



**AMY WINEHOUSE'S BEST FRIEND  
CLAIMS HER BEING "HOUSED"  
BY PAPARAZZI LED TO HER DEATH**  
*pg 08*

**COVID: DID A DELAYED SECOND  
DOSE GIVE THE DELTA VARIANT AN  
EVOLUTIONARY HELPING HAND?**  
*pg 04*

**COPYRIGHT HOLDER  
SETTLES LAWSUIT WITH  
LOVE ARTIST'S ESTATE**  
*pg 08*



# SummitTIMES

Vol 06 | Issue 150 | Gangtok | Sunday 13 June 2021

ON TOP OF THE NEWS

RNI No. SIKENG/2016/69420

Pages 8 | Rs. 5

## Sikkim gets a breather, no Covid deaths and more recoveries than new cases in past 24 hours

**SAGAR CHHETRI  
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:**

The 51 days that the second wave of Covid-19 pandemic has held Sikkim in its grips have been stressful and depressing. For a Sikkim traumatized by this experience, there is comfort to be drawn from the Covid statistics of the past few days and the past 24 hours have offered more solace with the State getting a breather. Not only were there no Covid deaths, but Sikkim also witnessed more people make full recoveries than the number of new cases in the 24 hours ending 8AM Saturday.

As per the 'Daily Report of Covid-19' released by the Integrated Diseases Surveillance Project of the Health Department this morning, 292 more formerly Covid-positive were recorded as having made full recoveries and were dis-



charged from isolation. Over the same period, only 167 new cases were detected.

Most importantly, no Covid patient died in the past 24 hours.

This newspaper counts 22 April, 2021 as the start of the second wave of Covid in Sikkim since it was on this day that the State recorded a Covid death after a nearly two-month long pause. In the 51 days that have passed

since, there have been only four days, including today, when people were told that no lives were lost to Novel Coronavirus.

To get an understanding of how devastating these 51 days have been, one should bear in mind that the past month and a half recorded nearly 60% more Covid cases than the State registered in the entire previous year that Covid has been around.

Till 22 April, Sikkim had detected a total of 6,970 cases of Covid. Today, 12 June, the count stands at 18,257! Against a total of 6,970 cases reported in a year, in the past 51 days alone, Sikkim detected 11,099 new cases.

Over this period, Sikkim also recorded more deaths than in the previous year: On 22 April, Sikkim recorded its 137th Covid death, and since then, it has lost 145 Co-

vid fatalities and now the total count stands at 381.

Sikkim currently has 3,783 active Covid cases.

The 167 new cases were detected from the testing of 1,401 samples on Friday. Among the new cases, 118 were found in RT-PCR testing of 754 samples and 49 others were found positive in rapid antigen testing of 636 samples.

In the district-wise distribution of new cases, South Sikkim beat the more populous South district again today with 83 new cases against the 71 reported in East District. While nine of the cases were registered in West District, four were in North District.

Among the new cases, only 11 more patients were admitted in hospitals today. Of the 3,783 active cases, on 172 are in hospital, 26 of whom are in the ICU facilities at STNM Hospital and Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

## SMU waives fee for students who have lost earning member of family to COVID

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 12 JUN:**

Sikkim Manipal University (SMU), Gangtok, has announced full fee waiver, as scholarship to its students who are bereaved because of the demise of their father or mother, who was the sole earning member of their family due to COVID-19 infection. The entire course fee of these students will be waived as a scholarship, across all academic programmes and courses for the remaining duration of study.

As per a press release, VSM, (Retd), Pro Chancellor, Lt General, (Dr) MD Venkatesh, SMU,

said, "By this decision of SMU, of providing full fee waiver, we hope to give some relief to our students who have unfortunately lost their sole earning member of the family and suffered the consequences of this COVID pandemic. We sincerely hope that their financial difficulties are mitigated to an extent."

Vice Chancellor, Dr (Veteran Lt General), Rajan S Grewal added, "Sikkim Manipal University, in alignment with the ethos and values of The Manipal Education & Medical Group, earnestly endeavours to support our students who face

difficulties and hardships. This scholarship should enable our bereaved students to complete their studies, and reduce their challenges, as a consequence of the unfortunate demise of their sole earning parent, due to COVID infection. Concerted efforts will be made by Team SMU, to prepare and enable these students to envision a bright future in academics and their careers." He further hoped that with this initiative, SMU hopes to sensitize our students to be empathetic, humane and caring members of the society."

## With 84,332 fresh Covid cases, India sees lowest daily rise in 70 days

**NEW DELHI, 12 JUN [NDTV]:** India - witnessing a downward trend in Covid cases - today reported its lowest infections in 70 days with the country adding 84,332 new cases to take its overall caseload to 2.93 crore. Active cases account for 3.68 per cent of the total infections.

India's test positivity rate (positive cases identified for every 100 tests) contin-

ues to decline. For the fifth straight day it is below the 5 per cent-mark at 4.39 per cent.

Active cases have decreased by 40,981 in the last 24 hours to take the tally to less than 11 lakhs (10,80,690) after 63 days. The national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 95.07 per cent, according to the government.

**turn to pg02**

# IF SKY IS THE LIMIT, THEN BECOME AN IAF PILOT AND CONQUER THE SKIES



## JOIN INDIAN AIR FORCE TO BE A CUT ABOVE

Online registration through <https://careerindianairforce.cdac.in> and <https://afcat.cdac.in>

ENTRY	BRANCHES
AFCAT	FLYING / TECHNICAL / ADMINISTRATION / EDUCATION
NCC SPECIAL ENTRY	FLYING BRANCH (AIR WING C CERTIFICATE IS MANDATORY)
METEOROLOGY ENTRY	METEOROLOGY BRANCH

- Online test only for AFCAT entry
- Aadhaar card is mandatory for online registration
- For more details, refer to Employment News dated 29 May 21 and for detailed notification visit our website <https://careerindianairforce.cdac.in> and <https://afcat.cdac.in>



'DISHA' Cell, Air Headquarters, Vayu Bhawan, Motilal Nehru Marg, New Delhi - 110106, Tel: 011-23013690, Toll free No.: 1800-11-2448, E-mail: [afcatcell@cdac.in](mailto:afcatcell@cdac.in)

For updates follow us on: [@IndianAirForce](https://twitter.com/IndianAirForce) | [Indian Air Force](https://www.facebook.com/IndianAirForce) | [indianairforce](https://www.instagram.com/indianairforce) | [indianairforce\\_mcc](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF2K152819)

dayp 10801/13/0007/2122



# A Senior Advocate Meditates on Freedom of Expression and the Row Over Bhaichung's Statement

J.B. PRADHAN

It is time to remind our fellow Sikkimese of a notable dialogue from a famous book 'EMILE' by philosopher Rousseau: "I don't believe a word of what you say, but I will give my life to defend your right to say it."

One of the most basic right in a robust democracy is the 'Right of Freedom of Expression'. Democracy grows and flourishes when there is debate, discussion and deliberation. Dissent is not always bad.

It is time to revisit the dissenting judgement of Justice HR Khanna in ADM Jabalpur's case (popularly known as the Habeas Corpus case) during emergency. For such dissent, he was superseded and denied the high office of the Chief Justice of India but his judgement was applauded globally.

During the emergency, fundamental rights including the right to approach the constitutional courts under Article 226 and 32 of the Constitution was suspended. Under the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) many opposition leaders and citizens were arrested and detained. They approached the High courts under Article 226 for a writ of Habeas Corpus. Under normal times the courts in a suitable case would issue such writ/command to the government to produce the detenu in person and direct for his release. The government raised preliminary objection as the right to move the court for enforcement of fundamental right had been suspended. The High Courts overruled such objections. An appeal was filed by the government and a Constitu-

tion Bench of 05 judges was constituted to hear the matter. In what is described as the 'darkest hour' in the history of the Supreme Court, 04 judges declared that the citizens had no right to move the court under Article 226 or 32 for enforcement of their fundamental right during emergency. The lone dissenter was Justice HR Khanna who held otherwise and in favour of the citizens. "The New York Times" in its editorial paid its tribute by predicting that if India ever finds its way back to freedom and democracy, "someone will surely erect a monument to justice Khanna ..."

The infamy ADM Jabalpur judgement was finally buried in 2017, after 42 years by a larger bench of the Supreme Court in 'Right to Privacy case' (KSPuttaswamy vs Union of India).

Freedom of Expression, Right to dissent are important facets of a vibrant democracy. A dissent or criticism can be dealt with by an intelligent and convincing retort. Every reaction need not be violent or aggressive. It is not good to scare your dissenters. You may soon have none left to correct your follies which could prove counterproductive in future. The over zealous show of support and love could do more harm than salvage the damage.

Leaders in any country or region occupy a precarious position. They have to deal not only with the administration and opposition parties but also with their party people who display abundance of their loyalty and support having the tendency to cause more harm than good. The leaders must be conscious and careful. To follow the-

old adage 'keep your friends close but keep your enemies closer' may prove to be more beneficial. It is better to lend one's ear to your critic than to your sycophants. A renowned jurist Ram Jethmalini reminds us that: 'Sycophantic, deceitful advisors have been the death of kings and kingdoms. Words of flattery and sycophancy are sweet, but always false. They are addictive and destructive, for they make a person averse to any

## ViewPoint

criticism or further growth, and prevent talent and merit from emerging.'

I am not here to support or justify the statements made by Bhaichung Bhutia but only to impress upon the importance and significance of 'Freedom of Expression' and the 'value of dissent' in a democracy. I do not know him personally and have met him only once at a dinner party hosted by United Sikkim Football Club (USFC) for USFC members. I had become a member of his football club along with my son Vidarth. In fact, Vidarth was the youngest member of the club. He was considered lucky for the club. Whenever he was a mascot for the home match USFC invariably won. Bhaichung's contributions to develop a local football club for 'A division league tournaments' is commendable and admirable. He did his best. Unfortunately, his efforts did not sustain. In retrospect, I only wish many others had supported the homegrown USFC.

Bhaichung has earned fame and accolades in football and has thereby

brought glory to Sikkim. However, few years back during a debate session in national TV channel his statement and insinuation against the Nepali community did raise objections from various quarters. Having decided to tread in politics he could have been cautious in dealing with such sensitive issue rather than making a casual and irresponsible statement. Maybe, to err is human. However, soon after launching his political party he announced that his party will file a case in the Supreme Court to remove the tag of immigrants for the Nepali of Sikkimese origin.

The pandemic has taken its toll. The government's decision to focus on Health and Social sector is definitely in the right direction and needs to be appreciated. Their action and efforts indicate their sincerity to help the people tide over the present crisis. These goals can be achieved through deliberations and cooperation.

Reverting to the subject matter in issue, it is the duty of every Sikkimese to protect and defend their rights. The dialogue must go on and never stop. The only rider to it is that - it must be done in a bona-fide manner and in good faith with the sole objective of securing the welfare of the people and for the interest of Sikkim.

I hope good sense will prevail and every effort will be made to raise the standard of our politics and debate. Let us all preserve our Freedom of Expression, or else to quote George Washington:

"If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led like sheep to the slaughter house."

[the writer is a Sikkim-based Senior Advocate]

## SP South convenes monsoon preparedness meet



NAMCHI, 12 JUN (IPR):

A coordination meeting with regard to monsoon preparedness in the district was conducted in the office of Sr SP/South involving all stake holders today. The meeting was attended by all SD-POs, DySP/Hqrs., SHOs, ICs - Fire Stations under South District, DPO Disaster Management South, SDRF IRBn (South and West) and discussion on following issues regarding the subject matter was done.

