specific language (the français tirailleur) – created to prevent any real communication – and their treatment after the wars go against a specifically French narrative that emphasises the positive aspects of France's colonialism and its civilising mission.

The lack of visibility of the history of Senegalese tirailleurs is also connected to the ongoing dispute about specific events. One in particular is the massacre of Thiaroye. In December 1944, between 70 to 300 hundred (the numbers are disputed) Senegalese tirailleurs were killed at a demobilisation camp in Thiaroye, after having asked to be paid what they were owed for their military service.

Diop also manages to shatter stereotypes associated with Senegalese tirailleurs. In French historical and literary representations, they are seen as both naïve children in need of guidance and barbaric warriors. Senegalese tirailleurs partook, against their will, in war propaganda: this repre-

more barbaric than he is.

Diop thus manages to question representations of black soldiers dictated by colonial stereotypes – in order to dismantle them.

WHY DOES THIS BOOKER WIN MATTER?

Diop receiving the International Booker prize is of great importance because *At Night All Blood is Black* exposes a specifically French history that is connected to France's colonial endeavours. And even though the novel focuses on France, it connects to other histories as it indirectly points to the fact that other European colonial powers also resorted to using colonial troops during wars and erased their role in subsequent commemorations.

The novel also shows the importance and power of translation as Anna Moschovakis has managed to translate all of the beauty and horror of Diop's prose. In the same way that Diop manages to combine his dual heritage in his text, Moschovakis has allowed English readers to be exposed to a history that is specific to France, and yet similar to other histories.

[the writer is Postdoctoral fellow, Harvard University]

## Fake news: a simple nudge isn't enough to tackle it – here's what to do instead

SANDER VAN DER LINDEN  
& JON ROOZENBEEK  
*theconversation.com*

One high-profile theory of why people share fake news says that they aren't paying sufficient attention. The proposed solution is therefore to nudge people in the right direction. For example, "accuracy primes" – short reminders intended to shift people's attention towards the accuracy of the news content they come across online – can be built into social media sites.

But does this work? Accuracy primes do not teach people any new skills to help them determine whether a post is real or fake. And there could be other reasons, beyond just a lack of attention, that leads people to share fake news, such as political motivations. Our new research, published in *Psychological Science*, suggests primes aren't likely to reduce misinformation by much, in isolation. Our findings offer important insights into how to best combat fake news and misinformation online.

The concept of priming is a more or less unconscious process that works by exposing people to a stimulus (such as asking people to think about money), which then impacts their responses to subsequent stimuli (such as their willingness to endorse free-market capitalism). Over the years, failure to reproduce many types of priming effects has led Nobel laureate Daniel Kahneman to conclude that "priming is now the posterchild for doubts about the integrity of psychological research".

The idea of using it to counter misinformation sharing on social media is therefore a good test case to learn more about the robustness of

priming research.

We were asked by the Center for Open Science to replicate the results of a recent study to counter COVID-19 misinformation. In this study, two groups of participants were shown 15 real and 15 false headlines about the coronavirus and asked to rate how likely they were to share each headline on social media on a scale from one to six.

Before this task, half of the participants (the treatment group) were shown an unrelated headline, and asked to indicate whether they thought this headline was accurate (the prime). Compared to the control group (which was not shown such a prime), the treatment group had significantly higher "truth discernment" – defined as the willingness to share real headlines rather than false ones. This indicated that the prime worked.

To maximise the chance of a successful replication, we collaborated with the authors on the original study. We first collected a sample large enough to reproduce the original study's findings. If we didn't find a significant effect in this first round of data collection, we had to collect another round of data and pool it together with the first round.

Our first replication test was unsuccessful, with no effect of the accuracy prime on subsequent news sharing intentions. This is in line with replication results of other priming research.

For the pooled dataset, which consisted of almost 1,600 participants, we did find a significant effect of the accuracy prime on subsequent news sharing intentions. But this was at about 50% of the original study's intervention effect. That means that if we picked a person at random from

the treatment group, the likelihood that they would have improved news sharing decisions compared to a person from the control group is about 54% – barely above chance. This indicates that the overall effect of accuracy nudges may be small, consistent with previous findings on priming. Of course, if scaled across millions of people on social media, this effect could still be meaningful.

We also found some indication that the prime may work better for US Democrats than for Republicans, with the latter appearing to barely benefit from the intervention. There could be a variety of reasons for this. Given the highly politicised nature of COVID-19, political motivations may have a large effect. Conservatism is associated with lower trust in mainstream media, which may lead some Republicans to evaluate credible news outlets as "biased".

Priming effects are also known to disappear rapidly, usually after a few seconds. We explored whether this is also the case for accuracy primes by looking at whether the treatment effect occurs disproportionately in the first few headlines that study participants were shown. It appears that the treatment effect was no longer present after participants rated a handful of headlines, which would take most people no more than a few seconds.

WAYS FORWARD

So what's the best way forward? Our own work has focused on leveraging a different branch of psychology, known as "inoculation theory". This involves pre-emptively warning people of an impending attack on their beliefs and refuting the persuasive argument (or exposing the manipulation techniques) before they encounter the misinformation. This

process specifically helps confer psychological resistance against future attempts to mislead people with fake news, an approach also known as "prebunking".

In our research, we show that inoculating people against the manipulation techniques commonly used by fake news producers indeed makes people less susceptible to misinformation on social media, and less likely to report to share it. These inoculations can come in the form of free online games, of which we've so far designed three: *Bad News*, *Harmony Square* and *Go Viral!*. In collaboration with Google Jigsaw, we also designed a series of short videos about common manipulation techniques, which can be run as ads on social media platforms.

Other researchers have replicated these ideas with a related approach known as "boosting". This involves strengthening people's resilience to micro-targeting – ads that target people based on aspects of their personality – by getting them to reflect on their own personality first.

Additional tools include fact-checking and debunking, algorithmic solutions that downrank unreliable content and more political measures such as efforts to reduce polarisation in society. Ultimately, these tools and interventions can create a multi-layered defence system against misinformation. In short: the fight against misinformation is going to need more than a nudge.

[Sander van der Linden is Professor of Social Psychology in Society and Director, Cambridge Social Decision-Making Lab, University of Cambridge; Jon Roozenbeek is Postdoctoral Fellow, Psychology, University of Cambridge]



# Return of prodigal: Mukul Roy back in TMC

**KOLKATA, JUNE 11 (PTI):** In a blow to the saffron brigade, senior BJP leader Mukul Roy along with son Subranshu re-joined the TMC on Friday, with Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and other leaders of the state's ruling party welcoming him back to the fold.

Roy, who held the position of the national vice president in the saffron party, said he was "happy to see all known faces again".

Addressing a press meet, Banerjee said Roy was threatened in the BJP, and that, in turn, affected his health.

"Mukul's return proves that the BJP does not let anyone in peace and puts undue pressure on everyone," the chief minister said.



Both Banerjee and Roy claimed that there never had any differences.

Asked if her party would be taking back other turncoats, too, Ba-

nerjee clarified that the ones who left the TMC to join the BJP just ahead of the April-May assembly elections will not be taken back.

Roy, once the second-

in-command of the TMC, was removed from the post of the party's national general secretary in February, 2015.

He had joined the BJP in November, 2017.

