



**'JOHN WICK: CHAPTER 4' ADDS  
POP STAR RINA SAWAYAMA**  
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**NOW, SHOW US THE SCIENCE**  
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**JOHN DAVIS, REAL SINGER BEHIND  
MILLIVANILLI, DIES AT 66**  
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# SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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## CM KEEPS HECTIC SCHEDULE INSPECTING SIKKIM'S COVID PREPARATION

### Restricted relaxations to lockdown being considered, CM announces while seeking responsible abidance

**NAMCHI, 29 MAY (IPR):** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang visited Namchi District Hospital and Covid Care Centre, today. Present during the visit were Minister Building and Housing Department, Sanjit Kharel, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling, Confidential Secretary to CM, Bikash Basnett, Additional Political Secretary (South), Anjeeta Rai alongside officials and councillors of Namchi Municipal Council. At the onset, Chief Minister visited the hostel of Namchi Girls Senior Secondary School which has been turned into Covid Care Centre. He took stock of the centre and briefly interacted with the medical team, patients and other staff stationed at the centre and wished them speedy recovery and assured that the State Government has and will assist in every possible way for the betterment and recovery of the Covid-19 patients.

Thereafter, he visited Namchi District Hospital and the various wards in it. The Chief Minister was appraised by CMO (South), Dr DC Sharma about the status of the hospital, the needed requirements including manpower and medical equipment.



Later, the Chief Minister also attended a coordination meeting with the HoDs and other officials at the Conference hall of South District Administrative Centre in order to work out the strategy to combat COVID-19 in the district.

The Chief Minister said that in a short span of time, health sector in the state has been

augmented at its best and the State Government has provided equipment, enrolled qualified doctors and other health care workers meant for the convenience and improved treatment of the masses.

The State Government has put up dialysis machines in the districts and arrangements of visit's from Super specialty doc-

tors has also been made available to the public.

Additionally, the Chief Minister informed that the State Government will provide a high-quality medical care to its citizens and for the same augmentation of health care sector will consistently be a priority. He also thanked the health care workers for holding the fort

particularly with the increased spurt of COVID-19 disease.

The Chief Minister underlined that COVID-19 has spread from urban to rural areas and highlighted the health sector to robustly follow Tracing, Testing and Treatment method and by doing so Symptomatic and Asymptomatic patients can be identified and can be nursed back to health.

While speaking about lockdown, the Chief Minister said that one and all should follow the guidelines issued by the State Government and that law and order should be maintained.

He also briefly spoke about the disadvantage of lockdown which can impact certain sections of the public and said that the State Government is looking into restricted relaxation for some business of which the notification will be released soon.

As for Pharma companies, the Chief Minister said that series of constructive regulations will be issued by the State Government which will consist of extending medical facilities, Covid Care Centre for the holistic benefit of the employees, extra wages and other assistance will also be framed.

...turn Pg2

## AE blames negligence by NHDCIL and contractor for damage to Namchi's water supply lines

**ARPAN PRADHAN  
GANGTOK, 29 MAY:**

A E-Namchi, PHE Department, has blamed carelessness by National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation [NHDCIL] and Nagyan Construction Pvt Ltd in the construction of a tunnel on the state highway for the damage suffered by the mainline water supply pipes at Rabongla Bye-Pass in South Sikkim.

He contends that the contractors have broken the water supply pipes several times in the past years as well.

"The feeder line which carries water from Bermelle to Namchi has been damaged due to the negligence of NHDCIL and Nagyan Construction Pvt Ltd which are constructing



a tunnel for the state highway. The work is being carried out without proper safety mechanisms as a result of which a landslide occurred in the area yesterday. As soon as we got the message, I and a PHED team went to slide zone at Rabongla Bye-pass road to check the damage. We tried to restore the pipes but could not do it as even a bench

to lay a pipe was not left. Currently we are providing water from two new sources which have water available only during the monsoons," the Assistant Engineer said.

He also informs that the concerned company and the District Collector, South, have been notified and requested at least four times to shift the water supply lines. Only recently, the office of the

AE was informed that the shifting has been sanctioned, but the construction company hastened its work and has now damaged the main water source to Namchi.

As a result, Namchi has not been receiving drinking water supply from PHE for two days.

For monsoons, as mentioned earlier, an alternate source has already been planned from Ghattey Khola near Ghurpisey and Gaddi Khola near Damthang, work on which is expected to be completed today.

As for restoration of the main supply line, this will be possible only after a bridge or a wall is built in the damaged area, he informs.

What is also worrying is that continuing spillage from the broken supply lines could cause severe damage to villages

## South Sikkim hit by slew of slides



**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 29 MAY:**

Heavy rainfall occurred in South Sikkim on 27 May resulting in landslides at several places such as Dantum, Simkharkha, Dadung, Dew, Ben-Thalabari, Thaka, Doring Donga, Chirag, Runkay, Ningnang, Sangmo etc. of different GPUs.

The completed and on-going construction road portion of NH-510 from Tarku to

Ravangla faced heavy damage in different types of protection wall such as completed top surfaces of road (WMM), completed road covered by DBM (Dense Bituminous Macadam), etc. Prime Contractor appointed for road construction M/s. S & P Infrastructure Developers (Pvt) Ltd is suffering from heavy financial losses which is more than Rs3 crores (Approx).

## Namchi gets a Command and Control Centre

**NAMCHI, 29 MAY [IPR]:** An Integrated Command and Control Centre was inaugurated by Chairperson Namchi Municipal Council, Ganesh Rai, today.

Present amongst others were DC (South), M Bharani Kumar, ADC (South), Satyan Kr Pradhan, SDPO (South), Kesang D Bhutia, Additional Chief Town Planner, Namchi Smart City Ltd, Navin Rai, officials and councillors.



This command centre cum Covid-19 War Room has been set up to monitor real time Covid-19 cases in the district and

will focus on Covid Care Centre, case distribution, infection chart and other aspects of Covid-19 in the South district.

## Labour Deptt meets pharma company reps, issues advisory

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 29 MAY:**

The Labour Department convened an emergency meeting on Friday with representatives from pharmaceutical companies and has issued an advisory for these units.

The pharmaceutical companies, "as far as possible," make arrangement for workers to reside within the company premises. In the event that such residential arrangements cannot be made, then companies should rent buildings or

hotels to house the workers so that their movement is minimised, the advisory suggests.

Pharma companies have also been advised to establish dedicated Covid Care Centres and isolation facilities for their Covid-positive workers and depute para-medical staff to attend to them.

These companies have also been advised to constitute Task Forces to monitor positive cases, covid care centres, relief, area mapping etc and submit weekly

reports to the Labour Department.

To encourage attendance, the advisory also suggests that an incentive of Rs 300 per day be provided to workers who report for duty during the lockdown. This incentive is to be with effect from the date of issue of the advisory, 28 May.

The meeting at which the advisory was arrived at was chaired by the Labour Minister and also attended by the Secretary, Labour Department.

## In reassuring development, daily cases nosedive despite record number of testing

**SUMMIT REPORT  
GANGTOK, 29 MAY:**

After reporting more than 400 daily cases for past two days, Sikkim registered a substantial drop in new cases today with a substantially low number [by comparison], 273, new cases of novel coronavirus being in the last 24 hours. What is even more reassuring is that this drop in new cases was despite a record number of tests. These cases were detected from the screening of 1,695 samples. The previous record for tests in a day was 1,495.

Unfortunately, Sikkim could not draw solace from this number since over the same 24 hours, the State also lost four more lives to the virus. Sikkim has now lost 247 lives to Covid. While three deaths were reported from Central Referral Hospital, Tadong, one was from STNM Hospital.

In the meantime, Sikkim's figure of recovered cases further improved to 10,616 with the discharge of 231 more formerly Covid-positive people from home isolation on Friday.

Out of the 273 new cases, 183 were registered in East District, 54 in South District, 31 in West District and five in North Sikkim. While 204 cases were found in RT-PCR testing of 856 samples, 69 more tested positive for COVID-19 in rapid antigen testing of 827 samples.

There are currently 3,831 active cases of coronavirus in Sikkim, of whom 15 are currently in ICU at STNM Hospital and 10 in ICU at CRH, Tadong.

Sikkim's tally of the confirmed cases of COVID-19 has now reached 14,907.

## CM congratulates PM on completing two years of second innings in office

**GANGTOK, 29 MAY:** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang extended warm wishes to the NDA government on the completion of two years of its second term, a press communique from the Chief Minister's Office informs.

In his letter to the Prime Minister, he addressed the challenges faced by the country since last year and acknowledged the dynamic and firm leadership of the Prime Minister in dealing with the pandemic, the release adds.

Speaking about vaccines, the Chief Minister commended that India has been among the few nations that have been able to produce vaccines adding that more than 20 crore Indian citizens have been vaccinated to date and have supplied 6.63 crore vials to 95 countries across the world.

Similarly, he also mentioned the recent production of 2DG anti-COVID drug by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) which has been helping patients recover quickly, citing it as a prime example of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'.

Further, he stated that the financial implications brought on by the pandemic have been difficult but under the leadership of the Prime Minister the country has

continued with the commitment towards building public infrastructure and utilities that are necessary for lifting the masses out of poverty, ensuring equitable growth.

On matters of security, the Chief Minister lauded the efforts of the Central government on their stance against anti-social elements and preventing unrest. He also added that the persistence in planning and execution of strategies by the military and the diplomats have been successful in maintaining the territorial integrity of the country and also expressed his gratitude to them.

He also highlighted the three bills related to the agriculture reforms which will assist in moving away from the system left by the British which were not fair. The Chief Minister believes that these reforms will establish a favourable system in the country and benefit the farmers. He commended the Prime Minister for his compassion towards the marginalised sections of the society.

Towards the end, the Chief Minister thanked the Prime Minister for his love and support for the Sikkimese people and his intervention towards helping the people of Sikkim during these trying times.

## COVID-19 HELPLINE NUMBERS FOR THE STATE OF SIKKIM

**STATE- (03592) - 201145 / 205256 / 220070, 1070**  
**EAST DISTRICT - (03592) - 204995**  
**WEST DISTRICT - 8768664356 / 9635054731**  
**SOUTH DISTRICT - 9339624796 / 9564226981 / 8653456458**  
**NORTH DISTRICT - 9635833880 / 9635833888**

*Issued by - Secretary, State Level Covid-19 Management Group, Government of Sikkim.*



# HC wants Govt to explain outbreak in monasteries

**SUMMIT REPORT**  
**GANGTOK, 29 MAY:**

The High Court of Sikkim has taken cognisance of the recent outbreak of Novel Coronavirus in some monasteries and directed the State Government to "explain the reasons for the aforesaid carelessness/ negligence and apprise the Court about the steps taken."

