



**HANNAH BERNER IS LEAVING
SUMMER HOUSE AFTER A
"WHIRLWIND" EXPERIENCE TO
FOCUS ON STAND-UP CAREER**
pg 08

**HERD IMMUNITY APPEARS UNLIKELY
FOR COVID-19, VACCINATED PEOPLE
CAN DITCH MASKS IN MOST SETTINGS**
pg 04

**KARDASHIANS REVEAL MYSTERY
BEHIND NORI'S BLACK BOOK**
pg 08



SummitTIMES

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ON TOP OF THE NEWS

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Pages 8 | 5

5 more deaths take Sikkim's second wave Covid toll to 68 in 40 days

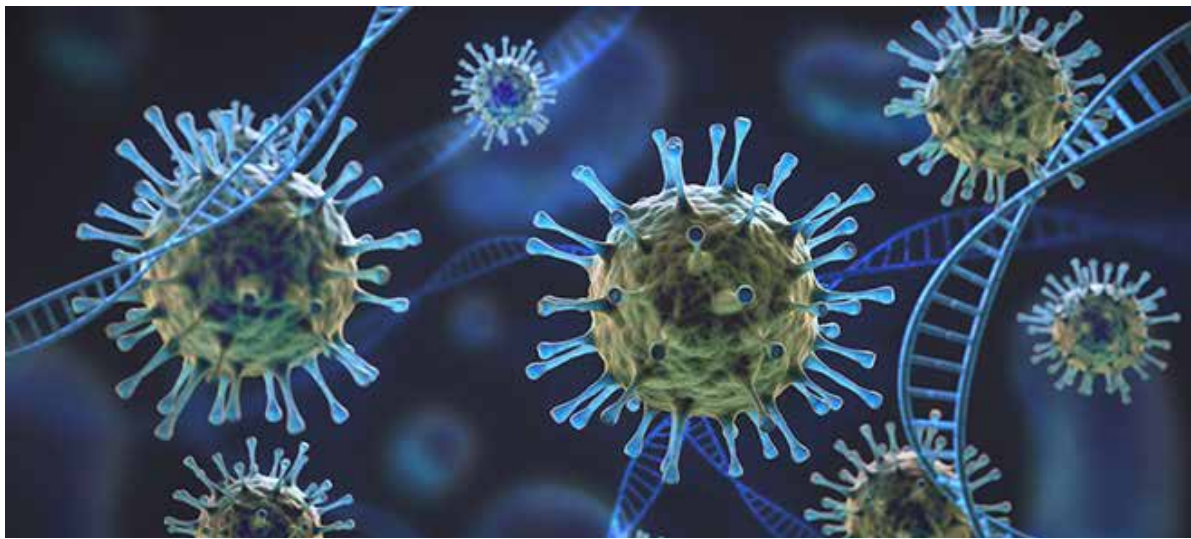
**SAGAR CHHETRI
GANGTOK, 15 MAY:**

The second wave of Covid-19 continues to be brutal for Sikkim. In the 40 days since Sikkim lost its first life to the second wave on 05 April last month when a Covid fatality was reported after no deaths for two months, the State has recorded 68 Covid-related deaths. A little over 33% of the officially recorded Covid deaths in the State have occurred in the last 40 days. It is obviously worrying statistics like this that have convinced the State Government to go in for a weeklong complete lockdown starting Monday.

As of 8AM Saturday, Sikkim reported five Covid-related deaths in the preceding 24 hours bringing the State's Covid toll to 203.

While four deaths were reported from STNM Hospital, one Covid positive person is reported of have passed away at Namchi District Hospital.

Meanwhile, the num-



ber of daily new cases continue to remain above 200 and today, 210 fresh cases were recorded boosting the total number of confirmed Covid cases recorded in Sikkim past 11K to 11,070.

Sikkim's cumulative confirmed cases had gone past 10K barely five days back on 10 May.

In what should come as a relief, more and more of the people who contracted the virus in its second wave here are recovering and today, 201 more persons were discharged from home

isolation after completing their quarantine and allowed to return to their normal daily lives.

This was the first time in the second wave that more than 200 people were recorded as having made full recoveries in a day.

Sikkim's number of recovered cases stands much improved now at 7,647.

The 215 new cases were picked up in the testing of 848 samples on Friday.