Speculation had been rife about Roy's possible homecoming after Banerjee's nephew and TMC MP Abhishek recently visited his wife at a city hospital.

## Jharkhand tops in vaccine wastage; Kerala, Bengal report negative wastage

**NEW DELHI, 11 JUN [PTI]:** Kerala and West Bengal recorded negative wastage of COVID-19 vaccines in May, saving 1.10 lakh and 1.61 lakh doses respectively, while Jharkhand reported maximum wastage of 33.95 per cent, according to government data.

While Kerala reported -6.37 per cent vaccine wastage, West Bengal recorded -5.48 per cent.

Chhattisgarh reported 15.79 per cent vaccine wastage while Madhya Pradesh reported 7.35 per cent.

States like Punjab,

Delhi, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra reported 7.08 per cent, 3.95 per cent, 3.91 per cent, 3.78 and 3.63 per cent and 3.59 per cent respectively.

The data showed that a total of 790.6 lakh vaccines were supplied to states and UTs in May out of which total vaccinations were 610.6 lakh while 658.6 lakh shots were utilised and the closing balance was 212.7 lakh.

The vaccination in May was less as compared to April in which a total of 898.7 lakh vaccinations were done, 902.2

lakh vaccines were utilised and the closing balance was 80.8 lakh.

India's first dose coverage of the 45-plus population till June 7 was pegged at 38 per cent with Tripura's coverage being 92 per cent, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh 65 per cent each, Gujarat 53 per cent, Kerala 51 per cent and Delhi 49 per cent.

Tamil Nadu's first dose coverage of the 45-plus population is at a low of 19 per cent, Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh at 24 per cent each and Bihar at 25 per cent.

## Extending Vaccine Intervals May Leave You Vulnerable To Variants: Dr Fauci



**NEW DELHI:** Extending intervals between vaccine doses could leave people vulnerable to infection by one of the Covid variants in circulation, Dr Anthony Fauci, the medical advisor to the United States President, told NDTV Friday.

Dr Fauci was responding to a question about recommended intervals in the light of revised guidelines by the Indian government last month.

"The ideal interval between doses for mRNA vaccines is three weeks for the Pfizer and four for the Moderna. The problem with extending intervals is that you become vulnerable to variants," he said.

"... and we've seen that in the UK, where they extended that interval, in that period you can get infected by the variants. So we recommend staying on schedule," Dr Fauci explained.

However, he also said it may be necessary "if you have a very small supply".

Last month the gov-

ernment extended the gap between doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine (manufactured and sold in India as Covishield) to 12-16 weeks - from the existing six-eight weeks.

That was the second time in three months Covishield dosage intervals were widened; in March states and UTs were told to increase the gap from 28 days to six-eight weeks "for better results".

Widening of Covishield dosage intervals have been linked to increased efficacy.

However, the changes came amid an acute shortage and sparked suggestions the government was trying to eke out stocks to give as many people at least one dose till supplies are replenished.

Dr Fauci also stressed that point - the need to vaccinate people as quickly as possible to stay ahead of the virus, particularly the more infectious 'delta' variant.

The 'delta' strain was first detected in India last year, and data suggests it

is behind the second Covid wave in the country. Experts say it is between 40 and 50 per cent more infectious.

"The 'delta'... spreads far more efficiently and hence any country (which) has that variant should be worried... must have extensive preparation and vaccination to deal with it," he said.

On Wednesday studies by AIIMS and the NCDC - neither of which have been peer-reviewed as yet - suggested the 'delta' may be able to infect even people who have been fully vaccinated.

Nevertheless, vaccination remains "key to (successfully) battling COVID-19", Dr Fauci said, adding that it is important to get vaccinated even if you have already been infected by the virus once before.

India has administered around 24.6 crore vaccine doses so far, but, given the country's population, that translates into a little over three per cent of people having been inoculated.

## Pranab's son dispels rumours of joining TMC

**KOLKATA, JUN 11 (PTI):** Dispelling rumours, Late President Pranab Mukherjee's son, Abhijit Mukherjee, on Friday made it clear that he is not leaving the Congress unlike his friend Jitin Prasada.

Television channels and a few newspapers had reported he would be joining the Trinamool Congress on Friday afternoon.

"I remain in the Congress and reports that I am joining Trinamool or any other party are not correct," Mukherjee, a former Lok Sabha MP and Congress Campaign Committee chairman during the assembly elections, told PTI over phone.

Mukherjee had good relations with Jitin Prasada, who recently joined the BJP, when they were colleagues in the

Congress Parliamentary Party, and the Late President was also known to be fond of him and his father Jitendra Prasada.

Mukherjee, an engineer-turned politician who won twice from Jangipur constituency, said in a lighter vein: "I am nearly 300 km away from the Trinamool Bhavan right now, sitting in Jangipur House... so, unless someone can teleport me, it would be impossible for me to join any party this afternoon."

He said the rumours probably arose after some of his father's former Congress colleagues "who are now in Trinamool" had come to have tea with him.

"They included MP Khalilur Rahman from Jangipur, MP Abu Taher Khan from Murshidabad and TMC ministers Akhruzzaman and Sa-

bina Yesmin.

"But, I have known them for long, as they were close to my father... to speculate that just because friends came to meet me, I will join TMC, is stretching it too far," Mukherjee said.

Pranab Mukherjee had won from Jangipur twice in 2004 and 2009, before becoming President of India. Several projects started by him, including a branch of the Aligarh Muslim University in the district, an Army cantonment and a management college, are now bearing fruit.

Abhijit Mukherjee said he had also been involved with some of these projects as an MP, and most of his interactions with state leaders are based on these developments, "besides normal social relations with old friends".

## UK economy edges to pre-pandemic levels as lockdown eased

**LONDON (AP):** The easing of lockdown restrictions in April helped the British economy grow at its fastest rate since July 2020 and recoup further ground lost during the coronavirus pandemic, official figures showed Friday.

The Office for National Statistics said the economy grew by 2.3% during April, which saw the reopening of shops selling non-essential items and a number of other service providers, such as hairdressers, resuming work. Schools were fully open for in-class learning, while pubs and restaurants were able to serve customers outdoors for the whole month.

The four nations of the U.K. — England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland — have been lifting lockdown restrictions in stages after new coronavirus infections fell sharply and vaccines were rolled out rapidly.

Despite the growth recorded in April, the British economy remained 3.7% smaller than it was in February 2020, before the U.K.'s first virus lockdown. Of the major sectors in the economy, only construction was above the level it was at on the eve of the pandemic.

The British economy is expected to regain more ground over the summer as remaining restrictions are lifted.

"Following the historic collapse in spring 2020, the U.K. remains on track to return to its pre-pandemic level by the turn of the year," said Holger Schmieding, chief economist at Berenberg Bank. "Judging by recent data trends, that could happen even sooner."

Though most sectors of the economy have reopened, there are concerns that the next planned easing for England, scheduled for later this month, may have to

be delayed because of a recent spike in new infections largely due to the delta variant that was first identified in India.

The hope is that the rapid rollout of vaccines will dramatically break the link between new infections, hospitalizations and deaths. So far, the evidence suggests that a large proportion of the people being infected are in younger age groups, many of which have yet to receive a first dose.