In an order issued on 25 May, the High Court bench comprising of Chief Justice Jitendra Kumar Maheshwari and Justice Bhaskar Raj Pradhan, draws attention to news-reports of monks found positive in two monasteries here in East Sikkim. At the time of the hearing, they numbered 99 in two monasteries and at the time of filing of this report, the number has gone past 300 and covers three monasteries.

The Justices direct that "It must be explained that whether they have been contaminated due to their visit to perform the rituals of the Covid-19 patients or otherwise, how, once the Monasteries are closed, there cannot be a question of effecting everyone and especially, only in these two monasteries in the State, therefore, the State must explain the reasons for the aforesaid carelessness/negligence and apprise the Court about

the steps taken."

The Court was hearing a Public Interest Litigation on the State's Covid Management based on a letter petition received by it last year and has appointed Jorgay Namkha as the Amicus Curiae to assist the High Court in hearing the case.

The Justices also delved into the vaccination process and pointed out the "discriminatory" attitude is opening vaccination slots for 18 to 44 year olds only in East district.

"Learned Additional Advocate General has made an attempt to satisfy this Court that in other Districts citizens above the age group of 45 years have been provided vaccine except to the age group of 18-45 years which is only in the East Sikkim. This appears to be discriminatory," the Order comments while observing that the State Government "must have" carved out a vaccination policy.

It now wants the State to "produce" this policy before the Court along with details of supply and availability of vaccines in the districts and complete data on vaccination.

The Court has also taken up the absence of RT-PCR testing at the district level and has been in-

formed in the past that a VRD Lab has been proposed for Jorethang to cater to South and West Sikkim. The status of Oxygen supply has also been enquired into the Court and sharp observations passed on the inadequacy of the health infrastructure in North Sikkim.

What can only be called bureaucratic ineptitude also attracts some sharp comments from the Bench.

"The State Government, being welfare State, since the time of pandemic from February 2020, must have assessed the resources available and how it can be augmented, if problem arises in the State. Therefore, it is a matter of policy with the State Government. The response filed by the State Government from time to time is voluminous but what was the policy decision for augmenting pandemic situation is not on record," the Order of 25 May observes.

The Central Government is also a respondent in the PIL and for it, the State Government has issued the following order: "The Central Government shall explain that as and when the help was sought on the above issues and other ancillary issues by the State Governments it was made immediately available to them."

## Restricted relaxations to lockdown being considered

The Chief Minister reiterated that 300 bedded hospital to be constructed in Namchi will commence soon and the ground work for the construction has been cleared by the State Government. With the same spirit, a Covid Care Centre will be set up at State Institute of Capacity Building, Karfector which shall cater to patients of South and West Districts.

The Chief Minister also pointed out that the State Government is preparing for mitigation and management of the possible 3rd wave of COVID-19. The needs of the health care sections revolving around infrastructure, oxygen plant and lifesaving drugs supply to the state is also being assessed. He stated that ample child care wards will also be set up so as to tackle the disease in an aggressive manner. He further informed that a committee to advice on Mucormycosis is also being formed and added that adequate stocks of drugs to treat mucormycosis is also being ensured by the State Government. The Chief Minister also added that series of measures have been taken to break the chain of transmission and that the State Government will dedicatedly fight this virus while ensuring the best interest of its citizens.

Speaking during the meeting, DC (South), M Bharani Kumar appraised the gathering about COVID-19 management in the South District. He informed about the Covid Care Centre's, its functioning and other aspects that the district administration has undertaken to deal with the disease. He also spoke about the village and ward level covid management committee and also highlighted about the various works being carrying out by these committee members in the district. He also spoke about the Integrated Command and Control Centre cum Covid-19 War Room which has been established at Namchi and will monitor the covid cases, covering the entire district.

## CM inspects CCCs in West Sikkim

**GYALSHING, 29 MAY [IPR]:** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang reached West district this afternoon to take stock of the arrangements and facilities available at the various designated Covid

Care Centres and healthcare centres in the district.

The CM visited the Village Administrative Centre (VAC) at Gyalshing-Omchung GPU, Gyalshing District Hospital and Nurs-

ing Training Centre, Gyalshing.

He enquired about the health of the Covid-positive patients at the centres and instructed the officials in-charge to provide wholesome meals and

supplements on regular basis.

Nutritious food and vitamin supplies were also distributed to the Covid patients at VAC Gyalshing-Omchung VAC and Nursing Training Centre.

## Daily COVID-19 count in India lowest in 45 days

**NEW DELHI, MAY 29 (PTI):** The single day rise in coronavirus cases was recorded at 1,73,790, the lowest in last 45 days, taking India's total tally of COVID-19 cases to 2,77,29,247, according to the Union health ministry data updated on Saturday.

The daily positivity further declined to 8.36 per cent, remaining below 10 per cent for five consecutive days, while the weekly positivity rate dropped to 9.84 per cent, it said.

The death toll climbed to 3,22,512 with 3,617 daily deaths, the data updated by the ministry at 8 am showed.

Also, 20,80,048 tests were conducted on Friday taking the total cumulative tests conducted so far for detection of COVID-19 in the country to 34,11,19,909.

The active cases have further reduced to 22,28,724 with a decline of 1,14,428 cases being recorded in the active caseload. It now comprises 8.04 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 90.80 per cent.



The number of people who have recuperated from the disease surged to 2,51,78,011 while the case fatality rate stands at 1.16 per cent, the data stated. The daily recoveries outnumbered the daily new cases for the 16th consecutive day.

The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses administered in the country exceeded 20.89 crore on Saturday under the nationwide vaccination drive, the ministry said. India is the second country after the US to achieve the vaccination landmark of 20 crore, it added.

A total of 20,89,02,445 vaccine doses have been administered through 29,72,971 sessions, according to the provision-

al report till 7 am on Saturday.

India's COVID-19 tally had crossed the 20-lakh mark on August 7, 30 lakh on August 23, 40 lakh on September 5 and 50 lakh on September 16.

It went past 60 lakh on September 28, 70 lakh on October 11, crossed 80 lakh on October 29, 90 lakh on November 20 and surpassed the one-crore mark on December 19. India crossed the grim milestone of 2 crore on May 4.

The 3,617 new fatalities include 973 from Maharashtra, 486 from Tamil Nadu, 401 from Karnataka, 194 from Kerala, 176 from Punjab, 154 from Uttar Pradesh, 145 from West Bengal, 139 from Delhi and 103

from Andhra Pradesh.

A total of 3,22,512 deaths have been reported so far in the country including 93,198 from Maharashtra, 27,806 from Karnataka, 23,951 from Delhi, 22,775 from Tamil Nadu, 20,053 from Uttar Pradesh, 15,120 from West Bengal, 14,180 from Punjab and 12,915 from Chhattisgarh.

The health ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths occurred due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

## CM inspects CCC facilities at SICB



**NAMCHI, 29 MAY [IPR]:** Chief Minister PS Tamang visited State Institute of Capacity Building (SICB) Karfector today. This Institute has been identified as one of the Covid Care Centres which

shall cater to the public of South and West Districts. The Chief Minister enquired regarding the necessary equipment and health care professionals to be put up at

the Institute. The Chief Minister informed that most COVID-19 positive patients from South and West District are being taken to Gangtok for treatment and this Institute has been picked out

to serve the covid positive patients of both the two District.

CMO (South), DC Sharma update regarding the arrangement to be put up in this covid care facility.

## CM visits Covid Care Centers at Paljor Stadium and Saramsa



**GANGTOK, 29 MAY [IPR]:** Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang visited the designated COVID Care Centers at Paljor Stadium and Saramsa today and took stock of the infrastructure and treatment facilities available at the two centres.

The CM was accompanied by Minister Sanjit

Kharel, Political Secretary to CM, Jacob Khaling and Confidential Secretary to CM, Bikash Basnett.

He also interacted with the patients from a distance and said that the State government is providing the best possible care for their well-being. He encour-

aged them to stay optimistic and further urged them to spread awareness on Covid guidelines and SOPs to be strictly followed to curb the outbreak in rural areas.

The CM handed over vitamin supplies to the Covid Care Center management teams for distribution to the patients at

both the Centers.

He has further directed Special DGP, Law & Order, Akshay Sachdeva, to immediately issue orders directing the local law enforcement and police personnel posted at districts to enforce and ensure strict social gathering norms and guidelines.

## Bengal's Covid death count crosses 15,000-mark

**KOLKATA, MAY 28 (PTI):** West Bengal's Covid-19 death toll on Friday crossed the 15,000-mark after 145 more people succumbed to the disease, the health department said.

The tally mounted to 13,43,442 after 12,193 fresh cases of infection were reported in the state.

The total number of fatalities is 15,120 now, the department said in a bulletin.

The state registered 19,396 recoveries improving the discharge rate to 90.70 per cent. The number of people who have been cured of the disease has thus gone up to 12,18,516.

Accordingly, the number of active cases also slipped to 1,09,806.

North 24 Parganas accounted for 42 deaths while Kolkata registered 36 Covid fatalities. The rest of the deaths were reported from several other districts of West Bengal.

## Obituary



*we inform you the sudden demise of*

**Mrs. Bhannu Khawas**  
*retired teacher of Lower Shyari Primary School and wife of Mr. C. B. Bhujel retired DFO on May 25, 2021.*

*Survived by her loving husband Mr. C. B. Bhujel, son Mr. Roshan Raj Bhujel, daughter Mrs. Susan Bhujel, son in law Mr. Richel Tshering La and grand daughter Ms. Sernya La.*

*In this Covid19 pandemic situation it is requested that none should visit the family however the family members can be reached on these numbers - 8250705837, 9775913252, 8585059227.*





## Denzong Sherpa Assoc celebrates Int'l Everest Day



### SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 29 MAY:

Denzong Sherpa Association celebrated the 14th International Everest Day and the 107th birth anniversary of Everest Tenzing Norgay Sherpa with a scaled down function at Tenzing-Hillary Park at Uttarey, West Sikkim on 29 May.

DSA president, Pema Wangchuk Sherpa, along with other members offered prayers and tribute to the Late Tenzing Norgay Sherpa on the occasion.

Denzong Sherpa Association also reiterated its demand seeking the Bharat Ratna for Tenzing Norgay Sherpa. Also today, DSA mourned all the lives lost to Covid-19 around the world.

## Aid for those orphaned by Covid in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra readies policy

**NEW DELHI, 29 MAY [NDTV]:** Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have joined the list of states reaching out to children who lost their parents to Covid amid India's battle against a deadly second wave.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin has announced an assistance of ₹ 5 lakh to children who lost both their parents. He further said the state government will bear education costs for these children till graduation level.