While a total of 160 samples returned positive in RT-PCR testing of

689 samples, 55 were reported positive for Covid in Rapid Antigen Testing of 155 samples.

While 114 of the new cases were recorded in East District, 51 were from South District, 44 from West District and six from North Sikkim.

With double-century of recoveries in a day, there are now 3,010 active cases left in the State of whom 20 are currently admitted in the ICU facility of STNM Hospital and 12 in the ICU at Central Referral Hospital, Tadong.

Sikkim broke the

3000 mark of active cases yesterday and had gone past 2000 for the first time barely nine days back on 05 May.

Overall, 14 Covid-positive people developed symptoms requiring professional attention and were admitted to hospital today - 13 at STNM Hospital and one at Mangan District Hospital.

Of the more than three thousand active cases, only 221 are currently in hospital while 2,729 are under home isolation across the State.

Arunachal mountaineer is first Indian to scale Everest this year

NEW DELHI, 15 MAY [NDTV]: Union Minister Kiren Rijiju congratulated Tashi Yangjom on Saturday for successfully scaling Mt Everest and becoming the first Indian climber to summit the world's highest peak this year.

From Dirang in Arunachal Pradesh, she was trained at the National Institute of Mountaineering and Allied Sports (NIMAS) in the village. The ninth climber from the institute to scale Mt Everest, the 37-year-old reached the peak on May 11, showing the world what human determination can achieve even during a pandemic. The minister also shared a photograph of Ms Yangjom at the Everest peak with the Indian flag, and at the base camp.

In a congratulatory message, Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu said regular training at the Dirang institute has made her "a strong mountaineer with blitzkrieg speed". And the official Twitter handle of the government of Arunachal Pradesh said Ms Yangjom is the ninth instructor from NIMAS to scale the peak in three years.

Spread over a 52-acre campus (currently being built) in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, NIMAS describes itself as India's first adventure institute in the field of land, air and aqua.

Complete Lockdown is a go, to be more strictly enforced this time!



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 MAY:**

A smart line-up of senior officers of the State Government addressed the media here today to explain the complete weeklong lockdown the government has decided to place Sikkim under starting Monday.

Addressing a joint press conference here today, Additional Chief Secretary to the Health

Department, K Srinivasulu, explained that a high-level meeting chaired by the Chief Minister yesterday had decided to go for a week-long complete lockdown in the State.

Accepting that this was a strong decision, Mr Srinivasulu explained that the decision was taken after all other options had been expended and that the high level meeting agreed that only complete

lockdown would break the chain of infection here.

Other officers to address the press briefing, Home Secretary R Telang, Special DGP Akshay Sachdeva, Agriculture Secretary Rinzing Chewang and SNT General Manager Karma Namgyal Bhutia, all echoed these sentiments and also appealed to support the lockdown and contain the virus here.

They also stressed that the lockdown will be strictly implemented.

The SNT General Manager also informed that there were 242 ambulances registered with the department, of which 85 were of the Health Department and 157 registered with NGOs and pharma companies.

On the same, he appealed to the NGOs and pharma companies to serve the people in such a difficult situation on humanitarian grounds.

For the same, he urged such organizations with ambulances to immediately contact the RTO of their respective jurisdiction to use their ambulances for the people in need.

RTO East can be contacted on 98320-70534, RTO Singtam on 98329-29999, RTO Jorethang on 94343-39297, RTO Gyalshing on 96098-66077 and RTO Mangan on 94344-84870.

region. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said in a report to the UN Security Council obtained Friday by The Associated Press that the smooth transfer of power to a new interim government, which took power in March, brings renewed hope for the reunification of the country and its institutions and for a lasting peace.

But he said progress must continue on the political, economic and security tracks to enable elections to go ahead on December 24.

Libya has been wracked by chaos since a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011, and split the oil-rich North African country between a U.N.-supported government in the capital, Tripoli, and rival authorities based in the country's

east, each backed by armed groups and foreign governments.

In April 2019, east-based commander Khalifa Hifter and his forces, backed by Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, launched an offensive to try and capture Tripoli. His 14-month-long campaign collapsed after Turkey stepped up its military support of the U.N.-backed government with hundreds of troops and thousands of Syrian mercenaries. An October cease-fire agreement that included a demand for all foreign fighters and mercenaries leave Libya within 90 days led to a deal on the transitional government and December elections.