Under the government's plan for ending lockdown measures, social distancing restrictions are set to be lifted on June 21, which would be a particular boon to businesses such as pubs and cinemas. They are currently operating with capacity limits to meet the need to keep people apart.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson plans to announce Monday whether the next easing will take place.

## Mizoram reports 210 new COVID-19 cases, tally at 14,743

**AIZAWL, JUN 11 (PTI):** Mizoram on Friday reported 210 new COVID-19 cases, which took the tally in the northeastern state to 14,743, an official said.

Of the fresh cases, 144 were reported from Aizawl, 35 from Lunglei, 16 from Lawngtlai and 10 from Kolasib district.

The remaining cases were registered in several other districts. Around 50 children are among the fresh patients, he said.

Eight new patients have travel history, and 136 developed symptoms of COVID-19.

According to the official, the single-day infection rate was at 5.86 per cent as the new cases were detected from 3,581 sample tests.

Mizoram now has 3,578 active COVID-19 cases, while 11,104 people have recovered from the infection and 61 died.

The recovery rate among coronavirus patients in the state currently stands at 75.31 per cent.

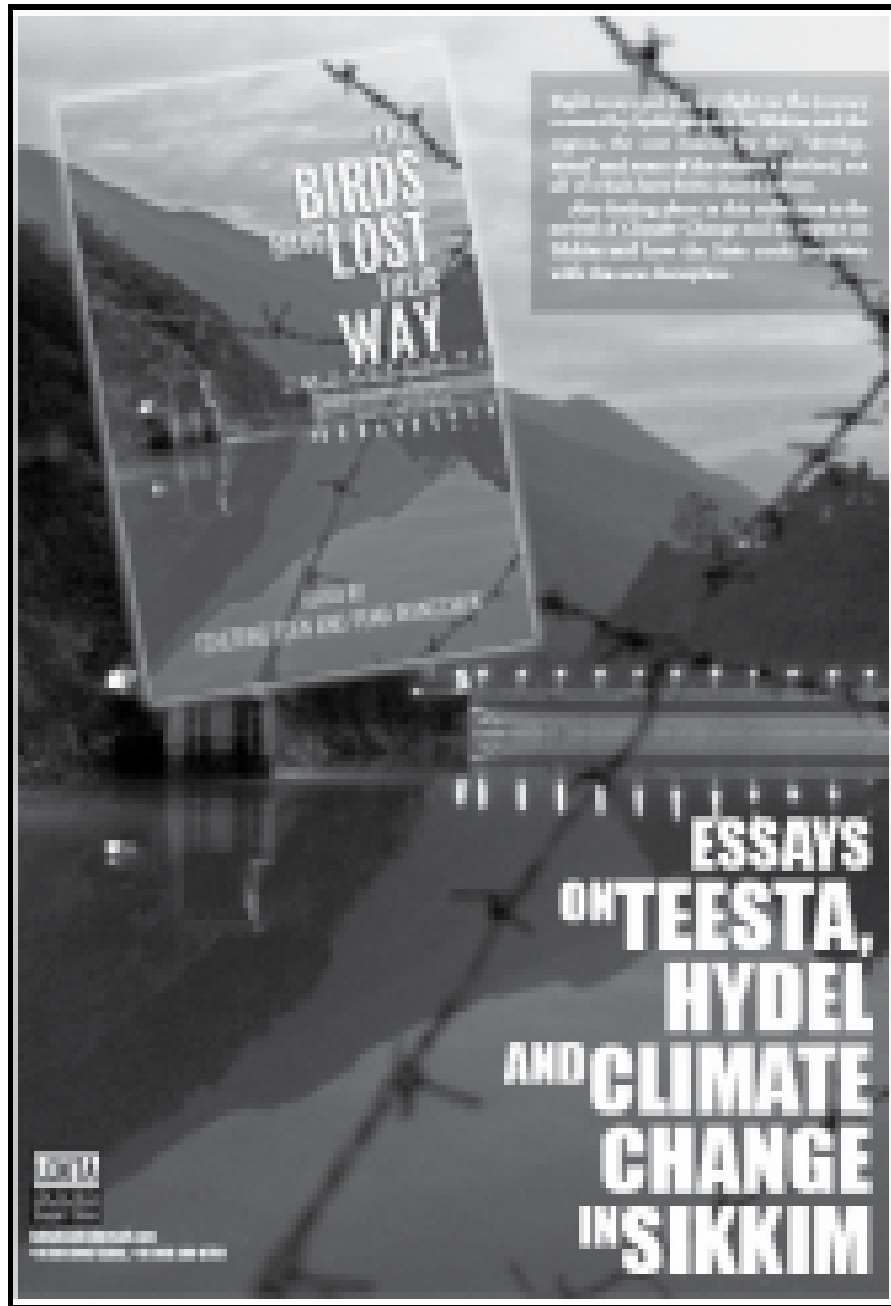
The state has tested 4,24,717 samples for COVID-19 so far, he said.

State immunisation officer Dr Lalzawmi said that 2,81,950 people have been inoculated with 52,840 of them having received both doses of the vaccine till Thursday.

## Assam CM meets RSS chief

**NAGPUR, JUN 11 (PTI):** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma met Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh supremo Mohan Bhagwat at the organization's headquarters here on Friday.

This was Sarma's first visit to the RSS headquarters after becoming chief minister of Assam a month ago. Sarma spent more than an hour at the RSS headquarters and met Bhagwat, Sangh sources said, without revealing what transpired at the meeting.





# As 'A' team coach, made sure every player on tour got a game: Dravid

**NEW DELHI, JUN 11 (PTI):** Widely credited for creating India's talent pool at the under-19 and A level, former captain and NCA Director Rahul Dravid says during his stint as coach with these teams, he made sure that every cricketer who toured got a game unlike his playing days.

Dravid will be head coach of a ShikharDhawan-led Indian team that will tour Sri Lanka for a white-ball series next month. He doesn't travel with the A and U-19 squads any more but it was he who made sure all the squad members played on tours.

"I tell them upfront, if you come on an A tour with me, you will not leave here without playing a game. I've had that personal experience myself as a kid: going on an A tour and not getting an opportunity to play is terrible," DravidESPNcrinfo's 'The Cricket Monthly'.

"You've done well, you scored 700-800 runs, you go, and you don't get a chance to show what you're good



at. And then you're back to square one from the selectors' point of view, because the next season you have to score those 800 runs again.

"It is not easy to do that, so there is no guarantee you'll get a chance again. So you tell people upfront: this is the best 15 and we are playing them. This is not about the supposed best XI. At U-19, we make five-six changes between games if we can," he said. Indian

cricketers are now among the fittest in the world but there was a time when they did not have the required knowledge on fitness and envied the more athletic Australians and South Africans, Dravid said.

Now in charge of the National Cricket Academy, Dravid has played a key role in producing the next generation of cricketers and a reserve pool which is the envy of India's opponents. In

his playing days, Dravid said the awareness just wasn't there. "Playing on the beach and playing on the road doesn't make you a cricketer. It makes you someone who loves the game. That's what we had. We had a lot of people who loved the game," Dravid said.

"Unless you give that guy a proper matting wicket or a turf wicket, unless you give him some half-decent coaching, some half-decent fitness

assistance where was all this in the 1990s and the 2000s? There was no access to it. We were starved of knowledge.