In Maharashtra, Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray has asked the state's Women and Child Development department to prepare a policy to assist children who have lost one or both parents to Covid.

Addressing a virtual meeting, Mr Thackeray said the plan must include information on provision for their upbringing and education, said the Chief Minister's Office.

The Chief Minister

also asked the department to communicate with the recently formed pediatric task force to prepare guidelines to shield children from the pandemic.

With the second wave pushing up the number of deaths across the country, many children have lost both parents or the earning parent and now stare at an uncertain future.

Union Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani has said that according to reports from states and Union Territories, 577 children were orphaned between April 1 and May 25 this year. The government is committed to support and protect these children, she said.

The Supreme Court has asked the states to ensure that the necessities of children orphaned during the pandemic are taken care of.

Hearing a case linked to Covid infection in child protection homes,

the Supreme Court said yesterday: "The Covid pandemic has created an unprecedented situation and has a cascading effect on vulnerable children. Authorities must identify children who were orphaned due to the pandemic or otherwise and take steps to address their basic needs."

The court has also asked states to collate data on children orphaned since March 2020, when the nationwide lockdown was imposed to control Covid cases, and upload it on the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights portal.

Several states have so far offered assistance ranging from financial aid and free education to children who have been orphaned. These include Delhi, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

# Financial incentive reached ASHA workers in Pakyong



**GANGTOK, 29 MAY (IPR):**

The concluding day of the distribution of one-time financial incentive of Rs 10,000 each to ASHA workers was held here at the Community Hall of Pakyong in East Sikkim today.

Namcheybong MLA, Em Prasad Sharma, graced the programme as chief guest. He was accompanied by Additional

Political Secretary to the CM, East, Tshering Wangchuk Lepcha, SKM area in-charge, Gnathang-Machong, Tshering Bhutia, Chairpersons Ganja Bhutia and Karma Tshering Bhutia, Advisor, Food and Supplies Department, In-chung Bhutia, Additional District Collector, Pakyong, Tenzing Denzongpa, Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Pakyong, Milan Rai,

Block Development Officer, Pakyong, Nilkanth Bhandari, and Block Development Officer, Parkha, Pradeep Gurung along with police personnel, doctors, health officials and the ASHA workers of Namcheybong and Gnathang-Machong area.

The MLA acknowledged the consistent efforts and contributions

of the ASHA workers during the Covid-19 outbreak in the State.

He urged all to take the ongoing Covid-19 situation seriously and encouraged them to follow healthy lifestyle and practices. He urged the ASHA workers to sensitize the public about the Do's and Don'ts of the Covid-19 protocol in rural areas

and to instill positive thoughts in the minds of Covid-19 positive patients.

The Additional Political Secretary to the CM, in his brief address, applauded the dedication of the ASHA workers throughout the pandemic and called for collective effort from all in the fight against Covid-19 in the State.

## Lingi Payong School hosts Parent Teacher Virtual Meet

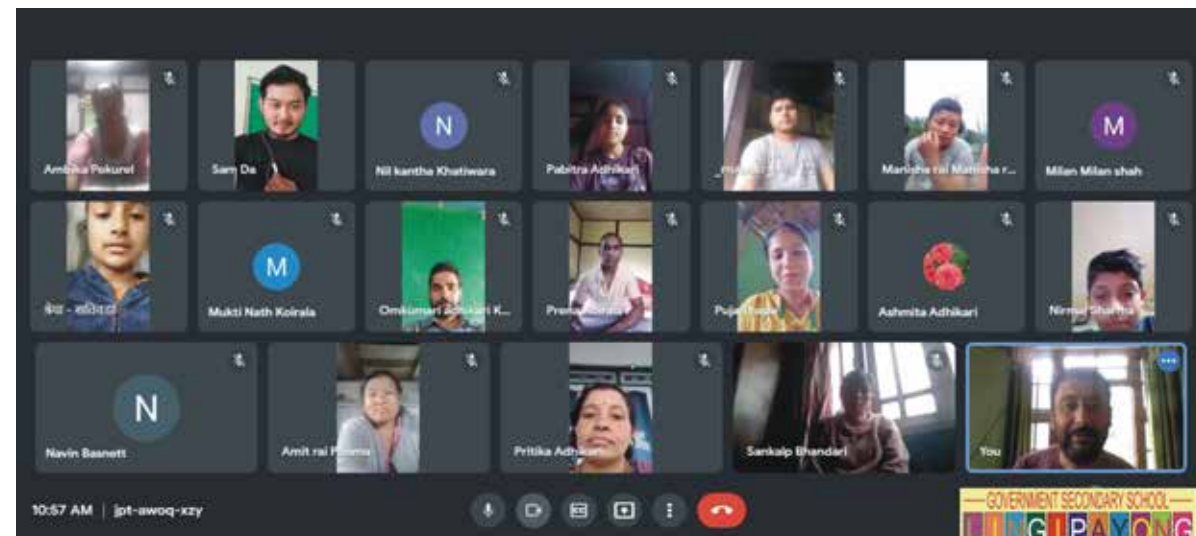
### SUMMIT REPORT

LINGIPAYONG, 29 MAY:

A virtual meet between a faculty of vocational education and parents of students of Lingi Payong Secondary School was held via Google Meet on Saturday.

The meeting was organised at the behest of Tourism faculty, Samir Gurung as suggested by SiBIN, the agency looking after vocational education in secondary and senior secondary schools of Sikkim.

The objective of meeting was to sensitize parents and students about various aspects on ongoing virtual teaching learning process and



guide them to undertake the same in a proper manner.

The meeting was also attended by headmaster of school, Suraj Kumar

Sharma. He urged the parents and the students to properly use the digital medium of teaching learning including the use of Sik-

kim Edutech App developed by Education Department Government of Sikkim.

The parents and students also expressed

their views on the progress of ongoing online/virtual teaching learning and assured the school to co-operate in the best possible way.

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### CEPCS distributes ration to laborers

Gangtok, 29 May: Social Service Committee of Council of Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Sikkim (CEPCS) distributed free dry ration as relief to more than 60 daily wage/migrant labourers residing in & around Pangthang & Penlong Area today with the cooperation of Penlong EPCS Church.

## Don't insult me like this: Mamata Banerjee to PM after meeting row

**KOLKATA, 29 MAY [NDTV]:** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Saturday hit back at Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government a day after a bitter face-off over a meeting to review the damage from Cyclone Yaas, accusing his office of feeding "fake, one-sided, partisan news" to the media. "Don't insult me like this. We have got a landslide victory, is that why you are behaving like this? You tried everything and lost. Why are you quarrelling with us every day?" Ms Banerjee said at a news conference "to set things straight".

Her outburst came after the centre ordered her top bureaucrat to return to Delhi, sources in the central government told reporters that Ms Banerjee had "skipped" a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister, and photos showing her vacant seat were plastered on social media by BJP leaders.

Ms Banerjee had a quick 15-minute interaction with him at an airbase where his flight landed and did not attend the review meeting, the government had said.

The Chief Minister said she had to visit a coastal district - plans that were an-

nounced earlier - and so she asked the PM's permission before leaving.

"I had made plans to visit cyclone-hit areas. I had to travel to Sagar and Digba to see the damage caused by Cyclone Yaas. All my plans were made and ready... then suddenly we get a call that Prime Minister wants to visit Bengal to assess the situation after the cyclone," Ms Banerjee said.

She also alleged that the Prime Minister had called the meeting only to settle political scores and invited the opposition, which includes his party BJP, and the governor

Jagdeep Dhankhar - a departure from the similar cyclone review meetings he had held in Odisha and Gujarat recently.

Ms Banerjee contested the central government's claim that she made the Prime Minister and Governor wait for 30 minutes, saying it was she who had to wait for PM Modi at the tarmac for 20 minutes.

"By the time we were reached the place where the PM-CM meeting was to be held, we found out that the PM had already arrived there some time ago and that there was a meeting going on. We

were asked to wait outside, told that there will be no entry at the moment because a meeting is going on. We waited patiently for a while. Then, when we asked again, we were told that no one can enter for the next one hour," she said.

"Then someone told us that the meeting has moved to the conference hall, so the Chief Secretary and I decided to go there. When we reached there, we saw the PM was in a meeting with the Honourable Governor, central leaders and even some MLAs of the opposition party," Ms Banerjee said.

"This was clearly against the brief. It was supposed to be only a PM-CM meeting. So, we decided to submit our report to the PM and then with the Prime Minister's permission we went to Digba. I sought the Prime Minister's permission three times," she said.

Ms Banerjee said she was "willing to touch the Prime Minister's feet if it soothed his ego" because she wanted what was best for the people of Bengal. She requested him to withdraw the transfer orders for the Chief Secretary and called it an insult of bureaucrats across the country.

The encounter between PM Modi and Ms Banerjee on Friday was their first since the April-May assembly election that the Chief Minister's Trinamool Congress party won, despite a no-holds-barred campaign marked by extensive poaching and coarse rhetoric.

Ties between the two sides have been icy since long before the elections, with the Trinamool government accusing the centre of withholding funds owed to the state and the BJP stoking a communal divide, while the BJP has blamed Ms Banerjee's party of political violence.



## Now, Show Us the Science If Covid is to be contained, data will have to be respected

A video news-report posted on this newspaper's Facebook Page went viral two days back. In less than eight hours, it went past one lakh views and received comments [actual comments and not just emojis] in more hundreds than is usually seen for news-reports. The report about the fracas at Gangtok's Lall Bazaar when a team in PPE Kits arrived at the gates unannounced to carry out Rapid Antigen Testing had everything going for it - drama, high emotions, confrontation, stereotypes and confusion. People were drawn to it by the drama, but what is important is that they stayed with it because the report highlighted many things which are misdirected in how the State is managing Covid. Interestingly, the follow-up report also developed similar traction, and for the same reasons. This piece was originally written when the incident occurred, but was held back when the comments section on the post and bytes by the affected vendors fleshed out the episode and its problems much better. Now that the dust has settled, it is again time to go over the lessons once, hence this piece was dusted up and updated.

All vendors were offended by the raid-like nature of the initiative to carry out Covid tests. They were also scared, not so much by the prospect of getting tested against their will as by the force that was being brought down on them to ensure compliance. This was a normal response because vendors were ambushed by the full force of the State in the form of cops, elected representatives and doctors in personal protective gear. They panicked. They got angry. And eventually they complied. Over two days, 550 of them were screened for Covid and around 12 of them tested positive. They also calmed down overnight and on Friday were giving polite statements thanking the government for bringing testing to their midst.

The story ends there. But then, does it? Should a chapter be considered closed if the lessons remain unlearnt?