The UN estimated in December that there were at least 20,000 foreign fighters and mercenaries in Libya, including Syrians, Rus-

STATE DAY MESSAGE OF THE CHIEF MINISTER OF SIKKIM

"Committed to provide best healthcare, keep development unimpeded by pandemic"

On this historic occasion of the 46th State Day, I extend my warm greetings to the people of Sikkim. Today marks the day when Sikkim joined the mainstream of Indian democracy and paved the way for a new era of unity and development. Over the years following the merger, Sikkim has earned global recognition as a model of development and progress.

On this day, let us remember our former Chief Ministers who have contributed immensely in shaping the State of Sikkim. These leaders along with the administrators sowed a seed and nurtured it with hope to see Sikkim as a State defined by peace, unity in diversity and progressive growth.

This year, we meet at a time when the second wave of Covid-19 has hindered the functioning of the Government and individuals. However, the State Government has worked tirelessly to overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic. Despite the severity, all

developmental activities have been undertaken with utmost zeal and without any interruptions.

Let me take this opportunity today to sincerely thank and express my gratitude to the front-line warriors - doctors, nurses, safaikaramcharis, all health workers and police who for the past fourteen months have been working tirelessly to protect us from the corona virus.

The State Government is firm in its resolution to provide a robust healthcare infrastructure along with quality health care services in Sikkim. Special focus has been given to health sector and there has been radical changes and phenomenal increase in allocation of resources to make us well prepared to face the pandemic.

We took measures to provide medicines and consumables in the far-fetched corners of the State. We have established a first of its kind Comprehensive Tertiary Health care system in-



cluding Cancer Care Centre in STNM Multi-Specialty Hospital. The first Viral Diagnostic Laboratory at STNM Hospital was established for conducting Covid-19 virus tests along with free treatment. A new Oxygen Plant has been installed in STNM Hospital saving numerous lives during the on-going pandemic. A second oxygen plant will also be commissioned soon.

A separate building has been set up at STNM complex which has been converted into a Covid Hospital so that the new STNM Hospital can cater to non-covid patients.

Dialysis Centers have commenced at Gangtok, STNM Hospital, Gyalshing and Namchi Districts. Subsequently the same

turn to pg02

JUS wants journalists recognised as frontline worker



**SUMMIT REPORT
GANGTOK, 15 MAY:**

Journalist Union of Sikkim [JUS] today reiterated its demand for journalists to be recognised as frontline workers in light of the current pandemic and especially because the nature of their work exposes them to risk of infection.

Addressing a press conference after an emergency meeting of the organisation, JUS president, Bhim Rawat, said: "Journalists cannot work from home and

have to put their lives and health at risk on a daily basis to cover both, the Covid-19 pandemic and other matters of public concern, including matters critical to the health and safety of the public, and critical to our democracy, so journalists should be declared as frontline workers."

The demand has wide endorsement among media-persons especially since such recognition would have also allowed them to receive vaccination irrespective of

whether they fell in the right age-bracket or not.

This point becomes redundant now that vaccination has opened for every aged above 18, but organisations like JUS are still making the point that separate arrangements may be considered to vaccinate journalists and add that the demand for recognition as frontline workers was still on the table since it was a valid demand irrespective of the situation.

Journalism is an essential service, JUS has underlined.

sians, Sudanese and Chadians. But at an informal council meeting in late April, speakers said there were more than 20,000, including 13,000 Syrians and 11,000 Sudanese, according to diplomats.

Guterres said in the new report that while the cease-fire continues to hold, the U.N. political mission in Libya has received reports of fortifications and defensive positions being set up in central Libya on the key route between the strategic city of Sirte, the gateway to the country's major oil fields and export terminals, and Jufra.

Despite the commitments made by the parties, air cargo activities reportedly continued with flights to various air bases in Libya's

turn to pg02

Bengal begins two-week lockdown

KOLKATA, 15 MAY [NDTV]: The West Bengal government today announced that the state will go under a near lockdown for two weeks starting tomorrow. Looking to curb the spread of COVID-19 infections, all offices and educational institutions will be shut down during this period. Even transport services, including Kolkata Metro, will come to a halt, the government has said.

Only emergency services will be allowed, the state's notification says, adding that groceries and shops selling essential items will stay open between 7 am to 10 am, West Bengal Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said today.