1. Current status of rescue equipment with respect to all PSs. Fresh requisition was proposed through Sr SP South and

subsequently available items were received from DPO South and distributed to PSs. Proposal for additional requirements is also placed.

2. A WhatsApp group -South District DM Team has been formed and all concerned stake holders are added so as to maintain chain of communication among members and enable in taking prompt action in case of any disaster.

3. District Control Room shall be functional in the existing COVID 19 Control Room at DAC under the supervision of DPO South and Police Dept.

## SKM distributes lockdown relief in Dzongu



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

Sikkim Krantikari Morcha's North District committee today came forward to help the public of Dzongu constituency providing essentials commodities to the underprivileged to combat the pandemic, a press release informs.

SKM North District team headed by North District vice president in-

charge (North), Rinzing D Gyalsten Bhutia along with North District president, Phurba Bhutia, and other party workers distributed essential food items in seven GPUs under Dzongu Constituency from their collective con-

tribution today.

They handed over essential commodities to the Ward Level Committees and Block Level Committees in the presence of Zilla Panchayat and Panchayat members in seven GPUs viz. Ship Gyer GPU, Lingthem-Lingdem GPU, Sakyong Pentong GPU, Tingvong GPU, Lingdong-Barfok GPU, Hee Gyathang GPU and Lum-Gor-Sangtok GPU.

Finally, the team also handed over essential commodities to the Nagar Panchayat president Mangan Nagar Panchayat, Norkit Lepcha for three wards under Lachen Mangan Constituency.

to book advertisements in

SummitTimes

call 03592-208698 9734152541

9647102692

advertise@summittimes.com

## F&CS Dept condemns SDF

### allegations

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 12 JUN:

The Food and Civil Supplies Department has condemned the allegations leveled by SDF Spokesperson, JB Darnal in a video post on Facebook recently. Mr Darnal had alleged that the Dept in connivance with some people in Siliguri had sold the food grains allotted to the state by the centre in the black market.

In a press release, the Dept has said that it has lifted all the foodgrains received from the Food Corporation of India from godowns at Rangpo and Jorethang. These have been delivered to the beneficiaries through Fair Price Shops.

## Private hospitals got 1.29 Cr vaccine doses in May, only 22 lakh used, data shows

NEW DELHI, 12 JUN (PTI):

At a time when vaccine shortage is being reported across the country, government data has shown that only 17 per cent of doses were utilised in private hospitals last month, leaving them with massive unused stock. According to a press release by the Health Ministry on June 4, a total of 7.4 crore doses were made available across the country in May, of which 1.85 crore doses were earmarked for private hospitals.

Private hospitals across India procured 1.29 crore vaccine doses of the available 1.85 crore shots, however, the government's own data shows only 22 lakh doses were used. Experts believe high prices at private hospitals in comparison to government-run hospitals and vaccine hesitancy could be the likely reason for people staying away.

## "Administration needs to show neutrality; Govt improve existing healthcare facilities with same enthusiasm as for new projects"

STATEMENT

SIKKIM PROGRESSIVE YOUTH FORUM

A controversy has gripped the state for the past few days. The controversy is primarily about the construction of 300 bedded hospital at a playground in Namchi South Sikkim and the statement given by the founder member of Hamro Sikkim Party and a former captain India National team, Arjuna Awardee, Bhaichung Bhutia on this matter. It took an ugly when a group of women supposedly backed by the ruling party protested against the statement of Shri Bhutia by burning his effigy and sloganeering against him in the heart of Namchi-the Central Park.

CONDITION OF HOSPITAL ALREADY ESTABLISHED IN SIKKIM

Sikkim has one 1000 bedded super speciality hospital, four 100-bedded district hospitals, a few Community Health Centres, several Primary Health Centres and Primary Health Subcentres. The planned 300 bedded hospitals at Namchi will be the second-largest hospital after STNM super speciality hospital at Sochegang Gangtok. Unfortunately, the standard of services, particularly in secondary level hospitals, is so low that the patients who afford to choose to visit a private clinic or private hospitals and those who can't afford to rely on shamans (dhami,jhakri) rather than visiting them. Almost all district hospitals have no adequate doctors, staff nurses, technical manpower, adequate machines, testing labs etc. Even for an ordinary pathological test, the govt hospitals send the patient to nearby private diagnosis centres. For little complicated services like Ultrasonography tests or MRI, either the facility is not at all available or if it is available the patient has to wait for months for his turn to come. Almost all medicines need to be bought by the patient party. When testing and medicine costs money - the Govt hospital becomes unaffordable to the economically weak. Small private clinics started by doctors privately provide far better service than those run by Govt spending crores from the taxpayers' money. PHCs and PHSCs are there only for the name with almost no reliable service available to the people.

THE POLITICS OF PERCENTAGE AND COMMISSION

It is an open secret in Sikkim that the governmental constructional projects come with high inflated monetary estimates, which the elected representatives happily pass not because the project will serve the needs of the people but primarily because a sizeable portion of it goes to the pockets of politicians and its lackeys through commissions and percentages. Be it the proposal of

constructing 3200 buildings under CMRHM or the construction and repairing of new roads or any other construction work. The newly planned hospital at Namchi may not be an exception. If the fate of this upcoming hospital will be the same as the 4 other district hospitals it is better not to waste peoples' money. The Govt should show the same kind of zeal as it is showing for the new hospital for improving the facilities in the hospitals already established. Buy adequate machines, appoint sufficient manpower, procure sufficient medicines and other chemicals in the hospitals already constructed. The Govt should work to restore the diminishing trust of the people in Govt hospitals.

THE RULING PARTY'S DEEP HATE FOR DISSENTERS

In a democracy, people can place their voice. The ruling SKM party's hate for dissent and its leaning towards using violence to suppress the voice of the dissenter is something people are used to. It uses its lackeys, paid goons and stooges to suppress the dissenters. In October 2020, people have not forgotten the incident when the ruling party sent a group of violent people to a designated place for the protest at DAC East to create a ruckus to end the dharna of SPYF against the Govt's decision to double the taxi fare by putting illogical restrictions on vehicles. Similarly, the ruling party sent a group of hyper zealous women to create ruckus in the middle of the town.

ADMINISTRATION LOSING THEIR SPINE

One of the most dangerous trends seen recently in Sikkim is the police and administration losing any kind of neutrality while acting in public. Its action has been more like the extended wing of the ruling party rather than an institution of Governance for the people. The best example of it is the Police's failure to arrest or stop the group of protesters from assembling in the central park in Namchi and burning effigy in the middle of the stringent lockdown and curfew declared in the state. As the protest was orchestrated by the ruling party the police stayed as a mute spectator while the incident was unfolding in front of them. The Police in Sikkim becomes hyper zealous when it comes to arresting anyone opposing the ruling party. It is the same Sikkim Police that did not hesitate even a bit to arrest the students of Geyzing College in college uniform in the middle of the night. It is the same Sikkim Police which has made several arrests in the recent past for Facebook posts and comments that has not made a single arrest in

this case of the burning of the effigy in the middle of the lockdown.

THE REACTION OF THE SOUTH DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

The funniest part of the entire episode was the statement given by the South District Administration on this matter when it said that the protesters had masks on and they could not identify them. There are videos on social media where police, that never fails to penalise the common people for even accidentally falling the mask below their nose, were seen watching the entire episode unfolding in front of them helplessly. Are our Police so inefficient that they cannot arrest the culprit simply because the culprit had worn the mask? Weren't the intelligence branch aware of the protest being planned in the heart of the town in the middle of the stringent lockdown when even normal movement of the people is heavily restricted? What will happen if a criminal with a mask come to central park and loot the Namchi Bazar tomorrow? What will the police do if a masked person murders a person in Bazar tomorrow? Will it give a similar lame statement again that since the culprit has the mask on that they could not identify him?

DIFFERENT LAWS FOR THE ELITE MEMBERS OF RULING PARTY IN SIKKIM

What can be a more glaring example of the administration and police not acting in a neutral or unbiased manner like this one? After this incident and a series of such incidences of police acting as an arm of the ruling party in the recent past, there are questions in the mind of the people that will the police arrest the people of the ruling party even if they commit a crime as heinous as a murder or a rape tomorrow? Are there different laws for the people of the ruling party in Sikkim? People are losing any kind of trust in the administration and police in Sikkim.

SPYF'S STAND AND DEMANDS

SPYF condemns the daylight violation of lockdown orchestrated by the ruling party to create terror in the mind of the people against criticizing the policies of the Govt. We request the administration to show some kind of neutrality in its action by acting like administration rather than the branch of the ruling party and make immediate arrests of the culprits involved in the daylight violation of lockdown in Namchi. SPYF also requests the Govt to show similar enthusiasm to improve the facilities in the already established hospitals by providing adequate manpower and infrastructure like it is showing to start a new hospital of more than 500 crores.

CONTACT SUMMIT TIMES REPORTERS NAMCHI 9832048410,	9775736596	9832612485/	9832082664,
	SINGTAM	9434011213	9832424750,
	7699771651	GANGTOK	8768664251
	MANGAN/ DIKCHU	8016270440,	9832470000



# Namchi's water supply restored

**NAMCHI, 12 JUN (IPR):** The water supply pipelines to Namchi which had been damaged recently at Rabongla Bypass due to landslide were successfully restored today.

The Chairperson Public Health Engineering Department, Hari Narayan Subedi accompanied by the Advisor Skill Development Department, Satish Chandra Rai, Additional Political Secretary (South), Anjeeta Rajalim, Chairperson Namchi Municipal Council, Ganesh Rai alongwith local gentry were present during the restoration process. Present amongst others were DE (PHE), NT Bhutia, AE (PHE), Sonam Karthak other concerned officials alongside stakeholders of NHIDCL and contractors.

The team inspected



the site of landslide which had caused disruption to water supply and assessed the measures taken by the Department for restoring the water pipelines.

The Chairman PHE

also extended gratitude towards the pace of work being carried by the stakeholder for swift restoration of water supply pipelines.

It may be mentioned here that a permanent

water pipeline will be laid down after moonsoon.

During the process, they also visited the perennial water sources and water reservoirs located in and around

Ravangla. Further, they also toured Damthang Water Treatment Plant and Namchi Water Reservoir to enquire about water stored for the use of public and its distribution process.

## UCSS and ASCA delegations call on CM

**GANGTOK, 12 JUN (IPR):** Minister LN Sharma, MLA GT Dhungel, president of United Christian Society of Sikkim, Patrush Gurung and the President of All Sikkim Christian Association, Lanam Sereng and other members called on the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang and handed over cheques amounting to Rs 6 lakh to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund on behalf of the entire Christian commu-

nity of Sikkim as a contribution towards the fight against COVID-19.

They acknowledged and appreciated the government's dedication and effort to tackle the pandemic in the state and assured their support and assistance in the endeavour.

Political Secretary to CM Jacob Khaling and Secretary Horticulture Department, MT Sherpa were also present during the event.

## Woman dies by suicide, family alleges foul play

**AARON RAI**  
**GANGTOK, 12 JUN:**

A 31-year-old woman allegedly died by suicide last night in Development Area here. While police sources say that it is death by suicide, the family of the deceased has alleged that it is murder and not suicide.

The sister has claimed that the deceased was a victim of domestic violence. The victim was

residing with her in-laws and had got married a year ago.

When approached, the victim's husband said that he has told the police everything and would not like to talk with the media.