There is no denying that random testing needs to be carried out. Ideally, Sikkim should have done so before the second wave crashed into the State so that Covid cases were detected early even among asymptomatic people and the administrators got a better sense of how deep the virus has spread in the general population. It is never too late for such an exercise though and it is welcome that doorstep testing is being carried out at places which have emerged as Covid clusters. Such an exercise helps contain the virus, detects people before they develop medical complications and achieves what ideas like mini-containment are expected to achieve - lock up the virus, screen the people, clear those who are negative and help the positive recuperate and receive medical attention in time. The Lall Bazaar exercise achieved only limited success. It is good that 12 probably asymptomatic Covid-positive vendors were detected and sent to home and facility isolation. None of them required hospitalisation so it can be safely vouched that none of them were spreading the virus.

But was the surprise check conducted to serve the vendors? Unlikely, given the ambush they were hit with. If their wellbeing was the priority, they would have been consulted and khadas exchanged when the testing crew arrived. So, has the testing made shopping at Lall Bazaar any safer than it already was? Not really, since a negative result is no guarantee against future infections or transmission.

The intentions were clearly well-meaning, but the initiative was so obviously misdirected. Any lay person constantly doom-scrolling Covid news will be scared of visiting Lall Bazaar. However, responsible social distancing and proper masking should be enough to make shopping there safe. If the idea was to make Lall Bazaar a safe-from-infection space, such screening is of limited use unless the "negative" vendors who have still not received their Covishield shots were vaccinated on priority. What the move has achieved though is calm people who see Lall Bazaar as a potential Covid hotspot because its positivity rate is much lower than any other area where such an exercise has been carried out, including among government office workers. The 2.18% Test Positivity Rate at Lall Bazaar is in fact lower than what even WHO sees as low infection rates. One also hopes that this does not lead to slack observance of Covid-appropriate behaviour by shoppers and shop-keepers.

The manner in which the tests were forced, meanwhile, leaves a lot to be desired and underlines the problem with how Covid is being managed in not just Sikkim, but the nation at large. A year of fighting a losing battle against the virus should have convinced us that enforcement is not the right approach. If people had been taken into confidence, two days of the State's limited resources would not have been consumed by this exercise and could have been deployed elsewhere for at least a day and a half. There are other still unaddressed potential clusters that require attention. For instance the pharma units where outbreaks have been consistently reported ever since the first wave. A similar testing crew would have screened the workforce at three pharma units at least in the time they spent at Lall Bazaar. And this is where data becomes important. What we fear has to be sifted from what is rationally a problem area. Before sealing up Lall Bazaar for screening, the data should have been analysed to establish that shopping there has led to infections. While there is no evidence in the public domain to suggest that this has happened, the scale of outbreaks among pharma workers establishes that infections have happened in the workplace. And still the workers are being tested at home and no accountability established on the managements beyond notifications which are not implemented with the same vigour that MG Marg is kept clear of strollers. Yes, pharma units are providing an essential service, so the responsibility to keep them in operation is not just the state's but also the managements. When infections happen in the workplace, the managements should be pulled up for having failed in their responsibility to ensure that an essential service is not hindered...

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# Reparations for Slavery and Colonial Abuses: How Behavioural Science Can Help

DAVID COMERFORD  
THECONVERSATION.COM

Germany has agreed to pay Namibia more than €1.1 billion (£940 million) in reparations for committing genocide during the colonial occupation of the country a century ago. It's a landmark deal that will create a 30-year programme of investment in infrastructure, healthcare and training programmes in Namibia.

But it wasn't easy reaching this agreement. Negotiations have been ongoing since 2015. Last year, Germany offered Namibia €10 million (£8.6 million) but the Namibian authorities rejected it.

And while the latest deal may set a precedent for the victims and descendants of victims of historic abuses seeking reparations payments - calls for which have grown in the last year in response to the Black Lives Matter movement - there are still many obstacles.

Alongside how to reach such agreements, one of the biggest questions is how to agree reparations in a way that helps heal society rather than causes further division. Behavioural science is a discipline that has made a study of how identity and emotion relate to money, so I believe the field has insights for the reparations issue.

Namibia's rejection of Germany's initial offer will come as no surprise to those familiar with the ultimatum game. In this experimental economics game, there are two players, G and N. G is arbitrarily given

some money, say £10. N receives nothing. G must select how much, if any, of the cash to share with N. N can accept G's offer or reject it. If N rejects then neither G nor N receive anything - both go home empty handed.

Economic theory offers a prediction: G offers N some tiny amount of wealth because N would be made materially better off by taking even a paltry sum of money rather than refusing it. That prediction has been refuted time and again and across cultures. In reality, N typically rejects the offer if it is only a small proportion of the initial endowment. The common sense that explains this result is reflected in everyday language when we talk of an offer as being "insultingly low".

A minimum criterion for reparations is that they avoid being insultingly low by adequately recognising the harm caused. But there is also a balance to be struck in making sure reparations, which are inherently aimed at specific groups, don't create more division by leaving out others who may have suffered harm in different ways.

### ESTIMATING HARM

The first step then is to rigorously take account of the harms inflicted. That can be extremely difficult. Even where the historic record is unambiguous and agreed upon, there is rarely the data available to accurately assess the harms people have suffered.

To compound the issue, some harms are so difficult to assess for

in the first place - for example, the emotional distress experienced by descendants - or so widespread - such as the pervasive legacy of racism in society - as to be uncountable. In the absence of data-based estimates, there is greater scope for subjectivity to sway the debate and hinder attempts to arrive at acceptable compensation.

Even where the data does allow accurate estimation of the causal impact of historic harms, the next question is how much money is required to compensate for them. This question is also very difficult to answer.

Canvassing public opinion is an option, but behavioural scientists often find people's answers are incoherent. In public opinion experiments, the conclusion reached by legal scholar Cass Sunstein and psychologist and economics Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman, is that people answer these questions by reporting their general attitudes rather than their considered evaluations of the specific situations.

So far the problems outlined have been technical: how to measure harm on a money scale. Now the substantial problems begin. How to divide the compensation across groups? There is a human tendency to overestimate one's own burden relative to others'.

Ask two partners in a relationship what percentage of housework they do and, for the majority of couples, the answers will add up to a total that exceeds 100%.

That violation of statistics occurs in a case where there is nothing at stake. Imagine how fraught things get when the stakes include large sums of money and issues of identity and victimhood. In this sense, any attempt simply to "compensate" for specific atrocities looks likely to provoke resentments among groups that have been differently harmed.

But there are other approaches. This month France launches a "memories and truth" commission to shed light on its acts during the Algerian war. If reparations are part of the process, philosopher Leif Wenar advocates that they should serve the function of improving future relations rather than of compensating for past wrongs.

The climate crisis offers former colonial powers an opportunity to make a positive contribution in this regard. Everyone agrees that global carbon emissions must reduce but the big question remains: who has to reduce their production and consumption? The countries that are most developed today got that way because they exploited the Earth's resources and people in the past. A reasonable way to proceed is for developed countries to make sacrifices and give less-developed countries their turn.

[the writer is Senior Lecturer of Economics and Behavioural Science, University of Stirling]

# Friends: Making Audiences Laugh by Embracing the Unexpected in Conversation

ELIZABETH STOKOE  
THECONVERSATION.COM

The Friends reunion has undoubtedly been one of the biggest TV events of the year so far.

Over its ten series, the sitcom about a group of 20- and 30-somethings in New York had a massive cultural impact. It attracted plenty of scholarly analysis, including critiques of its gender and race politics. Its scripts inspired my own research as a professor of social interaction.

Love it or loathe it (and I loved it), one of the striking things about Friends was that much of the humour depended on clever conversational devices, not just set-piece jokes or one-liners. Instead, the scriptwriters seemed to embrace the unexpected in conversation.

Think about the conversational rules for a successful invitation.

A: What are you up to this evening?

B: Nothing much.

A: Want to go to the cinema?

B: Okay, great.

The design of an invitation - and any other action in conversation - depends on who we're asking, what kind of relationship we have, what's at stake and how important an acceptance (or rejection) is. These sorts of contingencies shape everything we say.

In the example above, B responds positively to A - doing what conversation analysts call a "preferred turn". Although it might seem obvious that the "preferred" response to an invitation is acceptance, it's not so obvious what the preferred response to a compliment is.

If an invitation's "preferred" response is acceptance, the best ways to ensure a positive outcome is to lead up to it, using a "pre" question like, "What are you up to this evening?" This lays the groundwork for a possible invitation, depending on B's answer. We design what we say to help those we're talking to avoid having to give negative responses.

Breaching these rules is one way that the Friends' scriptwriters got audiences laughing from the very beginning.

### GENERATING THE BIG LAUGHS

In one scene, Joey asks Phoebe if she'd like to help build furniture.

Joey: Hey Pheebs, you wanna help?

Phoebe: Ohhh!! I wish I could, but I don't want to.

And the audience erupts in laughter.

Saying "yes" would mean giving the "preferred" response. It would most likely be done immediately, without elaboration, and it probably would not be funny. We can tell that Phoebe is going to say "no" when she says "Ohhh!! I wish I could". This looks like it will be the start of a regular kind of rejection, showing an appreciation of the invitation and giving an excuse before turning it down.

But she follows this with: "I don't want to." Although this does provide an explanation for saying "no", it's not the sort of reason generally found in rejections. The usual way to say "no" is to say



that you cannot accept the invitation, not that you don't want to accept it. In ordinary conversation, such a turn might start an argument.

### THE ONE WITH THE INVITATION

Earlier in the same scene, Ross asks Rachel if she wants to come to help him assemble the furniture.

But just before his invitation, Ross asks, "So Rachel what're you, uh, what're you up to tonight?" We can recognise this as leading up to something - it's a "pre-invitation". If Rachel is busy, Ross can avoid rejection by not issuing the invitation in the first place.

She replies: "Well, I was kinda supposed to be headed for Aruba on my honeymoon. So nothing!" Rachel could block any forthcoming invitation. But she gives Ross the conversational "go-ahead".

Ross: If you don't feel like being alone tonight, uh Joey an' Chandler are comin' over to help me put together my, my new furniture.

Rachel: Well actually thanks, but I think I'm just gonna hang out here tonight. It's been a long day.

Ross: Oh sure, okay. Sure.

Invitations can, of course, be accepted or declined. But these aren't equally valued alternatives. Rachel turns down the invitation - it's a "dispreferred" response. Such responses are more intricate than saying "yes". Just look at how many words it takes Rachel to say "no".