Interestingly, sweetmeat vendors will be allowed to function between 10 am and 5 pm. Similarly, petrol pumps will stay open and so will banks, although only between 10 am to 2 pm.

While industries will be closed, tea gardens will be allowed to function but only at 50 per cent strength.

No cultural, political, academic, administrative, or religious events and functions will be allowed in the state during the lockdown and no outdoor congregations will be permitted between 9 pm and 5 am, the government has said. "No more than 50 people will be allowed at wedding functions," Mr Bandyopadhyay said. The state reported 20,846 fresh Covid cases and 136 deaths related to the disease yesterday.

Overall coronavirus situation stabilising in India: Govt

New Delhi, May 15 (PTI): The overall COVID-19 situation in the country is stabilizing and the government will work towards ensuring further stabilisation, NITI Aayog member V K Paul said on Saturday.

At a press conference on Saturday, top health officials said 10 states account for 85 per cent of the total coronavirus cases in the country.

The Union Health Ministry said 11 states have over one lakh active COVID-19 cases, 17 have less than 50,000 cases while eight have active cases between 50,000 and one lakh.

It also said Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat and Chhattisgarh, which are recording a high number of novel coronavirus cases, are also reporting decline in the number of active cases.

Twenty-four states have a COVID-19 positivity rate of more than 15 per cent while Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Daman and Diu, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh have reported a major drop in case positivity, it said.

India in a day recorded 3,26,098 COVID-19 cases that took the tally to 2,43,72,907, while 3,890 new fatalities pushed the death toll to 2,66,207, according to Union Health Ministry data updated on Saturday.

The active cases have reduced to 36,73,802 and comprise 15.07 per cent of the total infections, while the national COVID-19 recovery rate has improved to 83.83 per cent, it stated.

"It is evident that we can see a certain amount of stabilization of the second wave of the pandemic. Some states have shown a clear pattern, in some states there are concerns and in some others there is a trend towards an increase. It is a mixed picture. But overall, the situation is stabilising and we hope and we will work towards ensuring further stabilisation and rapid decline of this pandemic," Paul said.

Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health, said a total of 18.04 crore vaccine doses have been administered so far in the country. This includes 12.74 crore people above the age of 45 years, 1.62 crore healthcare workers, 2.25 crore frontline workers and 42.59 lakh people between the age of 18-44 years who have received their first dose.

Agarwal also said the containment efforts of the government is working and the overall COVID-19 positivity rate in India, which stood at 21.9 per cent last week, has now fallen to 19.8 per cent.

He also spoke of 'e-

Sanjeevani OPD' which is a telemedicine platform that facilitates free online medical consultation to all citizens of India, as well as provides for online prescription of medicines.

He said this 'Stay Home OPD' is operational in 28 states and has so far provided over 30,000 consultations by more than 17,000 doctors.

AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria also warned against the spread of mucormycosis and recommended that with COVID-19 cases increasing, it's of paramount importance that protocols of infection control practices are followed at hospitals.

"It is seen that secondary infections like fungal and bacterial are causing more mortality," Guleria said.

The black fungus infection, also known as mucormycosis, is caused by a fungus called mucor.

Recently, several states have flagged cases of COVID-triggered mucormycosis, especially among patients who are diabetic.

In an advisory released on May 9, the Centre said mucormycosis may turn fatal if uncared for. It also said the fungal infection mainly affects people who are on medication that reduces their ability to fight environmental pathogens.

Bengal reports highest one-day Covid deaths at 144, Positivity Rate 9.8%

KOLKATA, 15 MAY [PTI]: West Bengal reported 144 new deaths linked to COVID-19 on Saturday - its highest figure since the beginning of the pandemic - as the proportion of coronavirus tests coming back positive also reached an all-time high of 9.8 per cent.

With 19,511 new cases reported, the number of daily infections came below 20,000 after 10 days. The state has reported 13,137 deaths and over 11 lakh cases so far.

Kolkata reported 3,951 new cases and 30 deaths. North 24 Parganas district had 4,279 cases and 35 deaths.

The number of active cases in Bengal rose to 1,31,948 while over 19,000 patients were reported as recovered in the last 24 hours.

Since Friday, 66,563 samples have been tested in the state, a health department bulletin said.