Meanwhile, the deceased's body has been sent for postmortem. Police sources have said that the case is under investigation.

## Sanitization and relief distribution at Rhenock



**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 12 JUN:**

Sanitization, distribution of essential commodities and health kits is being carried out in Rhenock as per the direction of Chief Minister, PS Tamang and under the guidance of Area MLA, Bishnu Kumar Khatriwara, a press release informs.

Today Chairman (Sikkim Housing Board) cum Chief Convener (Student Wing), Karma Tashi Bhutia inspected and conducted a sanitization drive at Pachak Monastery and all shops falling under Budang Kamarey

GPU under Rhenock Constituency.

Similarly, he visited a house which has been contained to meet the family members of COVID-19 positive patients in Budang Kamarey GPU and took stock of the health condition of the patients. He also extended some assistance to COVID-19 positive patients falling in BPL category for medical treatment.

He was accompanied by senior SKM worker, Dawa Sherpa, SKM WLC president and social worker, Kenzong Bhutia.

## GOC Eastern Command calls on CM



**GANGTOK, 12 JUN (IPR):** GOC in C Eastern Command, Lieutenant General Manoj Pande, AVSM, VSM called on the Chief Minister of Sikkim, Prem Singh Tamang at the official residence Mintokgang today.

It was a courtesy call by the GOC and during the call on, he offered his

greetings to the Chief Minister and shared his satisfaction on the close cooperation between the Army and Civil administration in all spheres. He further assured for every possible assistance from the Army wherever required.

Various relevant points regarding the state were also dis-

cussed. Chief Minister expressed his gratitude for the call on and shared his serenity for the gestures.

During the meeting, Lieutenant General Ajay Kumar Singh, YSM, SM, VSM, Corps Commander Trishaki Corps and Major General, Rohit Sawhney GOC Black Cat Division was also present.

## Education Dept launches assessment-based Remedial Learning Programme for students

**GANGTOK, 12 JUN (IPR):** Education Department today launched a chat-based assessment and remedial learning programme with the support of ConveGenius, India's leading EdTech social enterprise. The EdTech program was launched today by Additional Chief Secretary, GP Upadhyaya, State Project Director, Bhim Thatal, Samagra Shiksha, Director, Hon-dala Gyaltsen, Secondary Education, Director, Dr Rabin Chhetri, SCERT, Nodal Officer, Mr Subbiah, Suraj Bir Singh and the entire SCERT team.

The launching event was streamed simultaneously in YouTube channel and attended by many other officers, School Heads and Teachers.

The chat-based EdTech platform uses WhatsApp APIs and easily runs on a smartphone of any range with internet speed of mere 2G or 3G. The entire content is designed according to the state curriculum of learning to complement the ease of learning. The EdTech platform automatically provides assessments and individual feedback as per student's performance. It then suggests content for remedial learning, covering weaker points of the student.

Commenting on this novel association, GP



Upadhyaya, said, "We are elated with the responses that we are getting from students and teachers. In a pandemic, when many people have got bored with their monotonous lives, introducing chat-based learning platform has been the new interest for every stakeholder in the ecosystem. It takes a crucial step towards blended learning, data-driven governance and better collaboration between teachers and parents. We foresee this platform to have a considerable impact on the state's approach to remedial teaching and home learning."

Speaking on the initiative, Mr Subbiah, State Nodal Officer, said, "During the pandemic, we were listening to stories of teachers struggling to understand technology to teach their students. That got us thinking about the many children in our state who belong to a stratum where technical literacy is still uncommon, let alone

participating in online classes. However, the concept of using ConveGenius' chat-based EdTech platform as a source of education attracted us as we are aware of the reach and ease of use of the platform. The EdTech platform will be accessible to all students through a WhatsApp number 8595524414. The platform is live for Grades 6-10 right now and it will be extended to Grades 1-5 and Grades 11-12 very soon."

The EdTech platform promotes adaptive learning that moves with student's pace and the large-scale weekly assessment data is immensely helpful in improving teaching methods and identifying the scope of improvement in students. The National Education Policy, 2020 also proposes ongoing formative assessments that will track learner's progress at regular intervals so that schools can help the students plan improvement through remediation, if needed.

## High Court gives Centre Kerala and J&K examples for "door-to-door" vaccine

**MUMBAI, 12 JUN [PTI]:** The Bombay High Court asked the Union government to look at the door-to-door vaccination programme carried out successfully by Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir, and take a sound decision on its present policy that states door-to-door vaccination was not possible.

A division bench of Chief Justice Dipankar Datta and Justice GS Kulkarni noted that it was unable to understand what the Centre's problem was in starting door-to-door vaccination when states such as Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir were already carrying out such drives.

Responding to a query raised by the court earlier this week, as to how a senior politician got vaccinated at his residence in Mumbai, Anil Sakhare, counsel for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), on Friday said the jab was not given by the civic body.

The bench then asked additional government pleader Geeta Shastri, appearing for the Maharashtra government, about who administered the vaccine to the politician. <r Shastri sought a week's time to respond.

To this, Chief Justice

Datta said, One week to take information on this? This is alarming. There is an old saying 'You show me the man and I will show you the rule.'

The court was hearing a public interest litigation filed by advocates Dhruti Kapadia and Kunal Tiwari, seeking door-to-door vaccination for senior citizens above the age of 75 and persons who are specially-abled, wheelchair bound or bed ridden.

The court asked how the Union government policy says door-to-door vaccination was not possible presently, when individual states such as Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir were carrying out the drive.

"How is it that individual states like Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir have introduced and are successfully doing door-to-door vaccination? What is the Centre's comment on the Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir pattern?" the bench asked.

"We are not able to understand what the Centre's problem was. Why don't you (Union) communicate with these states and if it appeals to you, then you can ask the other states also to start the same drive," the court said, asking the government to take a "sound

decision."

The court also noted that it was very happy with the good job being done by the BMC during the pandemic and asked why the civic body was hesitant to introduce door-to-door vaccination.

To this, BMC counsel Mr Sakhare pointed out a letter written by civic commissioner Iqbal Chahal to the Centre stating that the civic body was willing to carry out door-to-door vaccination and requested the Union government to provide guidelines for the same.

The bench directed Additional Solicitor General Anil Singh to take instructions from the Health Secretary of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on the letter and posted the matter for further hearing on June 14.

ASG Singh told the court that the COVID-19 pandemic had a national impact and all states need to work in coordination with the Centre.

The Centre forms guidelines and it is expected from all state governments that the guidelines are followed, Singh said, adding that the guidelines for the vaccination drive are updated as per the prevalent situation from time to time.

## Farmers announce sit-in protests at Governor Houses on June 26

**NEW DELHI, 12 JUN [PTI]:** Protesting farmer unions Friday announced that they will organise dharnas at governor houses across the country on June 26 to mark the completion of seven months of their agitation against the three new Central agri-marketing laws.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha, an umbrella body of over 40 farmer unions, said they will show black flags during their June 26 protest and send memorandums to President Ram Nath Kovind. Farmer leader Inderjit Singh of Samyukta Kisan Morcha told a press conference that the day will be observed as "Kheti Bachao, Loktantra Bachao Diwas (save farming, save democracy day)".

"We will protest by showing black flags at Raj Bhavans and giving memorandum to the President through the governor of each state, who is the President's representative.

"It (June 26) is also the day when Emergency was declared in 1975 and we will complete seven months of our


protest. Along with farming, democratic rights of the people have also been attacked in this environment of dictatorship. This is an undeclared emergency," Mr Singh said.

Thousands of farmers, mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western Uttar Pradesh, have been camping at the Delhi borders for more than six months now in protest against the three laws that they say will leave them at the mercy of big corporates and end the MSP regime.

The government has said all these concerns are baseless and that the new laws are pro-farmer.

The Supreme Court has put on hold the implementation of the laws till further orders and set up a committee to examine the issues.


Addressing the concerns of women protestors, farmer leader Suman Hooda said special committees will be formed by Saturday evening which will be dedicated to the women at the protest sites.



### 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.**

<div style="background-color: #ff0000; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">Symptoms of nCoV</div> <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>	<div style="background-color: #ff0000; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">Precautions to Prevent nCoV</div> <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>
<div style="background-color: #00ff00; color: white; text-align: center; padding: 5px; font-weight: bold;">Treatment</div> <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>	



**If you seek help, you may call :**  
 -Toll free no. 104  
 District surveillance Officer  
 EAST : 7029372100  
 WEST : 9593297809  
 NORTH : 9641957468  
 SOUTH : 7407691463  
 New STNM  
 AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
 GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM



## Remember What Environment Means

*...then we can re-imagine, recreate and restore*

This is a month when environment comes to the fore. This year's World Environment Day, which moved indoors and online because of a virus which technically has the least chances of spreading outdoors and in open spaces, was themed 'Reimagine. Recreate. Restore.' Grand intentions which sought to convince us that ecosystem restoration means preventing, halting and reversing this damage - to go from exploiting nature to healing it. One welcome aspect of World Environment Day was its attempts to engage students in efforts aimed towards generating wider awareness on matters of environment, especially in the present times when urban lifestyles have reached even rural homes and the connection with land and nature is no longer as immediate as it used to be until even very recently. The planners should probably have added 'Remember' as well to their theme for the year because the environment is in ruins because we have forgotten how we had evolved to live off and with it. The moment humankind started exploiting nature instead of harnessing it for resources, we started growing distant and are now suffering.

It is important for the young to be introduced more intimately to environment because lives nowadays have become too cosmetic for the importance of environment for life to sink in. Despite all the talk of the Sikkimese people being essentially agrarian, fact also remains that the number of producers is going down. As more people get weaned away from the dependence on land, and as consumption veers increasingly towards manufactured goods, the relevance of environment, despite whatever may be included in Environment Studies textbooks, loses significance.

As mentioned, this disconnect is partly because of changes in lifestyles. A major contributor is however the imposition of rules and laws which have upset the traditional cohabitation between people and nature. With the State taking over the forests and with it the role of conservation, rules framed in offices too far removed from the resources they sought to preserve ended up dismantling the strongest protection nature has always had - traditional lifestyles adjusted to ensure sustainability. Such sustainable lifestyles were of course not unique to Sikkim, and are being lost across the world, but that should not mean that a course correction should not be attempted. In fact, it is time to resuscitate traditional knowledge and discover in its nuances the devices which will be urgently required to adjust to global challenges like climate change. For the non-believers, here are some Sikkim-specific examples. Villages in Sikkim have traditionally attached divinity to natural resources, and this was not ignorant blind faith, but an ingenious device to regulate sustainable use. This role of setting aside green cover as sacred groves for use in rotation or using faith to discourage defiling of water bodies was effected by monasteries and other religious organisations and worked very well for the State. When government departments take over this task, it is seen as an imposition and the law ends up alienating people from their surroundings. This alienation is regrettable because no forests have been lost to people who dwelled within or near them - the havoc has been wreaked by the demand of urban settlements far away.

Also, with the alienation, all that exploitation needs is the promise of profit to win cohorts. For another example, take the case of organic farming. Again, this was welcome, but before any "awareness session" on organic farming begins, the government and its officers should have first apologised to the farmers for having forced them away from organic farming practices in the first place and for having made them discard native crop species for hybrids. Organic was the only farming option for Sikkim until pesticides and chemical fertilizers were subsidized and promoted without enough education. Now the process is being thankfully reversed, but the task remains difficult because farming has become too dependent now.