Dispreferred responses often occur after a delay. They may start with words like "well", as Rachel's does. They may contain an appreciation - as

Rachel's does ("actually thanks"). They may also contain explanations or excuses for why the speaker cannot produce the preferred response - as Rachel's does ("it's been a long day").

But because it contains all these features, Rachel has said "no" in the regular way. There's no breach. It's not funny. The audience doesn't laugh.

Pre-questions and "preference" were a regular device for the scriptwriters. For example, in another episode, a new scene starts with Monica asking Phoebe a question.

Monica: Hey Pheebs. You know what I'm thinking?

Phoebe: Oh!! Okay. It's been so long since you've had sex you're wondering if they've changed it?

And the audience laughs. Rather than treat Monica's question as a pre-question leading to some kind of announcement - and requiring a go-ahead (like, "what?") - Phoebe responds to the form not the function of Monica's question, treating it literally as an invitation to guess what she is thinking.

The Friends scriptwriters' methods for generating laughter make the usually hidden conventions of language-use visible. Creating humour this way, as well as through misunderstandings and non-sequiturs, was even used by Shakespeare. Whether the humour of Friends will appeal to audiences in another decade or century we cannot say, but leveraging the rules of social interaction is likely to keep us laughing for some time to come.

[the writer is Professor of Social Interaction, Loughborough University]



# Nepal facing rising edible oil prices amid pandemic

**KRISHANA PRASAIN**

**KATHMANDU, 29 MAY [KATHMANDUPOST]:** Nepal is facing the double whammy of soaring market prices and a devastating pandemic, consumer rights activists said.

The price of essential items like edible oil has almost doubled in recent weeks, even as the people are having to make do with reduced incomes as the coronavirus has destroyed jobs and businesses, consumer rights activists said.

Sunflower, soybean and mustard oils have become dearer as unscrupulous traders try to take advantage of political instability and a society living amid a tense situation with the pandemic running wild, according to insiders.

The price of sunflower oil jumped to Rs300 per litre from Rs235 within a few days, while soybean oil now costs Rs250, up from Rs210.

The price of mustard oil price went up to Rs350 per litre from Rs200 after the lockdown was announced, said retailers.

"Prices rose steeply after the government announced snap elections and shut down the markets completely as it enforced a more stringent lockdown," said Madhav Timilsina, president of the Consumer Rights Investigation Forum.

"Domestic traders are hiking prices unnaturally under the pretext of rising raw material prices," he said.

"While the lockdown that has lasted a month shaved earnings, the price of basic essential food items is doubling," said Radha Basnet of Kupondol as she painfully

paid Rs290 for a one-litre bottle of sunflower oil.

"Cooking is impossible without edible oil. It is absolutely necessary. But government activity in the market to control prices of essential food products is zero," she said.

According to Nepal Rastra Bank, the price of ghee and oil in mid-April was 21.38 percent higher year on year.

Former commerce secretary Purushottam Ojha said that three things mainly cause an increase in the price of edible oil—a rise in the price of raw materials at source, an increase in the tariff by the government and unfair trade practices.

"The price of edible oil has increased by more than 30 percent which is too high," Ojha told the Post. "Edible oil falls under basic essential food items, and the government should regulate its distribution," he said.

The Department of Commerce, Supplies and Consumer Protection should do a market analysis of the price hike and inform the people, he said. "The government should undertake the responsibility of controlling prices and regulate the food market by gathering data of the inventory of edible oil, both raw and refined, and analysing it."

Traders taking advantage of zero tariff have exported more than 90 percent of the refined edible oil produced in Nepal to India in the past 10 months, Ojha said. Edible oil shipments account for 35 percent of the country's total exports, but that does



not have any contribution to the national economy, he added.

"If excess exports are the reason for the sharp rise in prices, then it needs to be brought under control so that the price does not rise exorbitantly," Ojha said.

"The government should be ready for rapid action instead of issuing directives. The tariff and duties can be reduced to provide relief to consumers at a time of crisis or export quotas can be imposed to ensure sufficient supply in the domestic market," he said.

Despite adequate imports of crude soybean and sunflower oils, consumers are paying high prices to cook their vegetables.

The rise in the price of crude oil in the international market is

considered to be one of the factors for the surging price of edible oil. India is also facing the highest level of edible oil price surges in over a decade.

Figures issued by the Department of Customs show that the country imported crude sunflower oil worth Rs12.15 billion in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year with exports reaching Rs1.70 billion during the same period. The country imported 103.911 million litres of crude sunflower oil during the review period.

Nepal imports most of its crude sunflower oil requirements from Ukraine, Russia and Argentina.

During the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, Nepal imported crude soybean oil worth

Rs39.46 billion and exported refined soybean oil valued at Rs35.75 billion. The country imported 355.29 million litres of crude soybean oil during the review period.

Nepal bought most of its soybean oil from Argentina, Egypt, Paraguay and Ukraine.

In recent months, the export of soybean oil has been increasing as traders changed tack to keep exploiting trade preferential loopholes after the Indian government squeezed palm oil imports.

With Nepal's soybean oil exports starting to reach sky-high levels despite near zero domestic production, the Indian government officially asked the Nepal government to check the authenticity of the certificate of origin is-

sued to local exporters.

"As the country is going through a health crisis, people are not able to go out and are forced to pay whatever prices traders say, so the government should take the responsibility," said Ojha.

Domestic manufacturers are exporting edible oil to India to make a profit as prices have increased in the Indian market, creating shortage in the domestic market, he said.

Timilsina said that the department was staying away from the matter saying that rising international prices of raw materials had led to increased market prices in Nepal, which is wrong. "The government lacks data about imports, shipment dates, stocks and supply, consumer and factory prices and changes in prices," he said.

Apart from swelling prices, Timilsina said he had been receiving complaints about the quality and quantity of edible oil.

Prakash Poudel, director general of the department, said that they were collecting information from producers regarding the reasons behind the hike in prices.

"Based on the preliminary information we have collected, we have found that there is a huge difference between the factory price and the maximum retail price," he said. "This might be due to a rise in raw material prices and increased mark-up."

He admitted that producers had been raising prices continuously in recent months. "We would have inspected their factories; but due to the coronavirus, we have not been able to do so," he added.

## Everest climbing season extended to June 3, in a rare event, as scores wait for weather to clear

**SANGAM PRASAIN**

**KATHMANDU, 29 MAY [KATHMANDUPOST]:** In an extremely rare move, Nepal has extended the spring mountaineering season to climb Everest to June 3 as scores of climbers are still waiting for fair weather to make their bid to reach the summit of the 8,848.86-metre peak.

The season traditionally ends at the end of May but two back to back cyclones in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal have disrupted climbing activities.

Mira Acharya, director at the Department of Tourism, the agency responsible for issuing climbing permits, said that the department on Friday decided to allow the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee to extend the closing date of the spring Everest climbing season.

"As there are many climbers who have completed their acclimatization and are waiting for good weather at Everest base camp [5,300 metres] and Camp 2 [6,400 metres], we have decided to give them a chance to make their summit bids after reassessing the weather forecast which had been expected to be favourable at the end of May," said Acharya.

Since 1997, the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee has been entrusted with the task of preparing the climbing route through the Khumbu icefall up to Camp 2 during the climbing season.

This year, amid Covid-19 pandemic, Nepal issued a record 408 climbing permits. With each climber hiring one guide, the

total number of climbers was expected to be more than 800.

According to expedition outfitters, around 350 climbers have reached the summit so far, the last of them summiting on May 26 and the first of them on May 7.

But there are still around 250 climbers who are waiting at the base camp and Camp 2 waiting for the weather to improve, according to officials and outfitters.

Nearly 200 climbers have abandoned their climbs citing risk of coronavirus infections amid shortage of sherpas.

Exact figure on how many climbers have been affected is not available, but according to expedition outfitters, most of the infected are the sherpas, whose number is estimated to be more than three dozen.

Although the weather was reported to be fine for climbing on May 20 and 21, the plan was affected because of Cyclone Tauktae on the Arabian Sea.

Then came Cyclone Yaas, which wreaked havoc on east Indian coastal states earlier this week and has left various parts of Nepal also drenched in rain. Meteorologists have predicted more adverse weather conditions across Nepal for the next few days. Nepal's Home Ministry in a notice on Thursday had asked expedition agencies to immediately return from the mountains.

But on Friday, the Tourism Department issued a statement that all people in the Everest region are fine although weather has been caus-

ing havoc, mostly for the people stationed at Camp 2.

Nepal's spring season generally ends at the end of May as after that the four-month-long monsoon season begins and the government's decision could be a breach of mountaineering safety protocols. However, officials said since there has been a heavy snowfall in the Everest region since May 25, it does not raise significant risks.

"This decision has been made in consultation with the Department of Tourism and Expedition Operator's Association considering the adverse weather conditions in Everest region due to the effect of Cyclone Yaas. We request all expedition teams at the Everest base camp and Camp II to remain safe," the Sagarmatha Pollution Control Committee committee said in its notice issued on Friday.

It's highly risky to walk around the Khumbu Icefall route in June because millions of tonnes of ice-fall start to melt in the summer heat. The section, which is also the route to the 8,516-metre Lhotse, the world's fourth-highest peak and the 7,861-metre Nuptse, passes over deep crevasses.

On April 18, 2014, an overhanging wedge of ice on the western spur of Everest broke, resulting in an ice avalanche that killed sixteen climbing Sherpas on the Khumbu icefall. Thirteen bodies were recovered while three of the bodies were buried beneath the frozen debris and never found.

This was the same icefall where the 1970 Mount Everest disaster had taken place. On April 5, 1970, an

ice-fall avalanche in the Khumbu icefall killed six sherpas.

But due to the winter-like situation even in summer this year with the heavy snowfall, Khumbu icefall route would not pose a risk, according to Ang Tshering Sherpa, former president of Nepal Mountaineering Association.

"After May 30 normally the icefall doctors start dismantling the route across Khumbu icefall announcing the end of the spring season because it's too risky to climb in June," said Sherpa. "When the ice melts in the icefall section due to summer heat, there are high chances of avalanches when the lower sections develop cracks."

He, however, said that since there has been a heavy snowfall on Everest, the icefall route would not be affected much this year.

"The snowfall on Everest makes climbing easy," he said.

In every climbing season, icefall doctors – highly skilled and experienced Sherpas of the committee—fix ropes and aluminum ladders to prepare the route.

According to the Tourism Ministry data, successful climbs on Everest in June have been rare.

On June 2, 2005, an American David C Morton, two Brazilians Waldemar Niclevich and Iravan Gustavo Burda and a Nepali Pemba Chhori Sherpa had climbed Everest from the Nepali side—the first such climb.

In the same year, on June 5, American climbers Claybourne Fox Clarke, Daniel Lee Mazur and two Nepalis Tenji Sherpa and Lakpa Sherpa had also reached the summit.