"Even in terms of fitness, we used to look at the Australians and South Africans and we used to look at their fitness trainers, and what did we get? 'Don't do too much gym, your body will become stiff. Bowl, bowl and bowl. Run rounds and laps'," he recalled.

## Rashid helps Qalandars to late victory over Zalmi in PSL

**ABU DHABI, JUN 11 (AP):** The competition-leading Lahore Qalandars had a 10-run win over Peshawar Zalmi as the second game in the first double-header since the resumption of the Pakistan Super League finished in the early hours of Friday morning. The Qalandars slipped to 25-4 after 7 1/2 overs before Ben Dunk (48) and Tim David combined in an 81-run partnership to re-set the innings. David, who finished unbeaten on 64 from 36 balls, then shared a late 47-run stand with James Faulkner (22) to lift the Qalandars to 170-8.

Faulkner took two wickets in his first over, the second of the innings, to have Peshawar in early trouble before Rashid Khan took a pair in the 10th to keep the Qalandars in control.

Rashid returned 5-20 to restrict Peshawar to 160-8, despite Shoaib Malik's 48-ball 73.

In the earlier game, Babar Azam's unbeaten half century went in vain as Multan Sultans defeated defending champion Karachi Kings by 12 runs.

Azam hit 85 off 63 balls, but Multan held Karachi to 164-7 through some disciplined seam and spin bowling.

After being put into bat, Multan did well in the end to push its total to 176-5 with left-handed Khushdil Shah remaining unbeaten on 44 off 32 balls.

Fast bowler Imran Khan claimed 3-28 and leg-spinner Imran Tahir picked up the key wickets of Martin Guptill and Afghanistan's Najibullah Zadran, who both scored 11 runs each as Azam was kept in check by the Multan bowlers.

Azam took his time to settle down and got little support from the other end to challenge the target. Azam raised his 18th half century in the PSL off 45 balls but his five fours and four sixes in the end were not enough to carry his team home.

Khan claimed all his three wickets in the last over and was on a hat trick when he dismissed Thisara Perera and captain Imad Wasim off successive deliveries. Qasim Akram denied Khan the hat trick before offering a tame catch off the last ball at extra cover.

South African Rilee Rossouw smashed seven fours in his quickfire 44 off 24 balls and it looked like Multan could cross the 200-run mark.

Rossouw and captain Mohammad Rizwan (29) shared a 68-run third wicket stand off 39 balls as Multan reached 107-2 by the halfway stage.

But Karachi hit back through Thisara Perera,

who bagged 2-12 off his three overs as Rossouw sliced a catch to long on and Rizwan was run-out in the same over while attempting a needless second run.

The left-handed Shah propelled Multan's total with an unbeaten 44 off 32 balls when he hammered Mohammad Amir for three fours and a six in the last over as the left-arm fast bowler, now retired from international cricket, finished with expensive figures of 0-42 off his four overs.

Pakistan's premier Twenty20 league was moved to Abu Dhabi for the remaining 20 games after it was suspended in March when several players and support staff tested positive for COVID-19 in a bio-secure bubble at Karachi.

## West Indies 97 all out to start series vs. South Africa



**GROS ISLET, JUN 11 (AP):** Lungi Ngidi took 5-19 and Anrich Nortje 4-35 as South Africa bowled out the West Indies for 97 on the opening day of the first cricket test.

Ngidi claimed his second five-wicket bag in tests and his first since his debut against India in 2018 as South Africa ended the West Indies' first innings in just 40.5 overs after the home side had chosen to bat on winning the toss.

At stumps South Africa was 128-4, a lead of 31 runs, and was able to celebrate a strong start to its first tour of the Caribbean in 11 years.

Ngidi describes his bowling as a "work in progress." It looked considerably more than that on Thursday as he tore through the South Africa middle and lower order after Nortje had knocked the top of the West Indies innings.

Former captain Jason Holder top-scored with 20 for West Indies, which was 24-0 before wickets started to fall rapidly. At one point the West Indies lost 5-11 in the space of seven overs and Ngidi, who went wicketless in his first spell, took 5-7 when he switched ends.

"It's not very often you bowl a team out for

97, Ngidi said. "There was a bit in the wicket so we exploited that as much as we could and we've got a bit of a lead.

"We really wanted to execute, we wanted to be ruthless in terms of our lines and lengths."

Ngidi was thrilled to personally see the result of hard work to develop bowling, especially his outswinger, and praised the support he received from his teammates' catching behind the wicket.

"My bowling's been a work in progress, he said. "It's been a while since I've been able to put in a performance like this.

"I've been working hard behind the scenes on my seam position, trying to swing it away from the right-hander. Just to see it come off today was really exciting."

Ngidi showed raw emotion when his fifth wicket came.

"I've had a few four-fors and it's been lingering. It felt like a monkey on my back," he said. "Just to get that off was really amazing for me."

A bad day for the West Indies got worse when batsman Nkrumah Bonner was ruled out of the rest of the match with a concussion after receiving a heavy blow on his helmet. He will be

replaced by veteran Kieran Powell.

Nortje set the West Indies' downfall in motion, taking three wickets for eight runs as home side tumbled to 48-4 at lunch, with Shai Hope (15), captain Kraigg Brathwaite (15), Bonner (10) and Kyle Mayers (1) all out in the first session.

It was a grindingly slow start for the West Indians, who scored at less than two runs an over.

Jermaine Blackwood fell for 1 straight after the lunch break and West Indies faced just 13 overs of the second session before they were all out.

South Africa lost opener Dean Elgar for a duck in the first over of their innings. Elgar is playing his first test as captain.

Keegan Peterson (19) fell with the total 34 before Aiden Markram and Rassie van der Dussen steadied the innings in a partnership of 79 for the third wicket. Markram was out for 60 before stumps and van der Dussen was 34 not out at the close.

South Africa gave debuts in the series opener to batsmen Keegan Petersen and Kyle Verreynne. West Indies gave a first test cap to seam bowler Jayden Seales.

## Brazil searches for right target man for Copa America

**SAO PAULO, JUN 11 (AP):** Brazil has always produced some of the best goal scorers in soccer.

But as the Copa America approaches, Brazil coach Tite knows he doesn't have a Ronaldo or Romario type of target man to rely on.

Instead, Tite is split between four options going into Sunday's opener against Venezuela in Brasilia.

Gabriel Jesus, Roberto Firmino, Richarlison and Gabriel Barbosa are in contention. Combined, they have scored 45 goals for the national team. In contrast, Neymar has 66 by himself.

Brazil has struggled to find a world-class striker since the 2006 World Cup, when an out of shape but still deadly Ronaldo played his fourth and last edition. The team's target men in the last three World Cups scored only four goals in 17 matches.

Jesus had zero in 2018, Fred scored once in 2014 and Luis Fabiano netted three in 2010.

Brazil coach Tite sees the Copa America as a key preparation for next year's World Cup, and it's a great opportunity for one forward to stake a claim to a starting place in Qatar. "Gabriel Barbosa fluctuates and he can have a very strong finishing power. Jesus is a natural, he can get to the wings and (do well) in one-on-ones. ... Richarlison too," Tite said before the 2-0 win at Paraguay on Tuesday in World Cup qualifying.