The numbers come on a day when the West Bengal government announced a complete lockdown from Sunday till May 30, as it put in place a host of stringent measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, including banning vehicular movement and all kinds of gatherings.

Chief Secretary Alapan Bandyopadhyay said the lockdown will take effect from 6 am on Sunday till 6 pm on May 30.

During this period, all government and private offices, shopping complexes, malls, bars,

sports complexes, pubs, cinema halls and beauty parlours will remain closed other than those relating to emergency and essential services, including healthcare, law and order, courts, power, drinking water and media.

Movement of private vehicles, taxis and autorickshaws will be prohibited except to and from hospitals, diagnostic and vaccination centres, airports and media houses, the top government official said.

"All intra-state local trains, bus services, metro railway and inland water transport shall remain closed for the 15-day lockdown period, barring movement of emergency and essential services personnel," Mr Bandyopadhyay said.

He said petrol pumps, auto repair shops, LPG gas offices and distribution centres will remain open, while banks will operate from 10 am-2 pm.

Sweet shops - a key part of the state's gastronomy - will be allowed to open between 10 am and 5 pm, and jewellery and saree shops from 12 pm-3 pm. E-commerce and home delivery services of all commodities shall be allowed.

West Bengal has been witnessing a surge in coronavirus cases since the first week of April alongside the eight-phase assembly elections and campaigning by political parties.

MESSAGE OF THE GOVERNOR OF SIKKIM ON THE OCCASION OF STATE DAY



On the occasion of 47th State Day, I would like to extend my best wishes to the people of Sikkim. This day reminds us of the merger of Sikkim as the 22nd State of the Indian Union. I am proud that Sikkim has always worked for the development and progress of the country. The Organic Mission of the State has immensely contributed to raise the honour of the country at the global level.

Nestled in the lap of Himalayas and blessed with its serene environment and beauty, Sikkim has been a tourist hotspot. The love for the country instilled in the hearts of the people of Sikkim is highly appreciable.

The State of Sikkim with the support of the Central Government, is committed in its mission to work towards a self-reliant society, women empowerment and public welfare, thus paving way towards the path of development.

I would also like to extend my gratitude and best wishes to all the frontline workers who are tirelessly and diligently working in this hour of pandemic. I would also like to appeal to the people of Sikkim to follow the message of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi "Dawai Bhi Kaddai Bhi" and join hands to support the State Government to fight this pandemic.

Best Wishes
Jai Hind, Jai Bharat, Jai Sikkim

India adds 3.26 lakh...

western and eastern regions, the secretary-general said. Reports indicated that there was no reduction of foreign fighters or of their activities in central Libya.

Guterres said the government of national unity must prioritize security sector reform including filling senior civilian and military appointments, producing a roadmap for reunifying the Libyan army, and addressing the proliferation of armed groups.

Bringing one of the world's largest uncontrolled stocks of arms and ammunition under state control is vital, he said. I reiterate my call on member states and Libyan national actors to put an end to violations of the arms embargo and to facilitate the withdrawal of foreign fighters and mercenaries from the country.

Last month, the Security Council approved a resolution urging all foreign forces and mercenaries to leave Libya and authorizing a small UN team to monitor the cease-fire agreement. In an April 7 letter to the council, Guterres proposed an initial maximum of 60 monitors for a phased deployment as part of the U.N. mission, known as UNSMIL.

In his new report, Guterres said that the monitors' deployment to Libya is contingent on the UN General Assembly approving the resources to cover security, logistical, medical and operational requirements, which will be submitted in the near future.

He also raised human rights violations, especially the continuing detention of migrants and refugees. According to the International Organization for Migration's most recent report, there are more than 571,000 migrants in Libya. And as of May 2, Guterres said over 4,300 migrants and refugees were being held in detention centers across the country.

Guterres called on Libyan authorities to release migrants and refugees from detention centers on an urgent basis, and put in place measures to protect them from sexual violence.

CORRIGENDUM

THE WALK IN INTERVIEW FIXED FOR 18.05.21 FOR LABORATORY TECHNICIANS UNDER THE ICMR PROJECT, "ESTABLISHMENT OF NETWORK OF LABORATORIES FOR MANAGING EPIDEMICS AND NATURAL CALAMITIES" VIDE RO NO 43/IPR/pub/class./2021-22 DATED 03.05.21 HAS BEEN POSTPONED TILL FURTHER NOTICE IN COMPLIANCE TO OFFICE ORDER 19/HOME/2021 DATED 14.05.21 FOR THE CONTAINMENT OF COVID 19.