## Assam reports 80 more COVID deaths, 5,436 fresh cases

**GUWAHATI, MAY 28 (PTI):** Assam's coronavirus caseload mounted to 3,98,010 on Friday as 5,436 people tested positive for the infection while 80 new fatalities pushed the COVID-19 death toll to 3,168, the National Health Mission bulletin said.

Rajya Sabha MP and state Congress president Ripun Bora tested positive on Friday and urged all who came in contact with him to get tested.

"I have tested COVID positive. All those in close proximity with me in the last one week are requested to kindly get themselves tested", Bora tweeted.

At present, Assam has 53,317 COVID-19 active cases.

Kamrup (Metro) re-

ported nine deaths, followed by seven in Cachar, six in Karimganj, five each in Dibrugarh, Golaghat, Jorhat and Tinsukia, four each in Darrang, Lakhimpur and Sivasagar, and three each in Barpeta, Goalpara, Hojai and Sonitpur.

The current death rate is 0.80 per cent and the number of COVID-19 positive patients dying due to other comorbidities is 1,347, the bulletin said. As many as 3,40, 178 patients have recovered from the infection, including 5,760 on Friday. The COVID-19 recovery rate is 85.47 per cent.

The new cases detected during the day include 595 from Kamrup Metro, 431 from Cachar, 418 from Dibrugarh, 386

each from Tinsukia and Nagaon.

All together 107,45,956 samples were tested for COVID-19 in the state, including 1,22, 977 on Friday.

A total of 32,02,886 persons have received the first dose of vaccine and 8,23,260 persons have got the second dose.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday said that he was confident that the COVID positivity rate and death rate would soon come down in the state.

He said that 5 lakh people in Kamrup Metro have been vaccinated so far out of the target of 12 lakh and direction has been given to conduct COVID inoculation at a fast pace in Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, and other towns where the positivity rate is high.

The chief minister on Friday visited the Sarusajai Sports Complex in the city and reviewed the ongoing construction of the 300-bed COVID hospital being set up by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).

The Assam government had signed an MoU with DRDO to set up the COVID facility with 100 ICU beds and 200 beds with oxygen support.

The DRDO is expected to hand over the facility to the state government in the first week of June and this hospital would greatly augment the COVID treatment infrastructure, he said.

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# Italy warms up for Euros with 7-0 win over San Marino



**CAGLIARI, MAY 29 (AP):** Federico Bernardeschi scored one goal and set up two more in Italy's 7-0 win over San Marino in a European Championship warmup. Italy coach Roberto Mancini used mostly reserves before he decides on his 26-man list for Euro 2020 over the weekend. We still have some question marks, Mancini said. We need to choose between a couple of great players. Bernardeschi boosted his chances of more playing time at the Euros by opening the scoring with a long-range effort in the 31st. He set up substitute Andrea Belotti for

another goal after the break following an exchange with the Torino center forward. Bernardeschi also produced strong work down the left flank that led to Matteo Pessina's second goal four minutes from time. It was a stark contrast from Bernardeschi's performances at Juventus, where he has struggled recently. He's always done well with us," Mancini said. "He helped us qualify. Matteo Politano also had a brace for the Azzurri and Gian Marco Ferrari also scored. Moise Kean, who is slated to be third choice at center forward behind Ciro Immo-

bile and Belotti, struggled. But Mancini said Kean received a knock early on and was in pain when he exited after the first half. San Marino is last in the FIFA rankings at No. 210. Italy extended its unbeaten streak to 26 matches. That's the second longest run in the team's history, trailing only a 30-match streak from 1935-39 under Vittorio Pozzo. The Azzurri face the Czech Republic in Bologna next Friday in another warmup then host Turkey in Rome to open the Euros a week later. Switzerland and Wales are also in Group A with Italy.

# Korda wins all-US duel to book Parma final vsCecchinato



**PARMA (ITALY), MAY 29 (AP):** Sebastian Korda beat sixth-seeded Tommy Paul in an all-American semifinal at the Emilia-Romagna Open to reach his first ATP final. The 63rd-ranked Korda, who has not dropped a set all week in Parma, won 6-3, 6-3 in 82 minutes to book a spot against Italian wild card Marco Cecchinato. If Korda wins on Saturday he will be the first American in 11 years to lift a trophy

on European clay, since Sam Querrey won in Belgrade in 2010. It's going to be tough (playing an Italian in Italy), but it's probably going to be super fun, Korda said. Another new experience. My first ATP clay-court final. I'm super excited, and whatever happens tomorrow I will give it my all. Hopefully we can play a good match. Korda broke four times and fended off eight of nine break

points on his serve. Korda also beat Paul in Delray Beach in January in their only other meeting. In the earlier semifinal, Cecchinato recovered from a second-set setback to prevail over Jaume Munar of Spain 7-6 (2), 1-6, 6-1 after more than 2 1/2 hours. The 104th-ranked Cecchinato also had to save a set point on his serve at 5-3 down in the opener, then broke back and eventually took the set to the tie-

break. All the points were hard but I was always focused, in particular on my serve, Cecchinato said. "At the beginning I didn't have good sensations but then I improved. The third set finished 6-1 but the scoreboard is certainly a liar, it was a hard battle right to the end." Cecchinato is going for his fourth career ATP singles title, all on clay, and first since 2019.

# Galaxy: Defender Derrick Williams targeted with racial abuse

**CARSON (US), MAY 29 (AP):** The LA Galaxy say new defender Derrick Williams was a recent target of racial abuse on social media after committing a red-card foul that ended the season of Portland's Andy Polo. The Major League Soccer club is working with the league and the proper authorities to identify the abusers, the Galaxy said Friday in a team statement. People who are talking like that, I hope we can find out who they are and we can deal with them, Galaxy coach Greg

Vanney said. Because it's nonsense, it's inappropriate, and much worse than that, to be honest. Williams was born in Germany to an Irish mother and a Black American father, and he plays internationally for Ireland, where he grew up. The Galaxy signed the former Aston Villa prospect last March from Blackburn Rovers, and he has started four matches in his first season state-side. This abhorrent language and behavior have no place in our sport or

in our society, the Galaxy's statement read. We will take the appropriate next steps to protect Derrick and all of our players from these acts of hate. Williams was sent off in the 44th minute of the Galaxy's 3-0 loss at Portland last Saturday after a dangerous tackle on Polo, who will miss the rest of the season after rupturing his quadriceps muscle and tearing the meniscus in his left knee. Williams could face additional discipline from the league for his tackle. Portland scored



all three of its goals in the second half while the Galaxy were a man down. Obviously, he was incredibly remorseful, Vanney said. He reached out to (Polo) in the moment. He reached out to the player after. The loser right now

in this is the player who is out for the rest of the year. Derrick is now suffering from some other things that should not be happening and taking place, whether it's social media or whatnot, that are complete nonsense as well.

# Michael Jordan donates \$1M to Morehouse journalism, sports



**ATLANTA (US), MAY 29 (AP):** Basketball great Michael Jordan and Nike's Jordan Brand are giving 1 million to Morehouse College in Atlanta to boost journalism and sports-related studies. The gift announced Friday will help enrich its journalism and sports program that was originally launched with a donation from director and actor Spike Lee. The school, in a news release, said the donation will help fund scholarships, technology and educational programming for students in those fields. Morehouse is grateful to Michael Jordan and Jordan Brand for an investment in the education of talented men of color who will ensure there is equity, balance, and truth in the way sports stories are framed and the way the Black experience is contextualized within American history, said Monique Dozier, vice president for institutional advancement at Morehouse. The donation is part of a larger philanthropic donation by Jordan and Jor-

dan Brand called the Black Community Commitment, which has directed donations to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture and the Ida B. Wells Society, among other organizations. Education is crucial for understanding the Black experience today, Jordan said. We want to help people understand the truth of our past and help tell the stories that will shape our future. The program, which has focused on the lack of Black leadership in sports journalism and athletics, has produced more than 80 graduates who now work in media and sports. Lee, a 1979 Morehouse graduate, said there would be a rich legacy of storytellers who will be supported by these programs. Many people are influenced to think a certain way about Black folks based on what they see on television and in Hollywood. We've got to tell our story, he said.

# Remainder of IPL set to be played in United Arab Emirates



**NEW DELHI (AP):** The remainder of the Indian Premier League will be held in the United Arab Emirates in September and October, the Board of Control for Cricket in India said Saturday. IPL, the world's richest Twenty20 league, was suspended earlier this month in India after some players and team staff returned positive tests for the coronavirus

when a bio-secure bubble was breached. Nearly 30 IPL games were held in four Indian cities before the league was shut down. The BCCI said in a statement on Saturday that the decision to take the league to UAE was made during a special general meeting of the cricket board and "members unanimously agreed to resume the IPL."

The cricket board also said since it will be monsoon season in the months of September and October in India, the decision was taken to complete the league in the UAE. India is also scheduled to host the Twenty20 World Cup in October and November with UAE as the backup venue lined up by the International Cricket Council.

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# Australia says citizen is in arbitrary detention in China

**CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA (AP):** Australia considers the incarceration of a Chinese Australian writer who has been tried in Beijing for alleged espionage a case of arbitrary detention, the foreign minister said. Yang Hengjun faced a closed trial on Thursday. The court deferred its verdict to a later date. “Given our enduring concerns about this case, including the lack of detail as to the charges and the investigation made available to Dr. Yang and to Australia, we consider this to be an instance of arbitrary detention of an Australian

citizen,” Foreign Minister Marise Payne said in a statement Friday. Australia first warned its citizens of the risk of arbitrary detention if they visited China in a travel advisory in July last year. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade advised that Chinese “authorities have detained foreigners because they’re ‘endangering national security,’ ” adding that Australians may also be at risk. The Chinese Embassy in Australia dismissed the warning as “ridiculous” and “disinformation.” Australian Embassy of-

ficials visited Yang in detention on Friday and gave assurances that Australia stood by him and his family “at this very difficult time,” Payne said. It was the 20th consular visit since Yang was taken into custody on arrival in China in January 2019. Ambassador Graham Fletcher was denied entry to the court on Thursday. Payne said Australian officials’ presence at the court entrance reinforced her government’s support for Yang and “our deep concerns with what continues to be a closed and opaque process.”