Returning to the theme of events being hosted around the National Environment Awareness Campaign, the best way to observe it would be bring the senior citizens into classrooms and then take the students out with them to the surrounding areas where the elders will point out where a spring existed till two decades back, identify medicinal herbs and their uses, explain what biodiversity means and how much of it has been lost... and the list can go on. If this is attempted at a large enough scale, maybe environment awareness will succeed as a campaign.

### 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)

# COVID: Did a Delayed Second Dose Give the Delta Variant an Evolutionary Helping Hand?

JONATHAN R GOODMAN  
*theconversation.com*

The delta coronavirus variant, which was first detected in India, is now the dominant variant in the UK. Some experts warn that the delta variant may be 100% more transmissible than the previously dominant variant, alpha. But we don't think that transmissibility alone explains delta's dominance.

Successful variants often have a biological advantage - through mutation - that helps them spread more easily among the population. And it's the variants with these mutations that natural selection acts on, ensuring they out-compete other, less transmissible strains.

The delta variant may, however, have a more complicated relationship with people than those that came before it. It is even possible that it was government policies, rather than the variant's inherent increased transmissibility, that led to its success and dominance in the UK.

To illustrate why, it's helpful to distinguish between several powerful forces that propel evolutionary change.

The first, natural selection, occurs when one type of organism out-competes another - either within or between species - leading, over time, to the success of one and the demise of the other. An example might be when one cheetah, slightly faster than another, outruns its rival and is thereby better able to catch prey, survive and reproduce. The slower cheetah is out of luck. It may either not find enough food to survive or be unable to attract a mate, both of which would prevent its successful reproduction.

The second force, artificial selection, is a subset of natural selection. It involves a person intentionally choosing which organisms survive and multiply. An example of this is a horse breeder. Horses that have desired qualities - speed and submissiveness, for example - are allowed by the breeder to mate with others, raising the odds that the next generation of horses will have the same qualities.

A third, less well-known force called unconscious selection, is where human interactions with the environment have accidental evolutionary effects. This further subset of natural selection is an important force across the world and is becoming increasingly important as populations grow and people change the global environment. Antibiotic resistance, where bacteria evolve defences against modern medicines, is a good example. As we continue to prescribe antibiotics to kill bacteria, we

unconsciously select for bacteria resistant to our treatments.

Another example is how farming practices have been implicated in how diseases spread among plants. The way people clump trees together may help diseases spread more effectively. Some re-

north-west England where the delta variant first became widespread - as well as its higher transmissibility, were responsible for its success. And the government's decision, even if it did contribute to the variant's dominance, may not have been the wrong one: hospitalisations and deaths appear to



searchers even argue that the 2009 swine flu outbreak, and possibly even the COVID-19 pandemic, occurred for similar reasons.

The way we arrange our world - planting trees too close to each other or delaying vaccine shots, say - selects for changes in our world. And many of these changes, such as antibiotic-resistant "superbugs" or scary new variants - can be harmful to us.

### THE FORCES DRIVING DELTA

Returning to the delta variant, its ability to infect people who are partly vaccinated against it may explain its rise to dominance. While people who have received two doses of the Pfizer vaccine may have around 88% protection, this figure is as low as 33.5% with one dose of either the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine, according to Public Health England.

Viewed from the perspective of evolutionary selection, it seems that the UK government's decision to lengthen the period between first and second vaccine doses provided delta with an extra window to infect people. While delta is likely to have evolved in India through natural selection, unconscious selection may have ensured its survival in the UK.

It is possible that other factors, including the crowded living conditions of Bolton - the town in

be lower, even as cases drastically rise.

What is important, however, is to think about the implications of the artificial selection hypothesis - if it is true. Rather than making blanket claims about the overall transmissibility of different variants as they arise, it will become increasingly important, particularly as different parts of the world are vaccinated at different rates, to think about the way different variants - which have been selected, naturally or unconsciously - will interact with new populations as they spread. The US, for example, has focused on providing two doses in a shorter timeframe. And assuming that because the delta variant has been successful in the UK it will create the same problems in the US, is not necessarily justified: selection is likely to have different effects in the two populations.

More broadly, this evolutionary perspective suggests that we need to look to selection, however it takes place, to make better predictions about which variant features are likely to lead to success in different populations. Uniting evolutionary theory with population health sciences is likely to be essential for improving our responses to disease, now and in the future.

*[the writer is PhD Candidate, Human Evolutionary Studies, University of Cambridge]*

# Does a plant-based diet really help beat COVID-19?

DUANE MELLOR  
*theconversation.com*

Since the beginning of the pandemic, it's been suggested that certain foods or diets may offer protection against COVID-19. But are these sorts of claims reliable?

A recent study published in BMJ Nutrition, Prevention and Health

that reported diet type didn't influence the initial risk of contracting COVID-19. The study isn't suggesting that diet changes the risk of getting infected. Nor did it find links between diet type and length of illness. Rather, the study only suggests that there's a link between diet and the specific risk of developing moderate-to-severe COVID-19 symptoms.

falsely identifying a relationship between factors when there isn't one - what statisticians call a type 1 error.

Then there is another problem with studies of this type. It's observational only, so can only suggest theories about what is happening, rather than any causality of diet over the effects of COVID-19. To attempt to show something is actually causal,

tial differences in people's diets may have gone unnoticed. After all, the foods available in the US do differ from those available in Spain, France, Italy, the UK and Germany.

### SO WHAT DOES THIS TELL US?

When it comes to trying to determine the best diet for protecting against COVID-19, the truth is we don't have enough quality data - even with the results of this study, which are a small data set and only observational.

And a further issue is that the study didn't look at the quality of people's diets by assessing which foods they actually ate. This is another reason why it needs treating with caution. Self-declared diet types or food questionnaires may not capture information on the variety and type of foods eaten - for instance missing details about how much fresh or processed food someone eats, how meals are eaten and with whom. And as alluded to above, self-reported data on what people eat is also notoriously inaccurate.

The bottom line is: the name of what you call your diet is far less important than what you actually eat. Just because a diet is vegetarian or pescatarian doesn't automatically make it healthy.

For now, the robust evidence isn't there to suggest that being vegetarian or pescatarian protects against COVID-19 - so there's no need to rush to switch your diet as a result of this study. However, what we do know is that keeping active, eating a sensible healthy diet and keeping our weight in check helps to fortify us against a wide range of health issues, and this could include COVID-19.

Perhaps the best advice is simply to keep following general dietary guidelines: that is, that we should eat a variety of foods, mainly vegetables, fruit, pulses, nuts, seeds and whole grains, with few highly processed foods that are high in sugar, salt and fat.

*[the writer is Lead for Evidence-Based Medicine and Nutrition, Aston Medical School, Aston University]*



sought to test this hypothesis. It found that health professionals who reported following diets that are vegetarian, vegan or pescatarian (those that exclude meat but include fish) had a lower risk of developing moderate-to-severe COVID-19.

Additionally, the study found that those who said they eat a low-carbohydrate or high-protein diet seemed to have an increased risk of contracting moderate-to-severe COVID-19.

This may make it sound like certain food preferences - such as being vegetarian or a fish eater - may benefit you by reducing the risk of COVID-19. But in reality, things aren't so clear.

SELF-REPORTING AND SMALL SAMPLES

First, it's important to underline

It's also important to consider the actual number of people involved. Just under 3,000 health professionals took part, spread across six western countries, and only 138 developed moderate-to-severe disease. As each person placed their diet into one of 11 categories, this left a very small number eating certain types of diet and then even smaller numbers getting seriously ill.

This meant, for instance, that fish eaters had to be grouped together with vegetarians and vegans to produce meaningful results. In the end only 41 vegetarians/vegans contracted COVID-19 and only five fish eaters got the disease. Of these, just a handful went on to develop moderate-to-severe COVID-19. Working with such small numbers increases the risk of a

you ideally need to test it as an intervention - that is, get someone to switch to doing it for the study, give it time to show an effect, and then compare the results with people who haven't had that intervention.

This is how randomised controlled trials work and why they are considered the best source of evidence. They are a much more robust method of testing whether one single thing is having an effect on something else.

Plus, there is also the problem that the diet people say they consume may not be what they actually eat. A questionnaire was used to find out what foods people ate specifically, but responses to this were also self-reported. It also had only 47 questions, so subtle but influen-



# Risk communication strategy key to fighting virus, but there’s none

**ARJUN POUDEL**  
**KATHMANDU, 12 JUN [KATHMANDU-POST]:** Earlier this week, Chhima Sherpa, a health assistant at Big-utar Health Post of Siddhicharan Municipality, Okhaldhunga, was manhandled by a local resident because Covid-19 vaccines had not come to the municipality.

Even after the latest round of vaccination began on Tuesday, there have been reports of health workers in various districts being abused and manhandled by people for not being inoculated, according to Health Ministry officials.

“Immunisation workers have been threatened and abused in almost every district, including in Kathmandu Valley,” Dr Jhalak Gautam, chief of National Immunisation Programme, told the Post. “Health workers were even forced to shut down immunisation centres early and to flee to avoid conflicts with relatives of those from the age group who had earlier been told they would get the jabs.”

As the infection has spread throughout the country and it is said that vaccines are a reliable medium to lessen the severity and the risk of deaths due to the infection, more people are now willing to get the jabs compared to the earlier phase of vaccination when those above 65 were given their first dose, according to reports from several districts.

The official view of the Health Ministry is that such incidents of conflict are not unnatural.

“Though I am not aware of the particular incident [in Okhaldhunga], such things are not unexpected,” Dr Samir Kumar Adhikari, joint spokesperson for the Health Ministry, told the Post. “This time we changed the priority group at the last hour and that might have infuriated some people.”

Experts say a lack of risk communication strategy is to blame not only for poor communication and the subsequent manhandling of health workers but also for people not taking the risk of infec-



tion seriously. The lack of trust in the government is responsible for people resorting to violence, according to them.

“Had the authorities made plans and conveyed the right message, people would have understood the situation,” Baburam Marasini, former director at the Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, told the Post. “Instead of doing risk communication at the time of pandemic, authorities are doing risky communication.”

The Ministry of Health and Population had announced that those aged between 60 and 64 would be immunised against Covid-19 with the 1 million doses of vaccines China donated last week. But the evening before the vaccinations were to begin it changed the eligibility criteria. While residents of Kathmandu Valley aged 60 to 64 would get the jabs, elsewhere those aged 62 to 64 would get them, the ministry announced.

“From the one million doses we got from China, we could vaccinate only around 450,000 to 500,000 people since their second doses

have been secured,” said Gautam. “If we had given to all those between 60 to 64 around 50 percent of this age group would have been deprived of the vaccine.”

According to estimates, the 60 to 64 year-olds number around 850,000 in the country.

Public health experts had criticised the new announcement as discriminatory even as the number of new infections have been increasing in villages.

Meanwhile, more than 15 months since the pandemic hit the country, the Ministry of Health and Population is yet to finalise a risk communication strategy.

“We have completed the draft of the risk communication strategy and have also sent it to the provinces for suggestions,” Dr Radhika Thapaliya, director at National Health Education Information and Communication Centre, told the Post. “We will include those suggestions in the strategy and send them to the Health Ministry for endorsement.”

The lack of clear messaging and even negative messaging have led

people to panic in the past. When the Health Ministry said hospitals may not be able to provide beds, as they were running at full capacity and hospitals lacked oxygen cylinders, people started to hoard oxygen cylinders.