ANTHYESTHI KRIYA

The Anthyesti Kriya of Late Kumari Thapa W/o Gopal Thapa of Lower Ghurpisey Namchi (SAKHA) who left for heavenly abode on 12th May falls on 21st May December 2021 Friday.



All relatives, friend and well wishers are requested to join us for offering prayers for the departed soul at our residence. We also like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude towards all those who extended their support during the time of bereavement.

Gopal Thapa (husband) kamal Thapa (son) Bimla Thapa (son) Som Maya Thapa (daughter) Dumber Kumari Thapa (daughter) Khem Kumari Sharma (dauhter-in-law)

Contact No: 97333 96231,
9002548203, 9002533458

"Committed to provide...

will be established at the Sub-division level too. Gyalshing Hospital now operates with a 10 bedded newly set up ICU, a new TB Hospital, Blood Bank and a new digital X-Ray machine. Soreng PHC has been upgraded to CHC and 56 PHSCs have been upgraded to Health and Wellness Centres in order to provide comprehensive preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative care. A Sub-Cardiac Centre has been opened at Jorethang. A 70 bedded hospital at Mangan is under construction, as well as, a three hundred (300) bedded hospital at Namchi. We appointed Super Specialists, two Neurosurgeons and One Additional Cardiologist at STNM Hospital and they are visiting the districts as well. We have also initiated the provision of health insurance to all government employees and their families through the Su-Swastha Yojana.

I am happy to announce that the vaccination drive for 18 to 44 years will commence from today. The vaccine shall be given universally free for the people in Sikkim.

My Government is giving top priority to Health, Education, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and IT sectors. Several educational initiatives have been taken up to improve the educational infrastructure, training and capacity building of teachers, up gradation of libraries, initiating partnership with various organizations etc. Students of Government schools have been provided with Smart Android TVs as additional learning tools. Another milestone is the establishment of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose Centre of Excellence at Chakung, West Sikkim which will fulfil the higher education aspirations of the Sikkimese students.

There are various other proposals towards strengthening the education sector and ensuring holistic development of our children. We have taken steps to enable establishment of a skill university in the state for skill training and flexibility for taking up jobs during the course of training. This will be a first of its kind in the entire eastern and north eastern India.

Since formation of our government, our focus has been on the need for technological reinvention in the state which will facilitate ease of doing business,

decrease Government's interface with the public and delivering Governance at the doorstep of the public. We have initiated the e-Office at East District and IT Department, Task Management System, e-Cabinet, e-Vidhan web application for automating assembly proceedings, installation of working CCTV surveillance at all police stations, process for information and IT enabled services at Namli, East Sikkim, strengthening internet connectivity at 17 BACs, online application for various skill development courses.

In the rural sector, we have initiated construction of pucca houses under the "Sikkim Garib Awas Yojana" with TV set and furniture and "Chief Minister's Garib Awas Yojana" to bring about qualitative improvement in the housing status of the poor. A housing programme has been initiated for the urban poor too under "Sikkim Urban Garib Awas Yojana" including house up-gradation.

Agriculture still remains one of the major occupations of the rural populace and the lesson that we have drawn from this Covid-19 pandemic is that agriculture is the key for both economic development and self-reliance. With Sikkim's growing potential in organic farming, emphasis has been laid on development of certified organic production in a value chain to link growers with consumers. A pilot project for "Development of Model Villages" is being undertaken by the State Government. We have proposed a Price Support system to the marginal and small farmers who produce buckwheat, orange, turmeric, large cardamom and ginger. In order to boost agriculture sector, the state government has formed a joint venture with IIFCO for introducing scientific agriculture services and impart value addition to the produce of the state. We have also provided incentive of Rs.8 per litre of milk to dairy farmers of the State in line with the Aatma Nirbhar Bharat initiative. The farmer who produces maximum milk in a year shall be awarded with Rs. Two lakhs under the Milkman of the year award.