Chinese authorities have not released any details of the charges against Yang, a novelist who reportedly formerly worked for China’s Ministry of State Security as an intelligence agent. Yang has denied the accusation against him, and while a conviction is virtually certain, it isn’t clear when the verdict will be handed down. The espionage charge carries penalties ranging from three years in prison to the death penalty. China’s Foreign Ministry said China was following international practice

in barring observers from attending a case involving state secrets. The trial comes at a time of deteriorating relations between the two countries, brought on by Chinese retaliation against Australian legislation against covert foreign interference in its domestic politics, the exclusion of telecommunications giant Huawei from Australia’s 5G phone network, and calls for an independent investigation into the origins of the COVID-19 outbreak that was first detected in China in late 2019. Beijing has essentially

suspended all but the most routine contacts between the sides, while state media and the Foreign Ministry routinely attack Australia as adopting anti-Chinese policies at the behest of the United States, China’s main geopolitical rival. Australian journalists Michael Smith of the Australian Financial Review and Bill Birtles of the Australian Broadcasting Corp. fled China in September after sheltering in Australian diplomatic compounds following demands for questioning by Chinese authorities. They were allowed to depart China under a deal brokered

between the two governments, leaving Australian media without a physical presence in the country. Before their departure, Chinese police questioned both journalists about Australian citizen Cheng Lei, a business news anchor for CGNT, China’s English-language state media channel, who had been detained a month earlier. China says Cheng has been lawfully detained on suspicion of violating Chinese national security laws. China has blocked Australian exports, including beef, wine, coal, lobsters, wood and barley.

## Belarusians increasingly cornered after EU cuts air links

**KYIV, UKRAINE (AP):** As fear of repression rises among Belarusians following the arrest of a dissident journalist whose plane was forcibly diverted to Minsk, those who want to leave the country are feeling increasingly cornered. Its land borders already were under tight restrictions, and now the European Union has banned flights from Belarus after a jetliner was diverted to Minsk earlier this week and authorities arrested a dissident journalist who was aboard. That leaves opposition-minded Belarusians with few options to get out from under the authoritarian rule of President Alexander Lukashenko. “Shutting the borders turns Belarus into a can of rotting preserves. We are being turned into hostages,” said TatsianaHatsura-Yavorska, who leads a rights group that helps those released from prison adapt to life and also organizes documentary film festivals. “The authorities have scaled up repressions in recent months to incite the atmosphere of fear,” she told The Associated Press.



Hatsura-Yavorska said most of her friends and associates have faced detention, searches and brutal beatings, and many have fled Belarus. She served 10 days in jail after organizing a photo exhibition about medical workers in the coronavirus pandemic that authorities decided leaned toward the opposition. She faces charges that could land her in prison for three years. Lukashenko, who has led the former Soviet nation of

9.3 million for more than a quarter century, has faced unprecedented protests after his reelection to a sixth term in an August 2020 vote that the opposition rejects as rigged. He has responded to the demonstrations with a fierce clampdown that has left more than 35,000 people arrested and thousands of them beaten. Hatsura-Yavorska said following her arrest last month, she was put in an ice cold cell for two days without a mattress

and was forced to wake up every two hours at night. The authorities released her after 10 days on the condition she not leave the city pending a criminal investigation on charges of “organizing actions that violate public order.” “Who would like to remain in such a country?” she said by phone. “The authorities have divided all citizens into loyalists and enemies, and treat us accordingly.” Hatsura-Yavorska’s Ukrainian husband was ordered

to leave Belarus along with their 9-year-old son and was barred from returning for 10 years. “They used my son to blackmail me. They beat me during interrogations and threatened to put me in jail and pushed me out of the country in the end,” VolodymyrYavorsky told the AP in Kyiv. “I couldn’t imagine that I would find myself in hell in the middle of Europe. Belarus is being shut closed right before our eyes, and millions of Belarusians are finding themselves hostage.” He communicates with his wife via the internet, but fears the Belarusian authorities will move to tighten controls over it. “Public protest has continued, and so the authorities ... close everything they can reach — borders, organizations and websites,” he said. “They are turning Belarus into a scorched land.” Belarus tightened restrictions at its land border in December. Those willing to cross must explain their reason, such as work, medical care or education, and can only do it once every six months. On Sunday, a Ryanair plane traveling from Greece to Lithuania with dissident

journalist Raman Pratasevich aboard was diverted to Minsk after Belarusian flight controllers told the jet’s crew to land there because of a bomb threat. Authorities then arrested Pratasevich, who ran a channel on a messaging app that was used to organize demonstrations against Lukashenko. EU leaders denounced it as akin to air piracy and responded by barring Belarusian carriers from the bloc’s airspace and airports. “The air boycott has hurt not only the regime but ricocheted against its opponents willing to leave the country,” said ArtyomShraybman, a Minsk-based independent political analyst. While Belarusian carriers have been banned from EU airspace, they are allowed to fly to other destinations. Arriving in Tbilisi, Georgia, on a flight from Belarus, a man said “people are trying to leave and those who can go to Europe are trying to do so.” The traveler, who asked to be identified only by his first name, Anatoly, for fear of reprisal, said the Ryanair flight’s diversion has deepened his concerns about his

country’s course, noting that “people can’t guarantee their future, can’t guarantee the future of their children.” Alena, another Belarusian traveler who similarly asked for her last name to be withheld, said people who can afford to leave Belarus will try to do so amid what she described as a “brutal” government response to protests. SviatlanaTsikhanouskaya, the main opposition challenger in the August vote, urged the EU to ramp up sanctions and banish Belarus from Interpol and the International Civil Aviation Organization to increase pressure on Lukashenko’s regime. But she also demanded that the country’s land borders be open. “I understand the EU’s decision to halt flights over Belarus as it’s a matter of security for all Europeans,” said Tsikhanouskaya, who fled to neighboring Lithuania under pressure from the government shortly after the election. “But we demand to open the land borders for free travel of Belarusian citizens, because we can’t allow the regime to turn our country into a prison for 9 million people.”

## US recognises India is important part of conversation on Afghanistan: Jaishankar

**WASHINGTON, MAY 29 (PTI):** There is a recognition in the US that India is an important part of the conversation when it comes to talk about the future of Afghanistan, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said. In my meeting with the Secretary of Defence, with the, with the Secretary of State, the Afghanistan issue obviously came up because it is a very important concern,” he said. “The possible scenarios, once the US military draws down is obviously

meetings with Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan. In April announced that all American troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11 this year, thus bringing to end the country’s longest war, spanning across two decades.

something which matters to us, it matters very much to Afghanistan, it matters to the United States, and it has a larger regional resonance, Jaishankar said. US President Joe Biden in April announced that all American troops would be withdrawn from Afghanistan by September 11 this year, thus bringing to end the country’s longest war, spanning across two decades.

In an interaction with a group of Indian reporters here, Jaishankar said that Afghanistan came up in all of these meetings. I don’t think it was so much an issue of what is India’s role? I mean, India has an interest, India has influence, India has stakes, India has a history out there. We are a regional country. We are probably bordering Afghanistan,” he said. “So, there is a recogni-

tion, clearly in the United States as indeed in many other countries, that when you talk about the future of Afghanistan, India, is an important part of that conversation, Jaishankar said. There were discussions on what could happen, what should happen, what should not happen, he said in response to a question. Earlier, Acting Assis-

tant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Dean Thompson told reporters that both India and the US have long shared the view that a peaceful, stable Afghanistan is in their mutual interest. We need to continue working together and with the region to press for a political settlement to end the conflict there, he said. With respect to the

question about Afghanistan, certainly providing an update on what’s happening in Afghanistan the two ministers talked about where things are headed on that front, Thompson said. India has invested more than USD 3 billion in stabilising Afghanistan economically, in reconstruction and relief work since 2001 when US-led troops drove the Taliban out of Kabul.

## Virus fails to deter hundreds of climbers on Mount Everest

**KATHMANDU, NEPAL (AP):** A year after Mount Everest was closed to climbers as the pandemic swept across the globe, hundreds are making the final push to the summit with only a few more days left in the season, saying they are undeterred by a coronavirus outbreak in base camp. Three expedition teams to Everest canceled their climb this month following reports of people getting sick. But the remaining 41 teams decided to continue with hundreds of climbers and their guides scaling the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) top in the season that ends in May, before bad weather sets in. “Even though the coronavirus has reached the Everest base camp, it has not made any huge effect like what is being believed outside of

the mountain,” said Mingma Sherpa of Seven Summit Treks, the biggest expedition operator on Everest. “No one has really fallen seriously sick because of COVID or died like the rumors that have been spreading.” With 122 clients from 10 teams on Everest, the company led the biggest group but there were no serious illnesses among them, he said. Nepalese officials have downplayed reports of coronavirus cases on Mount Everest, apparently out of concern of creating chaos and confusion in the base camp. After a gap year of no income from climbers, Nepal has been eager to cash in on this year’s season. “Many people made it to the base camp and it is pos-

sible that the people who went there from here could have been infected,” Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Oli said. “But that does not mean that it (coronavirus) has reached the entire mountain, maybe a part of the base camp or the area below that.” In April, a Norwegian climber became the first to test positive at the Everest base camp. He was flown by helicopter to Kathmandu, where he was treated and later returned home. Prominent guide Lukas Furtenbach of Austria decided to halt his expedition this month and pull out his clients because of an outbreak among team members. After returning from the mountain, Furtenbach



estimated more than 100 climbers and support staff have been infected. He said in an interview last week that it was obvious there were many cases at the base camp because he could see people were sick and could hear them coughing in their tents. “I think with all the con-

firmed cases we know now — confirmed from (rescue) pilots, from insurance, from doctors, from expedition leaders — I have the positive tests so we can prove this,” Furtenbach told The Associated Press. China last week canceled climbing from its side of Everest due to fears

the virus could spread from Nepal. The climbing season was accompanied by a devastating surge in coronavirus cases in Nepal, with record numbers of daily infections and deaths. On Friday, Nepal reported 6,951 new confirmed cases and 96 deaths, bringing the nation’s totals since the pandemic began to more than 549,111 infections and 7,047 deaths. Another expedition, by the Telluride, Colorado-based company Mountain Trip, also announced it was pulling out of Everest. “While it’s a difficult decision to make when considering all of the work, years of preparation, sacrifice and resources that have went into the ex-

pedition, it’s the only sensible outcome from a risk management standpoint,” a statement by the company said. Six Sherpa guides working for the company have been evacuated to Kathmandu with COVID-19 symptoms, it said. A total of 408 foreign climbers were issued permits to climb Everest this season, aided by several hundred Sherpas and support staff who have been stationed at base camp since April. Since Everest was first conquered on May 29, 1953, thousands of people have scaled the peak and many Nepalese Sherpas have done it multiple times. Veteran Sherpa guide Kami Rita scaled the summit a record 25th time this month.



# Author Michael Lewis' Daughter Dead at 19 After Car Crash

Dixie Lewis, the 19-year-old child of Moneyball author Michael Lewis and photographer Tabitha Soren, died in a head-on car collision on May 25. Moneyball author Michael Lewis is mourning the tragic loss of his 19-year-old daughter, Dixie Lewis.