"And Firmino is a No. 9 who also becomes a 10 and gives you a connection with Neymar." Tite's



first choice until recently was the 24-year-old Jesus. He scored 14 goals in 42 matches for Manchester City this season, a figure he acknowledged was disappointing. The Brazilian recently said he was affected by COVID-19 earlier in the year.

The 29-year-old Firmino had his lowest scoring season since he joined Liverpool in 2015, with only nine goals in 48 matches.

Richarlison had a better club season, scoring 13 goals in 40 matches for Everton. But Tite believes the 24-year-old is better as a winger, meaning he is a substitute for Neymar who did not play in the 2019 Copa America due to injury.

Out of Brazil's 16 goals in World Cup qualifiers, Firmino and Richarlison scored three each. Jesus has none. He is unlikely to start for Brazil unless Tite chooses to use him as a winger, giving a central position to Neymar, as he did in

the win at Paraguay.

Many Brazilian fans would like to see Barbosa, known as Gabigol, given a chance. A flop at Inter Milan and Benfica, the 24-year-old Barbosa has been a massive success at Flamengo since returning home two years ago.

Barbosa scored 38 goals in 52 matches for his club in 2020. This year he netted 13 goals in 12 matches, though the more competitive Brazilian championship is yet to start.

Barbosa started in Brazil's 2-0 win against Ecuador but did not score.

If none of the forwards can deliver, Brazil will have to keep depending on Neymar for its goals.

"National teams build themselves over time, that's what they are like," Tite said. "We don't have a lot of time together. And sometimes even during a match we will have to look for alternatives.

## Messi, Di Maria and Ag ero in Argentina's Copa America squad



**BUENOS AIRES, JUN 11 (AP):** Lionel Messi, Sergio Agüero and Di María are headlining the Argentina squad that will head to Brazil for the Copa America, seeking their national team's first major title since 1993.

The list was published Thursday by South American soccer's governing body, CONMEBOL.

Defender Juan Foyth and striker Lucas Ocampos are the most notable absentees from the 28-player squad, despite featuring regularly since Lionel Scaloni became head coach in 2018.

Foyth was involved late when Argentina conceded a last-minute equalizer to Colombia in a World Cup qualifying match earlier this week.

The Villarreal defender, a winner of the latest Europa League, lost possession at the edge of the

penalty box. Colombia subsequently crossed and then found the back of the net with a header by Miguel Borja.

Sevilla's Ocampos had a lackluster performance in the 1-1 draw against Chile last week, also in a World Cup qualifier.

Scaloni's squad included Cristian Romero and Nahuel Molina Lucero, who were brought to Argentina's senior team for the first time during the latest rounds of World Cup qualifiers.

Argentina's will open its Group A campaign against Chile on Monday at Rio de Janeiro. Uruguay, Bolivia and Paraguay are also in Group A.

Argentina Squad: Goalkeepers: Franco Armani (River Plate), Emiliano Martínez (Aston Villa), Agustín Marchesini (Porto) and Juan Musso (Udinese) Defenders:

Gonzalo Montiel (River), Nicolás Otamendi (Benfica), Germán Pezzella, Lucas Martínez Quarta (Fiorentina), Nicolás Tagliafico, Lisandro Martínez (Ajax), Marcos Acuña (Sevilla), Cristian Romero (Atalanta), Nahuel Molina Lucero (Udinese).

Midfielders: Leandro Paredes, ngel Di María (Paris Saint-Germain), Guido Rodríguez (Betis), Giovanni Lo Celso (Tottenham), Exequiel Palacios (Bayer Leverkusen), Nicolás González (Stuttgart), Rodrigo De Paul (Udinese), Alejandro Gómez (Sevilla), ngel Correa (Atletico Madrid), Nicolás Domínguez (Bologna)

Forwards: Lionel Messi (Barcelona), Lautaro Martínez (Inter Milan), Joaquín Correa (Lazio), Lucas Alario (Bayer Leverkusen) and Sergio Agüero (Barcelona).



## Euro 2020 opening marks return of mega-scale sports events

**ROME (AP):** Postponed by a year, the biggest sporting event since the coronavirus brought the world to a halt kicks off Friday at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome — a milestone both for European and world sports.

The opening match of soccer's European Championship will be played in the capital of Italy, the first country outside Asia to get struck by the pandemic and the first in the world to implement a nationwide lockdown. The tournament represents a major step forward on the path toward recovery after one of the darkest chapters in the continent's history since World War II. More than 1 million Europeans have died in the pandemic, including almost 127,000 Italians.

"After everything that's happened, now the situation is improving. I think the time has come to start providing fans with something to be satisfied about," said Italy coach Roberto Mancini, who tested positive for COVID-19 in November but was asymptomatic. The tournament was postponed last March when countries were scrambling to contain virus outbreaks and major sporting events around the world were canceled or put on hold.

Many worry that it's still not safe to bring tens of thousands of fans together in stadiums across Europe, but organizers hope measures including crowd limitations, staggered arrival times for fans, social distancing rules and lots of hand sanitizer will help prevent a resurgence of virus infections, which have dropped sharply in Europe in recent months.

In Rome, fans entering the stadium are required to bring documentation showing they have been vaccinated against the virus, tested negative in the 48 hours before the match or already had the disease.

The world of sports is watching. If everything goes smoothly, Euro 2020 can give a confidence boost for other major sporting events, like the Tokyo Olympics, scheduled to open on July 23 — also a year late. If it doesn't, it would be a serious setback that could have ramifications beyond soccer. The virus already has had an impact on the tournament, which for the first time is not being hosted by one or two nations but is spread out across the continent with matches in 11 cities.

Spain captain Sergio Busquets tested positive for COVID-19 and will miss the team's first match against Sweden in Seville on Monday. Another Spain player tested positive, as did two of Sweden's players. The Spanish squad was getting vaccinated Friday.

Russia winger Andrey Mostovoy then became the first player to be cut from a national team on Friday after testing positive. Italy's opening match against Turkey will bring together the biggest crowd in the country since it went into a full lockdown 15 months ago, even though the stadium will be filled to only 25% of its capacity.

# Afghan Hazaras being killed at school, play, even at birth

**KABUL, AFGHANISTAN (AP):** Just running errands in the mainly Hazara neighborhoods of west Kabul can be dangerous. One day last week, Adila Khari and her two daughters went out to buy new curtains. Soon after, her son heard that a minibus had been bombed — the fourth to be blown up in just 48 hours.

When his mother didn't answer her phone, he frantically searched hospitals in the Afghan capital. He found his sister, Hosnia in critical condition with burns over 50% of her body. Then he found his mother and other sister, Mina, both dead. Three days later, on Sunday, Hosnia died as well.

In all, 18 people were killed in the two-day string of bombings against minivans in Kabul's Dasht-e-Barchi district. It was the latest in a vicious campaign of violence targeting Afghanistan's minority Hazara community — one that Hazaras fear will only get worse after the final withdrawal of American and NATO troops this summer.

Hundreds of Afghans are killed or injured every month in violence connected to the country's constant war. But Hazaras, who make up around 9% of the population of 36 million people, stand alone in being intentionally targeted because of their ethnicity — distinct from the other ethnic groups, such as Tajik and Uzbek and the Pashtun majority — and their religion. Most Hazaras are Shiite Muslims, despised by Sunni Muslim radicals like the Islamic State group, and discriminated against by many in the Sunni majority country.