“Hoarding of oxygen cylinders and essential drugs at home was among a few such instances that reflect the lack of public trust in the government,” said Marasini. “When the authorities lose trust, people themselves look for the alternatives.”

The objective of risk communication is making people informed about risk factors, educating them, giving assurances so that people do not panic and motivating the general public to change their behaviour.

But instead of making people informed about the risks by giving them the right information, the authorities created insecurity and anxiety in many instances, according to doctors.

Meanwhile, the government seems to have only one plan to check the spread of the virus—

lockdown. By the time the prohibitory orders in Kathmandu Valley end on June 14, they will have been in place for 47 days.

The Health Ministry has been disseminating messages every day, but many of those messages are borrowed from elsewhere.

“Copying the message is not wrong but they should be contextualised,” an official at the Health Ministry said, asking not to be named. “Had we made our own risk communication strategy, our messages would have been more effective, precise and two-way.”

Every day, the Health Ministry issues some kind of message, without knowing if the message is reaching the targeted people.

Such messages in the past few days have included the danger of smoking and consuming alcohol during the coronavirus pandemic, symptoms of multisystem inflammatory syndrome among children as a complication resulting from Covid-19, notice on who will get the Chinese vaccine, and things to be aware of while taking the vaccine.

But communication is a two-way process, experts say.

According to the World Health Organisation, risk communication strategies include real-time exchange of information, advice and opinions between experts or officials and people who face the threat to their survival, health or economic and social well-being.

Through such strategies, everyone at risk is able to make informed decisions to mitigate the effects of the threat and take protective and preventive measures, says the UN health agency.

“We are still not bothered to know if the messages we are disseminating have been effective or not,” said the Health Ministry official.

Adhikari, the joint spokesperson, concedes that the ministry is copying the message from the World Health Organisation and from other sources and claims that

they are aware of the need for contextualisation. “A lot of homework has been done on the risk communication strategy and it is in the final phase,” said Adhikari.

Doctors say without effective risk communication strategy, it is not possible to contain the spread of infections in communities.

Thapaliya, director at National Health Education Information and Communication Centre who is a risk communication expert, concedes that both over-reaction and underestimation of the risk by the public result from the lack of proper risk communication.

“We are working not only to prepare the strategy but also on mechanisms to implement it,” said Thapaliya. “Several types of mechanisms at the centre, provinces, districts and the local level are needed to implement the risk communication strategy.”

But the delay in devising such a strategy has cost the country as a whole dearly. The country’s economy has suffered with Nepal registering a negative economic growth last fiscal year and the prognosis for the current one does not look good. Tens of thousands have been left jobless and with reduced incomes.

For those who have lost their loved ones and suffered from the illness brought about by the coronavirus, the price of the government’s failure to control the pandemic has been huge.

The total death toll since the pandemic began is 8,305 with the Ministry of Health and Population reporting 67 more deaths on Friday. With 2,709 new infections, the total tally of infections stands at 604,396.

“Authorities did not even do the simple things that could have been done,” said Marasini. “This shows that we are still not taking the risk of infection seriously. Things would have been different if experts were listened to, risks were taken seriously, and necessary measures were taken to check the spread of the virus.”

### Assam forms 2,000 teams to vaccinate 3 lakh people daily

**GUWAHATI, JUN 12 (PTI):** Assam Health Minister Keshab Mahanta on Saturday said that the state government has formed 2,000 teams to vaccinate three lakh people every day provided an adequate number of doses are available.

He said the state administration has an adequate stock of Covaxin for administering the second dose to people in the 18-44 years age group.

"We have kept ready 2,000 teams who could vaccinate four lakh people every day. But, for now, we are targeting to inoculate three lakh people daily if we get the vaccines. We hope that the availability of vaccines will increase in the coming days," he told reporters.

Mahanta, in a tweet on Friday night, had said that the state has a total stock of 3,80,900 vaccines, including 2,43,460 for those above 45 years of age and 1,37,440 for the 18-44 years age group. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had earlier said that the state had a capacity to inoculate 1 lakh people every day but it had to vaccinate less than half its capacity on most days since the beginning of the vaccination drive due to a shortage of supply. Mahanta said the Health Department is now focussing more on administering the second dose to people in the 18-44 years category, while the drive for those above 45 years of age is also underway.

"We had issues regarding the second dose of Covaxin due to short supply. We requested every district to let us know about their requirement for the second dose and are supplying them the vaccine accordingly," he said.

The health minister said that the government will be able to administer the second dose of Covaxin to 1.92 lakh people in the 18-44 years category within the stipulated time frame as it has received the required stock from the manufacturer. He said that 6.06 lakh people of the 12-lakh population of Guwahati have already been vaccinated.

"We have launched a special vaccination drive in the city from today and hope to cross the seven lakh mark within the next two days. After that, only around three lakh eligible people will be remaining," he said.

After a gap of 13 days, Assam vaccinated more than 50,000 people on Tuesday, with 62,198 people getting the jabs.

The number, however, fell again to 41,565 the next day, a National Health Mission bulletin said.

On Thursday, the state saw the highest vaccination after 39 days at 93,514 jabs, which came down to 83,054 doses on Friday, it added.

### High Court asks Mithun Chakraborty to join via video for questioning in incitement case



**KOLKATA, 12 JUN [PTI]:** The Calcutta High Court on Friday directed actor and BJP leader Mithun Chakraborty to provide his e-mail address to the state so that he can make himself available by way of video conference for questioning in connection with a complaint alleging that he had incited post-poll violence through his speeches while campaigning for West Bengal assembly election.

Hearing a petition by the national award-winning actor for quashing of the case registered against him at a city police station, the court directed the investigating officer to afford a reasonable time to Mr Chakraborty for his appearance by way of a video conference.

On prayers by the lawyers of the petitioner and the prosecution on Friday for taking up the matter on a later date, the court fixed the matter

for hearing on June 18.

Justice Tirthankar Ghosh directed that in the meantime, Mr Chakraborty or his advocate would communicate his e-mail address to the state so that he can make himself available through video conference for answering any query of the investigating officer.

Mr Chakraborty had filed the petition before the high court seeking quashing of the case registered against him for alleged incitement to post-poll violence through his speeches, wherein he had uttered popular dialogues from his films.

Mr Chakraborty claimed that the utterances of such film dialogues were only recreational and that he is innocent and in no way connected with any offence as alleged by the complainant.

The complainant claimed in his FIR at the Manicktala police station that the actor had

### 4 children killed in massive landslide in Mizoram

**AIZAWL, JUN 12 (PTI):** Four children were killed and two others injured as a massive landslide swept away a building in Aizawl in Mizoram, police said on Saturday.

The incident happened around 9.30 pm on Friday at Thuampui neighbourhood in the Bawngkawn police station area in the north-eastern part of the city, they said.

An Assam-type building, in which a seven-member family lived, was swept away by the retaining wall that collapsed due to a landslip, triggered by rains, police said.

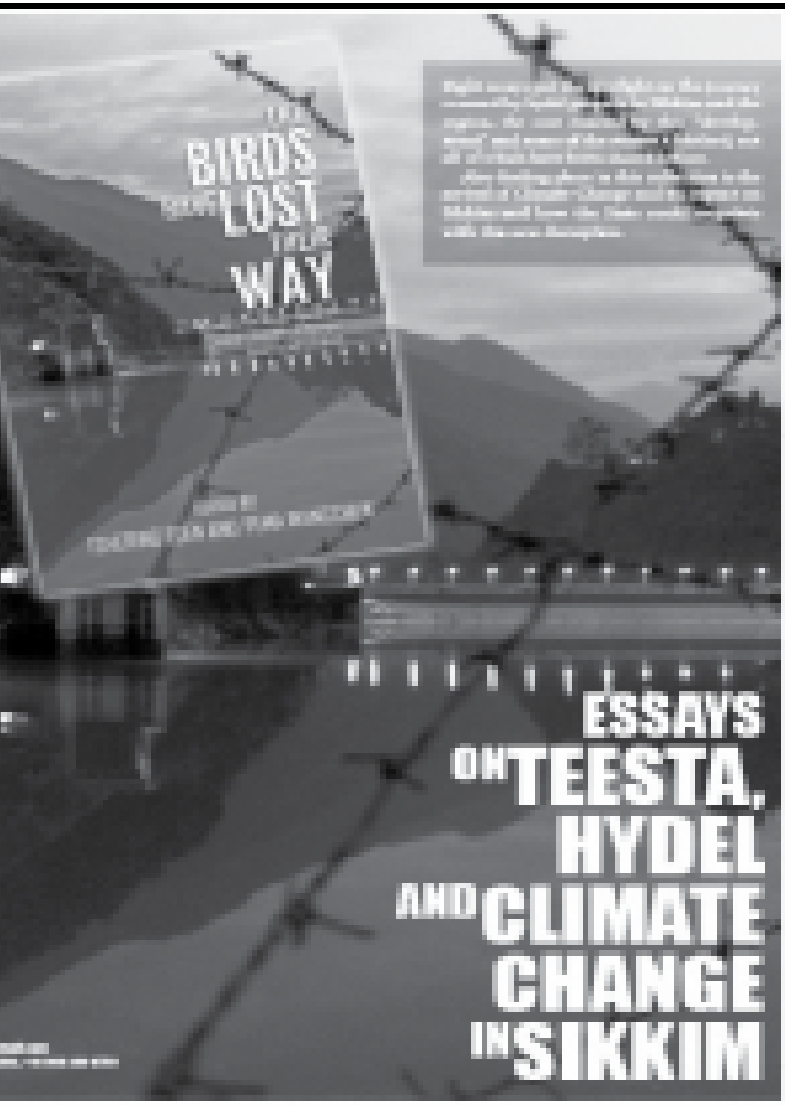
Six of the seven family members were present in the house at the time of the incident, they said.

Four children, aged between three and 16, died on the spot. The head of the family, Lalbiakzuala (75), escaped from the debris and another member was rescued alive, police said.

The bodies were recovered from the debris during the rescue operation launched by police and local volunteers soon after the incident.

The last body to be recovered was that of a 16-year-old girl, who was killed along with her twin sister, around 6 am on Saturday, police said.

Three occupants of another building, which stood below, managed to escape when they heard the loud noise of the landslide.





# De Kock's 141 puts South Africa on top against West Indies

**GROS ISLET (ST. LUCIA), JUN 12 (AP):** The West Indies' batting faltered for the second time in as many days, keeping South Africa in a commanding position at stumps on the second day of the first cricket test.

After being dismissed for 97 on the first day, the West Indies slumped to 51-4 as it began its second innings 225 runs behind South Africa.

Quinton de Kock's unbeaten 141 guided South Africa to 322 in its first innings and the tourist's bowlers again quickly ran through the West Indies' top order.

A stubborn 31-run partnership for the fifth wicket between Roston Chase and Jermaine Blackwood halted the slide and lifted the West Indies to 82-4 at stumps when the deficit was 143. Chase was 21 and Blackwood 10 at stumps and their partnership occupied the last 13 overs of the day.

Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje shared the four wickets that fell in the last session.

Rabada trapped Kraigg Brathwaite lbw for 7 in the fifth over, then removed Kieran Powell for 14 in a similar man-



ner in the 11th over. Nortje dismissed Shai Hope (12) and Kyle Mayers (12) in consecutive overs. Mayers fell to a superb catch at third slip by Wiaan Mulder.

Earlier, de Kock breezed to his sixth century and his highest test score to give South Africa a formidable first innings lead.

Released of the pressure of captaincy, de

Kock batted with fluency to achieve his first century against the West Indies before South Africa's first innings ended at tea.