The teen and 20-year-old Ross Schulz died in a car accident that took place Tuesday, May 25, in Truckee, Calif., her family confirmed to the San Francisco Chronicle and Berkeleyside.

"We loved her so much and are in a kind of pain none of us has experienced," Lewis said in a statement. "She loved Ross, with whom she died. She loved to live and our hearts are so broken they can't find the words to describe the feeling. Her mother, Tabitha, and I, and her brother Walker and sister Quinn are going to find ways for her memory to live in her absence."

According to a California Highway Patrol collision report obtained by E! News, Ross was driving northbound on State Route 89 when his 2014 Ford Fusion entered the southbound lane and struck a Freightliner semi truck head on. Both Ross and Dixie, who was riding passenger, were pronounced dead at the scene.

The driver of the semi-truck, identified by CHP as a 45-year-old male, suffered minor injuries.

While the cause of the crash remains



under investigation, CHP said alcohol and drug use are not suspected factors at this time.

Dixie's mother, photographer and former journalist Tabitha Soren, remembered her daughter as a "fighter," telling the Chronicle, "She had a fire in her that people could feel when she walked in the room. She used her intensity to bring up everyone around her and she tried so hard at everything she did. When she showed up, she was going to show up 150 percent."

A relative of Ross' told the Chronicle that he and Dixie were high school sweethearts. After graduating from Berkeley High School in 2020, Dix-

ie went on to attend Pomona College, where she reportedly intended to major in neuroscience and played on the softball team.

A statement shared to Instagram on behalf of the team read, "This news saddens us all in the Sagehens family. Not only was Dixie a decorated athlete and impeccable student, she was an incredible human being. Dixie cared for each and every one of her teammates, doing her best to make connections with everyone during this difficult year. We will honor her memory every day, playing every game with Dixie in our hearts. All our thoughts and love are with the Lewis family during this tragic time."

## John Davis, real singer behind MilliVanilli, dies at 66

**COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP):** John Davis, one of the real singers behind the lip-synching pop duo MilliVanilli, died of the coronavirus this week, according to his family. He was 66.

Davis died on Monday in Nuremberg, Germany, where he had lived and performed for a long time, his daughter Jasmin Davis said in a Facebook post.

"We are so incredibly sad and heartbroken," Davis told The Associated Press in a Facebook message.

Davis was credited with backup vocals but was really a lead singer on albums by MilliVanilli, whose expeditious ascension into the music world was followed by an equally rapid fall.

Following the debut single "Girl You Know It's True" and No. 1 hits including "Blame It On the Rain" and "Girl I'm Gonna Miss You," Fabrice Morvan and Rob Pilatus won the 1989 Best New Artist Grammy Award.

When it was revealed that neither actually sang on MilliVanilli records, the group was stripped of the Grammy months later and disbanded, reforming as Rob and Fab in 1991, but achieving little commercial success. The duo faced legal challenges, including a successful lawsuit from the 1960s-era band Blood, Sweat and Tears, which accused Morvan and Pilatus of stealing the melody



of "Spinning Wheel" for "Girl You Know It's True."

Born in Anderson, South Carolina, Davis had lived much of his life in Germany after first being stationed there with the U.S. Army in the 1970s, he told The Hustle podcast on an episode published in April.

He was living in the country working as musician in the 1980s when German music producer Frank Farian selected him to sing on a project — for several times what he made for a regular singing gig — but didn't tell him others would lip-synch his music, Davis said. Farian had him come to the studio late at night, keeping him separate from other artists, he said.

Only later did he discover that his voice was being attributed to Morvan, Davis told the podcast.

"One evening I was sitting at home watching my TV, and I saw Fab singing 'Girl I'm Gonna Miss You,'" he said.

Radio stations in Nuremberg began to recognize Davis' voice on the MilliVanilli tracks, the singer said. But Davis told the podcast he "made a lot of money" from the recordings and had a comfortable life, despite not achieving the stardom — albeit fleeting — of the faces of the group.

The record on which Davis sang sold more than 6 million copies in the U.S. alone. All five singles from the album were Top 5 hits.

Farian later repackaged songs that had been planned for a second MilliVanilli album, but with Davis and another of the actual singers listed as lead vocals. The album reached Germany's top 20 in 1991.

Pilatus, a former model who later turned to drugs, died alone at age 33 in a German hotel room in 1998.

Morvan and Davis remained on good terms, performing together on a German television show in 2015. A documentary film about MilliVanilli's rise and fall is reportedly in the works.

"We're going to miss your energy, the big smile you graced me and so many with through the years, we'll keep you forever in our hearts," Morvan tweeted Friday, of Davis. "Your golden voice will continue to be heard, you best believe that those classic records will live just like you eternally."

Davis' family set up a GoFundMe to help pay for a service, which they called "one last performance, with people he loved and got loved from."



**DENIM DAZE!** The actress, Skai Jackson stuns in a Valentino ensemble paired with a matching Louis Vuitton bag and nude strap sandals while grabbing a bite to eat with friends in West Hollywood.

## 'John Wick: Chapter 4' adds pop star Rina Sawayama

**LOS ANGELES, MAY 29 (PTI):** Japanese-British pop superstar Rina Sawayama will make her acting debut with Keanu Reeves-starrer "John Wick: Chapter 4".

Reeves and filmmaker Chad Stahelski are returning for the new movie in the franchise after collaborating on three earlier parts -- "John Wick" (2014), "John Wick: Chapter 2" (2017) and "John Wick: Chapter 3 Parabellum" (2019).

According to Deadline, the details of Sawayama's character have been kept under wraps.

The pop star was born in Japan and raised in North London. She came to pop stardom from Cambridge University where she studied politics, psychology and sociology.

Sawayama funded her early music through proceeds from modeling, before signing a record deal.

After grabbing attention with singles like



"XS", "Comme des Garçons", and "Chosen Family", she released her album "Sawayama", which was a big hit.

"John Wick: Chapter 4" will be produced by Basil Iwanyk, Erica Lee, and Stahelski. Reeves will executive produce along with Louise Rosner.

The movie will start production later this year with shooting on location in France, Germany and Japan.

### ARIES:

The exploration of magic continues to be a big theme in the Aries HQ. There is a deep yearning to meet your true self. The radiant being of light who is merely Source energy in disguise. Remember, you are not bound by the rules of the matrix. The portals of the other world are open to those who harbour within them an insatiable desire to realise the truth.

### TAURUS:

Things are looking lit in the Taurus HQ. The cards are talking about a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that you have consciously called into your existence. You are a manifesting maven, and you don't even know it! Remember, putting yourself out there is important at a time like this. Getting the right people to notice you will give your career the boost that is required at this moment.

### GEMINI:

There are deadlines to meet, presentations to make, Zoom meetings to attend, and dishes to clean. Being indoors doesn't have to be an overwhelming experience, Gemini. This is a time of establishing new rituals. Time-saving hacks can go a long way in freeing up mental space so you can focus on what matters the most: your creative endeavours too. Think about that one thing you always wanted to do, but didn't quite get the chance to delve into. Now is the perfect time to sign up for those guitar lessons, or give bartending a shot.

### CANCER:

The 'my way or the highway' approach isn't going to

work this time. Somebody's got to give, Cancer. Could that somebody be you? Word for the wise: find a middle ground between your desire and theirs. When in doubt, choose the path of least resistance. The more gentle you are in the manner with which you communicate your truth, the easier it will be to restore balance.

### LEO:

Sometimes we miss out on opportunities because the timing isn't quite right. On other occasions, we let something precious slip away because we do not fully believe in our ability to do justice. Could the latter hold true for you, Leo? Have you let go of something golden because you didn't believe you had something special within you? The good news is, you will be presented with a second chance in the days to come. Repeating the affirmation "I am enough" will help you move mountains this time around.

### VIRGO:

We all say hurtful things when we're triggered, and you're no exception to the rule, Virgo. The bad news is, you are likely to find yourself in situations that bring out the worst in you. The good news is, these events are 100 per cent avoidable. Word for the wise: tread cautiously and leave your ego out of controversial conversations.

### LIBRA:

There comes a point in every seeker's journey where the voice of the guru without interferes with the voice of the guru within. A time when the holy books and scriptures, no matter how revered, cease to provide comfort. Accept where you are in your journey towards self-realisation

and redirect your focus towards that voice of wisdom within. You are being called to embody your truth in a manner you never have before. Remember, you came to this planet with a sacred mission.

### SCORPIO:

Often, we grow up with limiting beliefs around wealth, which convince us that we cannot experience happiness and abundance at the same time. But, this is far from the truth. The more you work on the shadow aspects of your personality, the more you transmute your fears, the greater your capacity to receive becomes. What the Universe wants you to remember now and for the rest of your life: there will never be a dearth of love, money, and opportunities in your world.

### SAGITTARIUS:

Sagittarius, you're feeling all kinds of creative today. Creative in a way that everything you pour your energy into becomes play. Don't let those who adhere to the rules of the matrix convince you against your methods. Your heart knows you're being honest to your craft, and that's the only litmus test that matters. As such, perfecting the art of effortlessness will continue to be a big theme for you. Word for the wise: become a conduit for the divine forces to come through.

### CAPRICORN:

There are so many kinds of love, Capricorn. The together-forever kind of love. The we-could-be-more-but-life-has-other-plans kind of love. The timing-was-just-not-right kind of love. The I'm-too-scared-to-define-

this-relationship kind of love. And, the I-know-we'll-find-each-other-in-another-lifetime kind of love. Today, you're being asked to acknowledge each one of these connections from your past, present, and future, and all the wonderful souls that have made your life as luscious and flavoursome as it is today.

### AQUARIUS:

Today, the cards are urging you to take a good look at the ideas you are streaming directly from a higher source of consciousness. Not one of these ideas is random, Aquarius. They are all in alignment with your sacred purpose and a part of the contract you committed to before you made your way to the earthly realm. So, trust your instinct and take the next step without delay. As you do, renounce that cloak of invisibility too. It's time to be seen and heard, beautiful! PS: A sibling, an old friend or colleague could be instrumental in helping you take your work to the next level!

### PISCES:

Albert Einstein once said, "Great minds have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds. The mediocre mind is incapable of understanding the man who refuses to bow blindly to conventional prejudices and chooses instead to express his opinion courageously and honestly." Your thoughts exactly, Pisces. The next chapter of your life is about embracing your inherent wildness, bringing bold ideas to life, and challenging the status quo. The good news is, you're not walking this path alone. Your soul crew is just as committed to fighting this battle with you.