After the collapse of the Taliban 20 years ago, the Hazaras embraced hopes for a new democracy in Afghanistan. Long the country's poorest community, they began to



improve their lot, advancing in various fields, including education and sports.

Now many Hazaras are moving to take up arms to protect themselves in what they expect will be a war for control among Afghanistan's many factions.

Inside the Nabi Rasool Akram Mosque compound, protected by sandbags stacked against its ornate doors and 10-foot high walls, in violence connected to the country's constant war. But Hazaras, who make up around 9% of the population of 36 million people, stand alone in being intentionally targeted because of their ethnicity — distinct from the other ethnic groups, such as Tajik and Uzbek and the Pashtun majority — and their religion. Most Hazaras are Shiite Muslims, despised by Sunni Muslim radicals like the Islamic State group, and discriminated against by many in the Sunni majority country.

The government doesn't care about Hazaras and has failed to protect them, he said. "Anyone who can afford to leave, they are leaving. Those who can't are staying here to die," said Broman. "I see a very dark future for our people."

There is plenty for Hazaras to fear.

Since it emerged in 2014 and 2015, a vicious Islamic State group affiliate has declared war on Afghanistan's Shiites and has claimed responsibility for many of the recent attacks on the Hazaras.

But Hazaras are also deeply suspicious of the govern-

ment for not protecting them. Some worry that government-linked warlords, who also demonize their community, are behind some of the attacks.

Former government adviser Torek Farhadi told the Associated Press that within the political leadership, "from the top down," there is a "sorry culture" of discrimination against Hazaras. "The government, in a cynical calculation, has decided Hazara lives are cheap," he said.

Since 2015, attacks have killed at least 1,200 Hazaras and injured another 2,300, according to Wadood Pedram, executive director of the Kabul-based Human Rights and Eradication of Violence Organization.

Hazaras have been preyed on at schools, weddings, mosques, sports clubs, even at birth.

Last year, gunmen attacked a maternity hospital in the mainly Hazara districts of west Kabul. When the shooting ended, 24 people were dead, including newborns and their mothers. Last month, a triple bombing at the Syed Al-Shahada school in the same area killed nearly 100 people,

mostly Hazara schoolgirls. This week, when militants attacked a compound of demining workers, shooting at least 10 to death, witnesses said they tried to pick Hazaras out of the workers to kill.

Some of these attacks, deliberately targeting civilians, hospitals and children, could rise to the level of war crimes, said Patricia Gossman, Associate Director of the Asia Program of Human Rights Watch.

Pedram's organization has petitioned the U.N. Human Rights Commission to investigate the killing of Hazaras as genocide or a crime against humanity. It and other rights groups also helped the International Criminal Court in 2019 compile suspected war crimes cases in Afghanistan.

"The world doesn't speak about our deaths. The world is silent. Are we not human?" said Mustafa Waheed, an elderly Hazara weeping at the burial of Mina and her mother.

A black velvet cloth inscribed in gold with Quranic verses was draped over the two bodies. Family and friends carried them on wooden beds, then placed them inside the graves. Mina's father fell

to the ground crying.

"The U.S. can go into space, but they can't find out who is doing this?" Waheed said. "They can see an ant move from space, but they can't see who is killing Hazaras?"

In the face of the killings, talk has turned to arming Hazara youth to defend the community, particularly in the districts that the community dominates in western Kabul. Some Hazaras say the May 8 attack on the Syed al-Shahada school was a turning point.

It is a significant reversal for a community that showed such hope in a new Afghanistan. After the fall of the Taliban, many Hazara militias gave up their weapons under a government disarmament program, even as other factions were reluctant.

"We used to think the pen and the book were our greatest weapon, but now we realize it is the gun we need," said Ghulam Reza Berati, a prominent Hazara religious leader. Fathers of the girls killed in the school attack are being told to invest in weapons, said Berati, who helped bury many of the girls.

Sitting on the carpets

of west Kabul's Wali Asar Mosque, Berati said Hazaras are disappointed in the democracy brought by the U.S.-led coalition. Hazaras have largely been excluded from positions of prominence, he said.

Hazaras worry about continuing Islamic State group attacks and about the potential return of the Taliban to power after the American withdrawal. But they also worry about the many heavily armed warlords who are part of the government. Some of them carried out violence against Hazaras in the past, and Hazaras fear they will do so again if post-withdrawal Afghanistan slides into a repeat of the brutal inter-factional civil war of the early 1990s.

One warlord who is still prominent in Kabul, Abdul Rasool Sayyaf, led a Pashtun militia that massacred Hazara civilians during a ferocious 1993 battle with Hazara militias in Kabul's mainly Hazara neighborhood of Afshar.

Rajab Ali Urzгани became a sort of folk hero in his community as one of the youngest Hazara commanders during the Battle of Afshar — only 14 at the time.

Now 41 and still known by his nom de guerre, Mangol, he returned to Afshar earlier this month with the AP to visit the site. He stopped to give a prayer for the dead at a mass grave where nearly 80 men, women and children killed in the bloodshed are buried. A black Shiite banner flies at the entrance.

Mangol held out little hope for peace in Afghanistan following the withdrawal.

"When the foreigners withdraw, the war will happen 1000%," he said. "The war will happen like in the past with the different groups, and we will defend our family and our dignity."

## Israel's Netanyahu lashes out as end of his era draws near

**JERUSALEM, JUN 11 (AP):** In what appear to be the final days of his historic 12-year rule, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is not leaving the political stage quietly.

The longtime leader is accusing his opponents of betraying their voters, and some have needed special security protection.

Netanyahu says he is the victim of a deep state conspiracy. He speaks in apocalyptic terms when talking about the country without his leadership.

They are uprooting the good and replacing it with the bad and dangerous, Netanyahu told the conservative Channel 20 TV station this week. I fear for the destiny of the nation.

Such language has made for tense days as Netanyahu and his loyalists make a final desperate push to try to prevent a new government from taking office on Sunday. With his options running out, it has also provided a preview of Netanyahu as opposition leader.

For those who have watched Netanyahu dominate Israeli politics for much of the past quarter century, his recent behaviour is familiar.

He frequently describes threats both large and small in stark terms. He has belittled his ri-



vals and thrived by using divide-and-conquer tactics. He paints his Jewish opponents as weak, self-hating leftists, and Arab politicians as a potential fifth column of terrorist sympathizers.

He routinely presents himself in grandiose terms as the only person capable of leading the country through its never-ending security challenges.

Under his term, identity politics are at an all-time high, said Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, a non-partisan think tank.

It is a formula that has served Netanyahu well. He has led the right-wing Likud party with an iron fist for over 15 years, racking up a string of electoral victories that earned him the nickname, King Bibi.

He fended off pressure by President Barack Obama to make concessions to the Palestinians and publicly defied him in 2015 by delivering a speech in Congress against the U.S.-led nuclear agreement with Iran.

Although Netanyahu was unable to block the deal, he was richly rewarded by President Donald Trump, who recognised contested Jerusalem as Israel's capital, pulled out of the nuclear agreement and helped broker historic diplomatic pacts between Israel and four Arab nations.