Our government has also provided a conducive media environment and steps have been taken to make Sikkim a congenial place for film making with

the launch of Sikkim Film Policy 2020. It is a matter of pride that Sikkim hosted the first ever Global Film Festival 2020 created by the Film Federation of India. Sikkim Film Promotion Board has been constituted. The Press Club Bhawan was also inaugurated on the occasion of National Press Day and handed to Press Club of Sikkim (PCS).

The State Government remains firm in its resolve to elevate tourism for a better future for its people. The objective of making Sikkim an ultimate eco-tourism destination is being propagated under the brand of "responsible travel". Similarly, home stays under rural tourism are being encouraged and a Home stay Operators Manual has been introduced to offer higher standards of hospitality and professional services. Despite the pandemic, many tourism projects one of which is "Mega Home stay Project" of 1000 home stays with 3000 rooms have been approved and are under implementation.

With the Government's approach of holistic development, efforts are being made to connect the remotest corners of the state through building and upgradation of roads, construction of foot and suspension bridges etc.

In addition to rural connectivity, efforts have also been made to provide safe and portable drinking water to every household.

The State Government holds responsibility for the welfare, socio-economic and educational development of the vulnerable and marginalized sections of the society. We have enhanced the existing rate of pensions and in order to provide wider coverage, the age limit of Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme (IGNWPS) has been lowered to 21 years. The financial implications being borne by the State Government and timely monthly release of the pension is being ensured. Towards the welfare of persons with Disabilities, the Government has reserved two seats to travel free in any state-owned transport, 4 % reservation provided in Government employment, regular disabled Government employees of the State Government are being provided with free conveyance allowance @ Rs.1000/- per month.

A onetime grant of Rs. two lakhs

State Day: The Dawn of Democracy

PAWAN CHAMLING

Today we celebrate 46 years since Sikkim became the 22nd state of the Indian Union. On this important day, a question that begs answering is why did the Sikkimese people decide to merge Sikkim with the Indian Union? The merger has become history, a history made by the people of Sikkim themselves. Still it is crucial to remember that the historical step of merger was taken by the people of Sikkim as it promised the fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations for a robust democracy and the provision of equal political rights of the people of Sikkim. Prior to merger, the 8th May agreement of 1973 was signed and on the basis of this, Sikkim was merged with India.

The 8th May Agreement promised that "The system of elections shall be organized as to make the assembly adequately representative of the various sections of the population. The size and composition of the Assembly and of the Executive Council shall be such as may be prescribed from time to time, care being taken to ensure that no single section of the population acquires a dominating position due mainly to its ethnic origin, and that the rights and interests of the Sikkimese of Bhutia Lepcha origin and of the Sikkimese of Nepali, which includes Tsong and Scheduled Caste, origin, are fully protected". A referendum was held on 14th April 1975 and on 26th April 1975, Sikkim was merged with the Indian Union. Finally, on 16th May 1975, Sikkim became the 22nd state of India. Though Sikkim was merged with India 46 years ago, the promise of the merger of equal political rights, justice and protection are yet to be fulfilled. In fact, today, the Old Laws and the distinct identity of the Sikkimese people under Article 371F of the Indian Constitution is under jeopardy, far more today than it has ever been in the history of Sikkim.

A HISTORIC INJUSTICE TO THE 12 LEFT OUT COMMUNITIES AFTER MERGER

After the merger, a new socio-political landscape emerged in Sikkim. According to the Sikkim Tribal Order 1978, Bhutia Lepcha, Sherpa, Dukpa, Dophthapa, Chumbipa, Yolmoley, Kagatey, Tromopa, Tibetan were accorded Scheduled Tribe status. Similarly, Kami, Damai, Majhi and Sarki were brought under Scheduled Castes. Around the same time, the Government of India was willing to accord tribal status to the Nepalis of Sikkim. In 1976, Director Gen-

eral, Ministry of Home Affairs, OK Moorthy had written a letter to the Chief Secretary of Sikkim, apprising the state of the possibility of bringing Nepalis under Scheduled Tribes. But since the State Government did not agree with the proposal, the Nepalis were deprived of this right. The L.D. Kazi Government knew why the Nepalis were left out, as do the leaders who are still alive today and who witnessed this historic injustice. They were silent spectators when this took place and today too, their silence remains.