I just wanted to get out there and bat time, de Kock said.

"The runs I thought were going to come at some point.

Just to be able to stay out there and get the team into a strong position obviously was quite

satisfying. De Kock was playing his first test since giving up the captaincy and taking a break from cricket for mental health reasons.

He entered the fray with South Africa 119-4 late on day one and with the ball still moving about. De Kock anchored the Proteas from there, clubbing 12 fours and seven sixes and single-handedly taking the at-

tack to the West Indian bowlers at times. The ball was still moving around so I just wanted to put myself in strong positions and put the bad balls away, de Kock said.

That was the mindset this morning.

De Kock hit 68 of the 79 runs he put on with Anrich Nortje for the ninth wicket. De Kock had luck, too, with two let-offs. He was dropped

on 83 by Mayers, who couldn't cling on to a running, diving effort at fine leg. Mayers did hold on for a catch in the same position when de Kock was on 117, but bowler Jason Holder was called for a no-ball.

Holder took 4-75 and 19-year-old fast bowler Jayden Seales 3-75 on his test debut, but West Indies was well behind. Seales was also the unlucky bowler when Mayers dropped de Kock.

De Kock shared a 43-run partnership with Rassie van der Dussen (46) and put on 53 with Wiaan Mulder (25) but really took control in the second half of the South African innings.

Tailender Nortje (7) gave him support, although he had to do little more than survive at the other end while de Kock unleashed the boundaries. Obviously we've batted ourselves into a good position, de Kock said. "The bowlers came out aggressive and hit the mark.

The wicket is a bit up and down now by the look of it but there's still a bit of swing around and we have to make sure we stay on it. I'm sure we'll be alright.

## Munro powers Islamabad to 10-wicket win over Quetta in PSL

**ABU DHABI, JUN 12 (AP):** New Zealand opener Colin Munro plundered an unbeaten 90 off 36 balls as Islamabad United swept Quetta Gladiators by 10 wickets in the Pakistan Super League.

Munro hit 12 fours and five sixes, and was well supported by Islamabad-born Australian Usman Khawaja's unbeaten 41. The left-handers smashed the seam and spin of Quetta to reach 137-0 in just 10 overs. Quetta was all out for 133.

No team had previously chased so quickly in Pakistan's premier Twenty20 league which is in its sixth season. The electrifying chase lifted Islamabad to second in the standings, two points behind leader Lahore Qalandars.

Munro tore the Quetta bowling apart by hitting Andre Russell's

concussion substitute, Naseem Shah, for four boundaries in the first over. Russell didn't take the field as a precaution after being struck on the helmet by fast bowler Musa Khan.

Quetta spinners Zahid Mahmood and Mohammad Nawaz also were played by Munro. He smacked 54 runs off four overs and finished the game with a reverse swept six off Nawaz.

Quetta, on the bottom of the table, struggled against young fast bowlers Mohammad Wasim, 2-12, and Aki Javed, 1-18. Pakistan fast bowler Hasan Ali added 2-24. Russell smashed Musa for two successive sixes but was struck on the helmet off the next delivery, then was caught at short third man in an eventful 14th over.

Jake Weatherald top-scored with 43.

## Top scientific body gets nod for clinical trials of Colchicine for COVID-19

**NEW DELHI, 12 JUN (PTI):** The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has given approval to the CSIR and Laxai Life Sciences Private Limited to conduct clinical trial of Colchicine on COVID-19 patients, according to a statement on Saturday.

Ram Vishwakarma, the advisor to the CSIR Director General, said Colchicine in combination with standard care will be an important therapeutic intervention for COVID-19 patients with cardiac co-morbidities and also for reducing pro-inflammatory cytokines, leading to faster recovery.

A number of global

studies have confirmed that cardiac complications during course of COVID-19 infections and post-Covid syndrome are leading to loss of many lives, and it is essential to look for new or repurposed drugs, he said.

"Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR), and Laxai Life Sciences Pvt Ltd Hyderabad, have been given the regulatory approval by DCGI to undertake a two-arm phase-II clinical trial to assess the safety and efficacy of the drug Colchicine in improvement of clinical outcomes during the treatment of COVID-19 patients," the statement said.

## Italy convincing in 3-0 win over Turkey to open Euro 2020

**ROME, JUN 12 (AP):** Italy waited a long time for this European Championship to start and then showed Friday just how eager the team was to play the tournament opener.

After humiliatingly failing to qualify for the 2018 World Cup, Italy was already back on track with a perfect qualifying campaign of 10 wins in 10 matches. Now Roberto Mancini's team has begun its first major international tournament in five years with a convincing 3-0 win over Turkey.

It was important to start well and it's satisfying for us, for the crowd and for all Italians, Mancini said.

It was a wonderful evening and I hope there will be many more."

Ciro Immobile and Lorenzo Insigne both scored after an own-goal from Turkey defender Merih Demiral had given Italy the lead all in the second half.

Demiral redirected a cross from Domenico Berardi into his own net after attempting to intercept the pass. Immobile then poked in a rebound of a shot from Leonardo Spinazzola on another play that began with Berardi, and Insigne later curled one in after a failed clearance by Turkey goalkeeper Ugurcan Akir.

Immobile thanked his mamma for giving him "the sense for being in the right place at the right time for his goal, while Insigne said the team's togetherness was its greatest strength.

The coach has created a great group in which there are no starters and



bench players and each one of us is always ready to sacrifice for our teammates," Insigne said.

"Winning is the most important thing if I score, even better. It was a great night.

Italy dominated from the start but was denied in the first half by a superb save from Akir and a decision by the referee not to award a penalty for an apparent handball.

The victory extended Italy's unbeaten run to 28 matches and boosted the Azzurri's status as a title contender.

We played a great match and we didn't permit Turkey to play, and they are not a weak side, Mancini said.

Italy, which won its only European title in 1968, had never before scored more than two goals at the European Championship, according to UEFA.

Games are not won by chance," Mancini said. "We've improved a lot but we can still improve more.

The tournament, which is still being called Euro 2020, began a year late because of the pandemic.

The Stadio Olimpico was still only 25% full

because of coronavirus measures and fans sat in small groups safely distanced from one another. Still, the crowd of about 16,000 was the largest gathering in Italy since the pandemic took hold.

With people around us in the stands, it's a whole different style of soccer, said veteran Italy defender Leonardo Bonucci.

They help us keep our hearts in it throughout the match.

Wales and Switzerland, the other teams in Group A, will play in Baku, Azerbaijan, on Saturday.

Italy appeared energized from the start and dominated possession while Turkey sat back and waited for rare counterattacks.

In the first half alone, Italy produced 13 attempts and Turkey none. By the end, Italy had 24 attempts and Turkey three and none on goal.

It was not our day. We started to lose the ball and couldn't get forward, Turkey coach Senol Gunes said. Italy were better. We lost to the better team.

Midway through the first half, Akir made an

acrobatic save to deny Giorgio Chiellini. The Italy captain was left unmarked on a corner and directed a header toward the target before Akir leaped up, extended his right arm high into the air and pushed the ball over the bar with his fingertips.

Italy protested vehemently for two handballs in the match but Dutch referee Danny Makkelie ruled to play on.

First, Immobile's shot appeared to be knocked down by a defender's arm. Then Turkey defender Zeki Ucar stuck out his hand and stopped a cross from Spinazzola.

elik himself appeared to feel guilty, quickly pulling his arm behind his body after making contact with the ball. There was a VAR check several moments later but the decision to play on was upheld.

I haven't re-watched it yet so I really can't comment," Mancini said.

We couldn't really see what happened from the bench.

In the next set of group matches, Italy stays in Rome to play Switzerland while Turkey travels to Baku to play Wales.

## Djokovic hands Nadal 3rd loss in 108 French Open matches

**PARIS, JUN 12 (AP):** Sprinting, sliding and stretching, anticipating each other's moves for four sets and more than four hours, Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal produced a masterpiece in the French Open semifinals.

Djokovic, as it happens, is one of only two men in tennis history who knows what it takes to beat Nadal at Roland Garros. And now Djokovic has done it twice this time ending Nadal's bid for a 14th championship there and record-breaking 21st Grand Slam title overall by coming back to win their 58th career matchup 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-2 on Friday night.

Just one of these nights and matches that you will remember forever, said the top-seeded Djokovic, who trailed 2-0 in the closing set before reeling off the last half-dozen games to reach his sixth final at the clay-court major tournament.

Definitely the best match that I was part of ever in Roland Garros, for me, and (one of the) top-three matches that I ever played in my entire career considering quality of tennis, playing my biggest rival on the court where he has had so much success and has been the dominant force in the last 15-plus years, Djokovic said, and the atmosphere, which was completely electric.

It was Nadal's third loss in 108 matches at a tournament he won each of the last four years, including by beating Djokovic in the 2020 final.

Nadal's first defeat at the French Open came against Robin Soderling in 2009; the next against Djokovic in 2015.

Each time you step on the court with him," Djokovic said, "you know that you have to kind of climb Mt. Everest to win against this guy here.

And to think: There wasn't even a trophy at stake in this one. That will happen Sunday, when Djokovic, a 34-year-old from Serbia, faces Stefanos Tsitsipas, a 22-year-old from Greece.

The fifth-seeded Tsitsipas edged sixth-seeded Alexander Zverev 6-3, 6-3, 4-6, 4-6, 6-3 earlier Friday to reach his first Grand Slam final. It's Djokovic's 29th as he seeks a second title at the French Open and 19th major championship overall to pull within one of the men's Slam mark shared by Nadal and Roger Federer.

Tsitsipas already had given away all of a two-set lead in his semifinal Friday when he double-faulted to trail love-40 in the opening game of the fifth. But Tsitsipas steeled himself to win five consecutive points, then broke to go up 3-1.

I'm someone who fights. I was not willing to give up yet. I think I did few things right that worked in my favor, said Tsitsipas, who entered the day 0-3 in major semifinals.

It was a breath of fresh air, that first game, he said. I felt revitalized.

His semifinal offered a measure of drama. But in truth, Tsitsipas-Zverev was merely an opening act before the headliners.

Nadal and Djokovic really riled up the raucous crowd at Court Philippe Chatrier.

Midway through the third set, Djokovic won a 23-stroke point with a forehand winner and windmilled his arms a half-dozen times, earning a standing ovation and chants of No-vak! No-vak! On the very next point, Nadal produced a forehand winner and screamed, prompting chants of Ra-fa! Ra-fa! and a wave in the stands.

Nadal acknowledged fatigue might have been a factor during his poor play in the tiebreaker, including a double-fault and a flubbed volley.

Mistakes can happen, the 35-year-old from Spain said.

But if you want to win, you can't make these mistakes.

That set alone lasted 1 hour, 33 minutes, and an 11 p.m. nationwide curfew in place because of COVID-19 was approaching. Djokovic's previous match had been delayed more than 20 minutes while the audience limited to 5,000 people under coronavirus restrictions was cleared out of the stadium, but an announcement was made Friday to let everyone know the government agreed to let them stay until the end of the match.

Earlier chants in French of We won't leave! were replaced by choruses of the national anthem and cheers of thanks for President Emmanuel Macron.

Nadal noted afterward that playing in the cooler night air meant balls bounced lower, lessening the effect of his lefty forehand's heavy topspin. That's more favorable for him, the conditions, Nadal said. By the way, doesn't matter. That's tennis. The player who (gets) used to the conditions better is the player who (deserves) to win. So no doubt, he deserved to win.