Netanyahu has waged what appears to be a highly successful shadow war against Iran while keeping Israel's long-standing conflict with the Palestinians at a slow boil, with the exception

of three brief wars with Gaza's militant Hamas rulers.

The situation with the Palestinians today is remarkably the same as when Netanyahu took office, Plesner said. "No major changes in either direction, no annexation and no diplomatic breakthroughs.

But some of Netanyahu's tactics now appear to be coming back to haunt him. The new Biden administration has been cool to the Israeli leader, while Netanyahu's close relationship with Trump has alienated large segments of the Democratic Party.

At home, Netanyahu's magic also has dissipated in large part due to his trial on corruption charges. He has lashed out at an ever-growing list of perceived enemies: the media, the judiciary,

police, centrists, leftists and even hard-line nationalists who were once close allies.

In four consecutive elections since 2019, the once-invincible Netanyahu was unable to secure a parliamentary majority. Facing the unappealing possibility of a fifth consecutive election, eight parties managed to assemble a majority coalition that is set to take office on Sunday.

Israeli politics are usually split between dovish, left-wing parties that seek a negotiated agreement with the Palestinians, and religious and nationalist parties long led by Netanyahu that oppose Palestinian independence. If any of the recent elections had centered on the conflict, then right-wing parties alone would have formed a strong, stable majority.

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### CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONS & SAFETY TIPS

#### DON'T LOWER THE GUARD

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

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

#### WEAR A MASK

Always wear a mask to prevent droplets from going outside

#### GET A FLU VACCINATION

Get your flu shot to develop an immune response before flu season begins, particularly if you have comorbidities

#### WASH YOUR HANDS

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

#### MAINTAIN SOCIAL DISTANCING

Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people

#### GET TESTED

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

#### COVER YOUR MOUTH & NOSE WHILE SNEEZING, OR COUGHING

Before stepping outside, make sure to carry a handkerchief or a packet of tissues.

#### FOLLOW PRECAUTIONS BEFORE STEPPING OUT

Carry your sanitizer, water bottle and, most importantly, avoid crowded areas.

#### CHECK YOUR TEMPERATURE

Monitor your temperature on a regular basis





**CITY STROLL!** The Bachelor Nation, Tayshia Adamsfan favorite looks fab in a bandana top, patterned jeans and cute orange purse while walking in NYC.

## JameelaJamil cast as villain Titania in 'She-Hulk' series



**LOS ANGELES, JUN 11 (PTI):** Marvel Studios has roped in actor JameelaJamil to play the antagonist in upcoming Disney Plus series "She-Hulk".

"She-Hulk" will feature actor Tatiana Maslany as Jennifer Walters, the cousin of Bruce Banner, who inherits his Hulk powers after she receives a blood transfusion from him.

But unlike Bruce, when she hulks out, Jennifer is able to retain most of her personality, intelligence, and emotional control.

Jamil, 35, will essay the role of Titania, a supervillain first introduced to the Marvel-

verse in 1984 and created by Jim Shooter, reported Deadline.

In the cast, "The Good Place" star joins Maslany, Mark Ruffalo, Tim Roth, Ginger Gonzaga and Renee Elise Goldsberry.

Ruffalo is returning as Bruce Banner aka The Hulk, a role he played in several Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) movies.

Roth will reprise his role of The Abomination from the 2008 movie "The Incredible Hulk".

The legal comedy will be directed by Kat Coiro and AnuValia, with Jessica Gao serving as head writer.

## James Wan reveals title for 'Aquaman 2'

**Los Angeles, Jun 11 (PTI):** The much-awaited sequel to Warner Bros' 2018 superhero hit "Aquaman" has been titled "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom". Filmmaker James Wan, who directed the JamonMomoa-led first part, shared the news in a post on Instagram on Thursday.

Wan posted an image from a production meeting, which featured the title as "Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom", in what looks to be a potential logo for the film.

"The tide is rising," he captioned the photo.

"Aquaman" featured Momoa as Arthur Curry aka Aquaman, a half-Atlantean, half-human who sets out to lead the underwater kingdom of Atlantis and stop his half-brother, King Orm, from uniting the seven underwater kingdoms to destroy the surface world.

The film, which released in December 2018, grossed more than USD 1 billion at the global box office.

The sequel will also mark the return of Amber Heard as Mera and Patrick Wilson back as Orm.

you deserve, you end up dishonouring a part of yourself, Virgo. As a result, you create from a place of lack rather than abundance, which in turn has a negative impact on the quality of your work. What the cards are urging you to do today is observe all the ways in which you are betraying yourself. It's time to stand up for yourself and ask for what you truly deserve. .

Tip: Remember who you are, baby!

Libra:

It's one of those days, Libra. One of those days when you're really feeling yourself and vibing with the cosmic currents. What the cards want you to remember is that none of the ideas you are channelling right now are random. They're all being airdropped into your subconscious for a higher reason. Trust that and act upon what you're being guided to without delay. As you do, keep in mind that perfection is an illusion. Your task is merely to be authentic to yourself and your inspiration. Coming from a space of truth and honesty will help you connect with your audience.

Tip: Remember, perfection is an illusion.

Scorpio:

The hero's journey is seldom an easy one. There are many, many challenges he is likely to face on the road to greatness. The fear of failure, for instance. Or the fear of losing to an opponent. No matter what your fear is,

# Hong Kong to censor films 'endangering national security'

**HONG KONG (AP):** Hong Kong censors now have the power to ban films that endanger national security, prompting concerns that freedom of expression is being further curtailed in a city once known for its vibrant arts and film scene.

Authorities are cracking down on criticism of Chinese Communist Party rule, arresting many pro-democracy activists in the city and implementing a sweeping national security law last year that criminalizes actions such as the calls for independence during months of anti-government protests in 2019.

The Hong Kong government announced Friday that it has amended the guidelines for censors in the city's Film Censorship Ordinance to include vigilance against any "portrayal, depiction or treatment of any act or activity which may amount to an offense endangering national security." Censors have the power to deem films unsuitable for exhibition to "prevent or suppress any act or activity endangering national security," it said in a statement.

"The film censorship regulatory framework is built on the premise of a balance between protection of individual rights and freedoms on the one hand, and the protection of legitimate societal interests on the other," the government said. The amended ordinance takes Hong Kong a step closer to the censorship of films on the Chinese mainland, which are closely vetted for themes and

scenes critical of the Communist Party's leadership or that do not align with values that the government seeks to espouse.

"This film censorship system shows

clashes between pro-democracy protesters and police at a local university, following an editorial in a pro-Beijing newspaper that said the movie spreads messages of subversion and may breach



how freedom of expression is disappearing from Hong Kong," said Anders Hammer, director of "Do Not Split," an Oscar-nominated documentary about the 2019 protests in Hong Kong. "In 2021 we have seen how the situation is deteriorating further where activists and pro-democracy politicians are put in prison, charged under the new draconian national security law," he said.

"And unfortunately, it looks like the local government and Beijing only want to continue with this dissolution of basic democratic rights in Hong Kong," he said. In March, organizers canceled the screening of the documentary "Inside the Red Brick Wall" which portrays

the national security law.

Censors in May also issued warnings to a hospital workers' union over the screening of two films related to the crackdown on pro-democracy protesters in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989, stating that it had not sought approval and that one of the films had not been rated.