The intensity was palpable from the outset of the evening, and Nadal zoomed to a 5-0 lead, reminiscent of last year's final, which he won 6-0, 6-2, 7-5. That was only the fourth shutout set lost by Djokovic in 341 career Grand Slam matches up to that point and the first in a major final. There wouldn't be another Friday, because Djokovic made two key tactical adjustments moving much further back than usual to return serve and deciding to focus on serving toward Nadal's backhand and quickly made clear this would be a classic between two of the greatest ever at what they do.

They defended in ways rarely seen. Found the right mix of power and touch. Conjured up impossible-at-first-glance winners that no one else would try, let alone successfully employ. Returned as well as anyone, combining to generate 38 break points.



## Hong Kong democracy activist Agnes Chow released from jail

**HONG KONG (AP):** Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Agnes Chow was released from jail Saturday after serving more than six months for taking part in unauthorized assemblies during massive 2019 anti-government protests that triggered a crackdown on dissent in the former British colony.

Chow, 24, was greeted by a crowd of journalists as she left the Tai Lam Center for Women. She transferred from a prison van to a private car without making any remarks.

Only a small group of supporters were on the scene, an apparent reflection of the government's threats to jail those it deems in violation of a sweeping national security law that Beijing imposed on the territory a year ago.

The legislation has resulted in the arrests of leading democracy activists including Joshua Wong and Jimmy Lai, who are serving prison terms. Others have sought asylum abroad. Critics say China is now routinely violating commitments it made to preserve freedoms promised to Hong Kong for 50 years following the handover to Chinese rule in 1997.

Chow came to prominence while still a student during the 2014 "umbrella movement" calling for universal suffrage, alongside Wong and Nathan Law, who was granted political asylum in Britain in April. She has a large following in Japan, frequently visiting the country and posting on Twitter in her fluent Japanese.

The 2019 protests began as peaceful marches against proposed legislation that could have seen criminal suspects sent to China to face possible mistreatment and unfair trials. Though the legislation was withdrawn, protests swelled to demand universal suffrage and an investigation into police abuses, becoming increasingly violent as demonstrators responded to harsh police tactics.

China fought back with the national security law, which has snuffed out dissent in the semi-autonomous territory. Defendants say it intends to ensure those running the city are Chinese patriots committed to public order and economic development.

China also overhauled Hong Kong's Legislative Council to give pro-Beijing delegates an overwhelming majority. Hong Kong's media outlets are now almost completely dominated by pro-Beijing business groups and even independent booksellers have become rare. The national security law has also given authorities broad powers to monitor speech online, making it difficult to organize opposition gatherings or even express views critical of the government or Beijing.

An annual candlelight vigil for victims of the bloody suppression of the 1989 pro-democracy movement centered on Beijing's Tiananmen Square was canceled for the second time this year.

# Algeria votes for new parliament but activists plan boycott

**ALGIERS, ALGERIA (AP):** Algerians vote Saturday for a new parliament in an election with a majority of novice independent candidates running under new rules meant to satisfy demands of pro-democracy protesters and open the way to a "new Algeria."

Tension surrounded the voting in the gas-rich North African nation, with activists and opposition parties boycotting.

Authorities have tightened the screws on the Hirak protest movement in recent weeks, with police stopping weekly marches and arresting dozens, the latest a Hirak figure and two journalists. The three prominent opposition figures, including journalist Khaled Drareni, a press freedom advocate, were freed early Saturday, three days after their arrests, the National Committee for the Liberation of the Detained said.

The early election is supposed to exemplify President Abdelmadjid Tebboune's "new Algeria," with an emphasis on young candidates and those outside the political elite. A huge number of candidates — more than 20,000 — are running for the 407-seat legislature, once dominated by a two-party alliance considered unlikely to maintain its grip on parliament. Islamist parties all offered candidates.



It's the first legislative election since former President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was forced from office in 2019 after 20 years in power amid protests over corruption, joblessness and repression. Tebboune was elected eight months later.

The Constitutional Council announced Saturday that it would be 15 days before results of the balloting are known because of the number of candidates and the need to ensure against fraud, which marked past elections.

The threat of boycott by the main opposition parties and Hirak supporters means the turnout may be low. Photos on social media showed images of some voting sta-

tions in the Kabylie region, east of Algiers, torn asunder with ballots strewn in streets. Kabylie, home of Berbers, is a traditional bastion of the opposition.

"I call on Algerians to vote massively ... to deny the forecasts and catastrophic scenarios of the enemies of Algeria," Communications Minister Amar Belhimer said on Algerian television. He said that Algeria "doesn't need interna-

tional observers" to ensure a transparent elections.

Women make up half of candidates for the first time, among efforts to make a fresh start. But women have been largely invisible from the campaign — their faces often blurred or concealed in campaign posters.

Candidates had just 20 days to campaign, and Algerian media said real debate on major issues of concern, like

unemployment, was mostly absent. "With such a slew of candidates, the calculation of power is simple: to elect a patchwork assembly, without a majority, which will allow the president to create his own parliamentary majority with which he will govern," said political scientist Rachid Grime.

A new election authority was formed to run the vote, and its chief said results may take up to 10 days to tally given the large number of candidates and the new system.

Many candidates couldn't afford campaign posters. Independent candidates like Djamel Maafa, a former TV producer, used social networks to spread his message for lack of access to the funds and logistical structure of big parties. Parties supporting the Hirak movement called for a boycott because they want a more fundamental political transition.

"Elections in Algeria have always proved that they are not the solution. The solution lies in democratic transition, it also lies in a dialogue around a table in order to solve the crisis," said activist Sofiane Haddadji.

## Suns spoil Nikola Jokic's MVP party, beat Nuggets 116-102

**DENVER (AP):** Deandre Ayton scrutinized the box score and couldn't believe his eyes as he read Nikola Jokic's stat line: 32 points, 20 rebounds, 10 assists.

"That's insane. That's the MVP," Ayton said after the Phoenix Suns overcame the Joker's historic triple-double to thump Denver 116-102 Friday night, putting the Nuggets on the brink of elimination.

Following a raucous pregame ceremony celebrating his MVP award, Jokic joined Wilt Chamberlain and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the only players with 30 points, 20 boards and 10 assists in an NBA playoff game. Jokic, though, was apologetic afterward, telling his teammates this loss was on him because of his 13-for-29 shooting performance.

Nonsense, said Denver guard Monte Morris, who called Jokic's performance phenomenal.

"He's carrying us," Morris said. "We've got to help him."

Morris scored 21 off the bench but Denver's four other starters scored just 30 points, half by Michael Porter Jr., who was 5 of 13 from the floor.

Devin Booker scored 28 points and teamed with Chris Paul to lead a steady offensive on-



slaught that countered Jokic's big night.

"We knew this was going to be an emotional game for them with Joker being presented with the trophy before the game," Paul said. "We just talked about withstanding their runs."

Jokic seemed to consider his big game more horrific than historic.

"I'm frustrated with myself because I missed shots," said Jokic, who also missed four of nine free throws. "I didn't play on top of my game, especially shooting wise. It would be much easier for us if I started making shots. Of course, they're making it tough for me to make shots."

With their sixth straight victory, the second-seeded Suns took a 3-0 lead in the best-

of-seven series. Game 4 is Sunday at Ball Arena. Paul had 27 points, eight assists and three steals for the Suns, who pulled away after halftime for the third straight time. All five of Phoenix's starters scored in double figures. They are a one win away from their first trip to the Western Conference Finals since 2009-10 — which was the last time Phoenix made the playoffs.

The third-seeded Nuggets, who reached the conference finals last year, are on the brink of getting swept in a playoff series for the first time since the Lakers bounced them out of the first round in 2007-08.

Jokic dedicated his MVP award to his teammates during a loud pregame ceremony that

Nuggets coach Michael Malone had hoped would energize his team that has lost by 17, 25 and now 14 points in this second-round series.

"I just feel bad that we weren't able to pull out a win for them because they made this atmosphere electric," Malone said of the crowd of 18,277.

"During the trophy ceremony, we said right when they get off the court let's go out there and be locked in," Booker relayed.

Suns coach Monty Williams said his team was ready for the energy boost the big crowd supplied by serenading Jokic.

"We didn't want to disrespect Jokic's moment. At the same time, we also came here to win a game," Williams said. "That's

something we stressed for a while, being able to have poise in those moments. Whether it's an emotional fouling situation or something like tonight."

The Nuggets' first MVP was mostly MIA early on as the Suns shot a sizzling 74.46% in jumping out to a 37-27 lead after one quarter. Jokic scored seven points in that quarter but none until the 4:45 mark.

Malone, who accused his team of quitting after a blowout loss in Game 2, said before tip-off that he liked his team's resilience, and that opinion didn't change afterward.

"I thought our guys played really hard. I think we let it all out there," Malone said. "I really think this game came down to two things: turnovers" and the Suns' 14-2 run spanning the third and fourth quarter.

That's something they couldn't overcome, not even with their MVP giving them another epic MVP performance.

**TIP-INS:** Suns: Phoenix led by double digits much of the first half, but went cold over the final 90 seconds of the second quarter, allowing the Nuggets to pull to 59-55 at halftime. ... The Suns shot 50% in the first half both from beyond the arc and from the field, and they made all 11 of their free throws.

## 8 dead, 3 injured in China factory's chemical leak

**BEIJING (AP):** Eight people died and three others were injured when a toxic chemical leaked Saturday at a plant in the southwestern Chinese city of Guiyang, authorities said.

The leak happened as workers were unloading a shipment of methyl formate from a vehicle at a chemical handling facility. An investigation is underway, according to the China National Emergency Broadcasting. Methyl formate is used in a variety of chemical processes and as an insecticide. It can cause skin irritation and may be toxic if ingested or inhaled.

The Chinese economy's emphasis on chemicals and heavy industry

has led to frequent deadly accidents, often traced to weak adherence to safety standards and corruption among enforcement bodies. Those responsible are often handed harsh punishments, but high demand and the desire for profits often trump such concerns.

Industrial accidents, many involving chemicals, have killed hundreds in recent years, including 78 at a plant in eastern China in 2019.

Among the worst accidents was a massive 2015 explosion at a chemical warehouse in the port city of Tianjin that killed 173 people, most of them firefighters and police officers.

## Sri Lanka seeks initial \$40M from cargo ship's operator

**COLOMBO, SRI LANKA (AP):** Sri Lanka is seeking an interim claim of \$40 million from the operator of a fire-ravaged cargo ship to cover part of the cost of fighting the blaze, officials said Saturday.

Sri Lanka's attorney general has sent the claim to lawyers representing X-Press Feeders, the ship's operating company, said Darshani Lahandapura, head of the state-run Marine Pollution Protection Authority.

She said authorities were still assessing the total damag-

es, and the interim claim seeks compensation for expenses from May 20, when the ship caught fire, through June 1.

The fire broke out while the Singapore-flagged MV X-Press Pearl was anchored about 9.5 nautical miles (18 kilometers) northwest of the capital, Colombo, and waiting to enter the country's main port.

The Sri Lankan navy believes the blaze was caused by the vessel's chemical cargo, which included 25 tons of nitric acid and other chemicals, most of which

was destroyed in the fire. But debris including burned fiberglass and tons of plastic pellets have already polluted nearby beaches. There are concerns that a spill of remaining chemicals and oil on the ship could devastate marine life.

However, Sri Lankan authorities and the ship's operator say there's still no large oil spill.

The fire burned for 12 days before being extinguished last week. The ship then began sinking, and attempts to tow it into deeper waters failed when the

vessel's stern sank to the seabed. The ship remains partly submerged in waters about 21 meters (70 feet) deep.

On Friday, the government said it was testing water samples to determine whether the ship is leaking oil. The tests were prompted by satellite images from Planet Labs Inc. that showed a substance that could be oil in the water near the ship.

A Colombo court has banned the ship's captain, chief engineer and assistant engineer from leaving the country.





# Amy Winehouse's Best Friend Claims Her Being "Hounded" By Paparazzi Led to Her Death

Amy Winehouse's best friend and flatmate Tyler James recalls finding the singer after she died of alcohol poisoning on July 23, 2011.

Tyler James will never forget the day he came home to learn his best

friend Amy Winehouse had died of alcohol poisoning. As he tells The Sunday Times, just two days prior before she died of alcohol poisoning, he left the flat they shared in Camden Square as an act of tough love in the hopes she'd cease her drinking. James says, "I was running out of ideas."

It was just one of the many tactics James used to help his friend get back on the straight and narrow. He recalls, "Amy was my world. I never have had that connection with someone again and I never will. I loved her. I was on a mission. I had a task. I had

always stationed outside their home, saying, "It was like a film premiere out there." Comparing her to Britney Spears and Princess Diana, Jame says Winehouse was "hounded" by the media, which was "hard for her."

biggest thing that f-ked Amy up was being famous." This intense pressure caused Winehouse to detest her newfound fame, according to James, who wanted to be a celebrity, too.

When he'd talk about his yearning for fame and fortune, he says the Back to Black performer would tell him, "T, fame is like terminal cancer. I wouldn't wish it on anyone."

He describes how she eventually became reclusive and mistrustful of those around her, including him. James shares, "I was the only friend she had left by then, the only person around her all the time who wasn't paid to be around her."

James says since she's died, he struggles to go on with his life without the woman he calls "the love of my life." It was only a few years ago that he found comfort in writing about their experiences, which he has turned into the book *My Amy: The Life We Shared*, which was published on Thursday, June 10. Though she's no longer around, he often thinks of her, sharing, "I hope Amy is proud of me. I'm pretty sure she would be. I hope that she thinks I have been brave."

July will mark 10 years since the Grammy-winning singer died. In her honor, Winehouse's mom, Janis, has partnered with documentarians to share who Winehouse really was. As she announced in March, "I'm looking forward to the opportunity to offer an understanding of her roots and a deeper insight into the real Amy."

## Copyright holder settles lawsuit with LOVE artist's estate



**PORTLAND, MAINE (AP):**

The estate of pop artist Robert Indiana has reached a settlement that keeps intact a longstanding relationship with Morgan Art Foundation, which holds the copyright for his iconic 1960s "LOVE" series, to promote and preserve his work, officials said Friday.

New York-based Morgan Art Foundation intends to work with the Maine-based Star of Hope Foundation, which aims to transform Indiana's island home into a museum to celebrate his work.

While the museum takes shape, the two organizations will work to display Indiana's artwork at venues around the country.

"We've done a lot of good stuff, but it's overshadowed by the litigation," said Larry Sterrs, chair of the Star of Hope Foundation. Completion of the museum is likely years away, he said.

Indiana's estate, which is valued at upward of \$80 million, had been entangled in a lawsuit brought by Morgan Art Foundation. The lawsuit was filed the day before Indiana's death on May 19, 2018, at age 89 on Vinalhaven Island, 15 miles (25 kilometers) off Rockland, Maine.

It accused the reclusive artist's caretaker and an art publisher of taking advantage of Indiana and producing forgeries — accusations the pair denied. That led to more claims and counter claims.

Under the agreement, Morgan dropped its law-

suit against the estate and Indiana's caretaker but not against the art publisher.

It also doesn't resolve a case brought by Maine's attorney general, who claims the estate paid excessive legal fees during litigation. That lawsuit contends \$3.7 million paid to four law firms and about \$400,000 collected by the estate's personal representative were excessive.

Indiana created a lifetime of art but he's best known for LOVE, spelled with two letters to a line and with a tilted "O."

It's been transformed into sculptures around the world, and was featured on a U.S. postage stamp.

The goal is display such artwork in a home museum that's going to be created at Indiana's former residence in a converted Odd Fellows Hall, a Victorian-style building, on Vinalhaven. Indiana also had several other properties that could be utilized for the art museum, art education and artist-in-residency programs, Sterrs said.

In the meantime, though, Morgan Art Foundation and the Star of Hope Foundation will work together to get the artwork in front of people at venues around the world, Sterrs said. Most of the estate's \$80 million worth cited in court documents comes from the art collection.

"The future is bright for the market and legacy of Robert Indiana, and the estate is pleased to have helped create this success," said James Brannan, a Rockland attorney for the estate.

## Playing on at Italy's oldest music conservatory

**MILAN (AP):** Before the pandemic, students at Italy's oldest and largest music conservatory were always told to move "closer, closer, closer" when they played together.

"Because you need to hear each other," said Cristina Frosini, director of the Giuseppe Verdi Music Conservatory in Milan. "Even at a meter's distance, it is harder to play together."

In its 213 years, the conservatory has turned out talents including composer Giacomo Puccini, and conductors Claudio Abbado, Riccardo Muti, Riccardo Chailly and Cecilia Bartoli.

The pandemic, which struck Lombardy first in Italy, and Italy first in the West, cast the 1,700 students asunder. For the first months of total lockdown, they could only follow classes online.

When they returned to in-person instrumental instruction a year ago, students had to adjust to both distancing and playing behind plexiglass, whatever the instrument — flute, violin, piano, drums. Frosini said the safety measures worked: There have been only five cases of COVID-19 among students playing together.

"The students were happy because it was the only way to make music and be together. Psychologically, it was

very important," Frosini said. But musically, it has been challenging.

The adjustment was more difficult for the orchestras or chamber music groups, when the plexiglass dividers and the distancing rules meant it was difficult to hear the other musicians.

"When playing together, you need to be together, breathe together," Frosini said. And it wasn't just the physical distancing that was hard. It was also the absence of audiences.

"We made a recording during the period we were closed to the public, and it was very cold," she said, despite the high level of execution.

"I am a pianist and when you hear the audience in the silence, that they are listening to you, it gives you a charge. It is also important to have the applause of an audience," Frosini said.

The conservatory has staged two concerts this spring: one by the Verdi Jazz Orchestra in May and a symphony of Beethoven in June. Both sold out, and they added a second show for the Beethoven performance.

"It was an important message. The public wants to return to listening to live music, and the musicians finally had an audience," Frosini said.



**SING IT!** Singer Christina Aguilera took the stage at the Grand Opening of Virgin Hotel in Las Vegas.

Aries:

It's been a long and lonely lockdown, and you're yearning for the feel of the sand in your toes and the wind in your hair. A beach vacay may or may not be on the cards any time soon (unless you live someplace tropical). But that doesn't mean you can't get your daily dose of Vitamin D. Consider joining the 6am club, Aries. Even better, wake up at the crack of dawn. You'll get so much done before others will have even begun their day \*and\* feel energetic throughout.

Tip: Get your daily dose of Vitamin D, beautiful.

Taurus:

Our human mind is limited in so many ways. We tend to get stuck in the 'how' and the 'why' of things, not realising that we're simply the vehicle through which the Universe creates great change. So, instead of doubting your inspiration, see it through. Show up for what you believe in. Allow yourself to be consumed by the fire of passion. Being in alignment with your purpose will not only clear the path for you, but also bring forth the gifts of joy and abundance.

Tip: Stay in the energy of passion, wild one.

Gemini:

Listen up, Gemini! You're not going to get the entire road map in your hand in the first go. The downloads usually come in parts, and need to be pieced together

as you go along. So follow your inspiration. Let it take you to wild and unknown places. Remember, staying in the energy of passion is the secret to unlocking the gateway to miracles!

Tip: Stay in the energy of passion. That's all!

Cancer:

They say there are always three sides to every story: yours, theirs and the truth. Could it be that you're so hung up on yours that you haven't taken a moment to consider what the other person is going through? Instead of letting your shadow self overrule, tap into that space of compassion within. Hold space for an open and honest conversation. Finding a middle ground is not as far-fetched as it seems at the moment.

Tip: Focus on finding a middle ground.

Leo:

You've got 99 problems at hand, Leo, and trying to do everything at once isn't going to solve your crisis situation. What the cards are urging you to do: prioritise, prioritise, prioritise! Let the most important tasks make their way to the top of your to-do list as you delegate the less significant ones. As for the assignment that you've been resisting the most? Get it out of your way as soon as you wake up!

Tip: Consider the art of prioritising today.

Virgo:

Not all of us are fortunate enough to have a mentor who provides us with the right guidance and holds space for us to realise our highest potential. What you have is truly a gift, Virgo. Honour this connection in the way that it is meant to be. As you do, apply the principles which resonate with you. As such, this is also a time of honouring your inner Guru, and knowing that the voice of wisdom within will help you bring light to the dark places.

Tip: Honour your connection with your mentor or guide.

Libra:

Spoiler alert: The Universe is not a fan of mixed signals or indecision. So move beyond that space of duality and speak with complete clarity. Your words have the power to act as spells, Libra. When it comes to your interpersonal relationships, especially the romantic kind, express both your needs and wants. Remember, the other person will not know what's going on in your head until you give them a chance.

Tip: Your words have the power to act as spells.

Scorpio:

It's time to tap into your inner artist, Scorpio. To retreat to the unseen place between dream and reality. That place where surreal ideas begin to take form.

You are so much more gifted than you give yourself credit for being. On the downside, your interpersonal relationships could pose as a challenge today. The Universe is bringing your attention to the bonds that withered away with the passage of time and tide. You know who you're being asked to let go of. Honour your intuition without bringing guilt or shame into the equation.

Tip: Tap into your inner artist.

Sagittarius:

We live in a world that glorifies the masculine, whilst dishonouring the feminine. As a result, we end up suppressing our creative and intuitive side. Today, you're being asked to address the guilt associated with your inner artist. The artist who has the potential to set off a major revolution. Oh, the doors that will open for you when you begin to stay in the energy of passion!

Tip: It's time to take your power back, Sagittarius.

Capricorn:

The trouble is, we've been raised to believe that the Divine is outside of us and that we need the assistance of special mantras, rituals, and practices in order to communicate with the benevolent forces above. But that is far from the truth, Capricorn. You are an extension of Source energy and Source is dancing the dance of life through you. Today, you're being asked to meditate on the verse 'Aham Brahmasmi' from the Upanishads which translates to 'I am the Brahman (Universe)'.

Tip: It's time to move past the separation illusion.

Aquarius:

There's a new offer at hand, Aquarius, an offer that looks almost too good to be true. Trust that this opportunity has been created especially for you as you accept with grace what the Universe has in store. You are so, so worthy of this great change. Remember, stepping into the new can be nerve-racking. But if you give yourself a little bit of time, it will all begin to make sense to you.

Tip: A brand new opening could be on the cards—one that you've consciously called into your existence.

Pisces:

Letting go is seldom easy, especially when you're \*this\* attached to something or somebody. But the truth is in front of you, Pisces, and it's been in front of you for a while. So, do what you are being guided to, even if that means walking away. What the cards want you to remember is that you'll never have to give up on something that is truly meant to be yours.

Tip: You are so loved and so protected. Lean on your spirit guides and they will help you get through this.