Earlier this month, Hong Kong authorities banned for a second year the annual candlelight vigil held in remembrance of victims of the Tiananmen Square crackdown.

Authorities have also ramped up efforts to overhaul the school system to instill "patriotism" in students.

## Plans for movie on New Zealand mosque attacks draw criticism

**WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND (AP):** Tentative plans for a movie that recounts the response of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern to a gunman's slaughter of Muslim worshippers drew criticism in New Zealand on Friday for not focusing on the victims of the attacks. Hollywood news outlet Deadline reported that

Australian actor Rose Byrne was set to play Ardern in the movie "They Are Us," which was being shopped by New York-based FilmNation Entertainment to international buyers.

The movie would be set in the days after the 2019 attacks in which 51 people were killed at two Christchurch mosques.

Deadline said the movie would follow Ardern's response to the attacks and how people rallied behind her message of compassion and unity, and her successful call to ban the deadliest types of semiautomatic weapons.

The title of the movie comes from the words Ardern spoke in a landmark address soon after the attacks. At the time, Ardern was praised around the world for her response.

But many in New Zealand are raising concerns about the movie plans.

Aya Al-Umari, whose older brother Hussein was killed in the attacks, wrote on Twitter simply "Yeah nah," a New Zealand phrase meaning "No." Abdigani Ali, a spokesperson for the Muslim Association of Canterbury, said the community recognized the story of the attacks needed to be told "but we would want to ensure that it's done in an appropriate, authentic, and sensitive matter."

Tina Ngata, an author and advocate, was

more blunt, tweeting that the slaughter of Muslims should not be the backdrop for a film about "white woman strength. COME ON."

Ardern's office said in a brief statement that the prime minister and her government have no involvement with the movie. Deadline reported that New Zealander Andrew Niccol would write



and direct the project and that the script was developed in consultation with several members of the mosques affected by the tragedy. Niccol said the film wasn't so much about the attacks but more the response.

"The film addresses our common humanity, which is why I think it will speak to people around the world," Niccol told Deadline. "It is an example of how we should respond when there's an attack on our fellow human beings."

Byrne's agents and FilmNation did not immediately respond to requests for comment. The report said the project would be filmed in New Zealand but did not say when.

Niccol is known for writing and directing "Gattaca" and writing "The Terminal" and "The Truman Show," for which he was nominated for an Oscar. Byrne is known for roles in "Spy" and "Bridesmaids."

**Aries:** Listen up, fire sign! You can't always be in yang mode, even if you want to. The law of balance states that you make peace with the yin side of your personality as well. That you learn to 'be' as much as you 'do'. This may sound counterintuitive, but mastering this lesson will help you make big things happen with minimal effort. Before you get to that to-do list, though, pause, breathe, and allow yourself to be present. Now is a good time to work with simple grounding techniques or practice a chakra clearing meditation.

Tip: Be in the present.

Taurus:

Let go of the could've-would've-should've narrative. Let go of the need to point fingers at or blame others. Take responsibility for where you are, Taurus, as you consciously release the past. The things that unfolded in your life were neither good nor bad. They simply were. So accept everything as a learning lesson integral to your soul growth.

Tip: You are understanding the higher reason behind why things unfolded the way they did.

Gemini:

The new moon in your sign is activating your inner psychic, Gemini. The one who can read omens and take a peek at what's transpiring behind the veil. Trust the

downloads that are coming through and make a note of them in your journal if you can. If the messages concern another person, hold off on sharing it with them until you have complete clarity on what needs to be said. Some of you could be thinking about taking the counselor or spiritual counselor route and assisting those who are walking the same path as you. Trust your inner guidance and know that it will never let you down.

Tip: Some of you could be thinking about taking the counsellor or spiritual counsellor route.

Cancer:

Here's the thing, honey: the Universe is "not" a fan of mixed signals. What you are doing by going back and forth on this decision is delaying the manifestation process. So come into a space of oneness about what you desire as you set your intentions with complete clarity.

Tip: Set your intentions from a place of complete clarity.

Leo:

It's time to get off the hamster wheel, Leo, and question the beliefs that are keeping you stuck in this endless loop. You were not sent here to suffer in silence. You were sent here to stay in the energy of joy and playfulness and to create from a space of love.

Tip: It's time to be present.

Virgo:

Every time you accept something that's less than what

you deserve, you end up dishonouring a part of yourself, Virgo. As a result, you create from a place of lack rather than abundance, which in turn has a negative impact on the quality of your work. What the cards are urging you to do today is observe all the ways in which you are betraying yourself. It's time to stand up for yourself and ask for what you truly deserve. .

Tip: Remember who you are, baby!

Libra:

It's one of those days, Libra. One of those days when you're really feeling yourself and vibing with the cosmic currents. What the cards want you to remember is that none of the ideas you are channelling right now are random. They're all being airdropped into your subconscious for a higher reason. Trust that and act upon what you're being guided to without delay. As you do, keep in mind that perfection is an illusion. Your task is merely to be authentic to yourself and your inspiration. Coming from a space of truth and honesty will help you connect with your audience.

Tip: Remember, perfection is an illusion.

Scorpio:

The hero's journey is seldom an easy one. There are many, many challenges he is likely to face on the road to greatness. The fear of failure, for instance. Or the fear of losing to an opponent. No matter what your fear is,

Scorpio, you're being asked to observe it, to make friends with it. Know that the strength, courage, and resilience you have been blessed with are far greater than the sum of all of your fears.

Tip: You have the courage to keep moving forward despite your fears.

Sagittarius:

The new moon has you feeling all kinds of sensitive, and that's okay, Sagittarius. But nothing in our life is without a purpose. So, understand what the current triggers are drawing your attention towards. Chances are, you're being called to strengthen your boundaries, right now and in this moment. Here's a simple exercise to begin your day with: visualise a bright, radiant source of golden light pouring downward from your crown chakra all the way to your toes. Then, project this light outward so that it covers not just your body, but also your aura. Step #3: Allow the rays to crystallise around you, forming a bulletproof energy shield. Now repeat the affirmation 'I am safe and protected' as you believe it to be your truth.

Tip: You're being called to strengthen your boundaries.

Capricorn:

Capricorn, it's time to contemplate upon the cliché 'slow and steady wins the race' and understand how it applies to your circumstances. It's true that you're not where you would like to be. But what makes you think you will not

get there eventually? The cards are reminding you that you're made for bigger and better things.

Tip: Be patient with your empire as you continue to put in the work—consistently.

Aquarius:

There are two kinds of people in the world: people who merely go through the motions and people who create from a space of passion consistently. Aquarius, we have no doubts about which of the two categories you fall into. What the cards want you to remember now and for the rest of the retrograde season: it's important to show up for what you believe in, despite the delays and difficulties. PS: The desired destination is closer than it appears at this time.

Tip: You have what it takes to overcome the perceived challenges.

Pisces:

You are what you eat, Pisces. We repeat: you are what you eat. So be mindful of what you put on your plate from now on. Consider making healthier choices that will serve you well in the long run. Working with a nutritionist or an Ayurvedic doctor who can help you understand your body type will be beneficial for you. Remember, physical movement is just as important.

Tip: Consider making healthier choices that will serve you well in the long run.