A major issue for merger was the abolishment of the parity system and provision and protection of seats for the different communities of Sikkim on the basis of population. But after the merger, the Nepalis instead of being granted seat reservation, lost the 50% seats accorded to them during the Chogyal rule under the parity system. The Sikkimese people became Indian citizens with the hope of equal political rights but ironically after the merger, the seats for the Nepalis were lost and they were placed under the General category in 1978. The Sikkimese Nepal, like the saying "Holaki le bukalilaunu, bulaki le naakhailagyo", were deprived of their rights twofold. The Government of Sikkim and the Government of India both soon forgot the reasons for merger and the hopes, dreams and aspirations of the people of Sikkim were put on the back burner. History will question the historic injustice that was done to the 12 left out communities.

AN EXEMPLARY STATE OF THE INDIAN UNION UNDER SDF

Before the SDF Government, there was no reservation in local self-government, government service and higher education for any community. The provision for reservation was provided by the Constitution of India but prior governments chose not to implement it. During our tenure, we made reservation in local self-government, jobs and higher education for all communities including Bhutia Lepchas, women, OBCs and State OBCs, Scheduled Caste under the provisions of the Constitution. Today, it is an example in the country that no Sikkimese person is outside the reservation category. This was done according to the special provisions of Article 371F. In the 25 years of our government, we provided protection to the BL community. We protected their political rights, Land Revenue Order no 1, ensured job reservation, reservation in local self-government and

higher education and preserved their culture, tradition, heritage, religion, language and way of life under the special provision of Article 371F.

We transitioned Sikkim towards the rule of democracy by focusing on grassroots empowerment. We strengthened the democratic institutions at the grassroots by allotting 70% of our budget to rural development soon after forming the government, empowering the people through power decentralization and devolution in the Panchayat Raj system, implementing policies to empower women, and focusing on social justice and inclusive politics. With the establishment of schools and several colleges and universities, along with the policy of free education, we empowered the young minds of our state who will be instrumental in protecting the democratic fabric of Sikkim.

We made incredible progress in economic development with the GDP increasing by 51.59%. We increased the per capita income of Sikkim from Rs 9,000 to Rs 34,100. Literacy rate increased from 56% to 96.72%, making it the highest literacy rate in the country. The life expectancy of the people also increased by 11 years with the average Sikkimese person living 73 years, well above the national average. We became the first organic state in the entire world. Basic minimum needs were fulfilled and according to the World Bank, we engineered the fastest decrease in poverty in any state in the world since World War 2. Sikkim was industrialized under the SDF government. Unprecedented boom in ecotourism, village tourism and homestay tourism made Sikkim a success story in India as Sikkim's tourism sector brings 4 times more tourists than the population of the state each year. We made our eco-friendly, organic and sustainable development model a brand of Sikkim which was recognized by organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank and the Planning Commission.

THE UNIQUE IDENTITY OF SIKKIM UNDER THREAT

Though we protected our unique identity guaranteed by Article 371F and made Sikkim a global example during the SDF government, the current political developments do not bode well for the Sikkimese people. We are witnessing developments which challenge the unique identity of the Sikkimese people. We are all aware that during the recently concluded Municipal elections, the issue of Trade Licences and

purchase of land on the basis of the Aadhar Card was raised. Those without Sikkim Subjects are buying homes and opening shops in rural areas in the name of Sikkim Subject holders. Individuals without Sikkim Subjects are holding government jobs and working in high levels of the administration. These are interferences on our special protection granted by Article 371F and is completely against the Old Laws.

Article 21 of the Constitution of India gives people the right to "Protection of life and personal liberty". Everyone has the legal right to protect their homes. If one enters another's home without permission, it is seen as a case of trespass. In the same way, the Indian Constitution grants Indian citizens the right to govern their state. Sikkim is our home and we have the right and responsibility to protect it, in the same way that people in other states have the same rights. We have the right to protect our holding land, property, home, state and country. If our home and land is not protected, how will the rights of the Sikkimese people be preserved and who will preserve it?

The only solution is that we stand united in the larger interest of Sikkim and take the responsibility of protecting Sikkim seriously. There is a provision in the Indian Constitution for the protection of our Old Laws which we must utilise. In turn, the law must protect us. We can achieve the BL seat protection of the Bhutia-Lepchas, Land Revenue Order No 1, special BL protection, Limbu Tamang seat reservation, and tribal status for 12 left out communities under the special provision of 371F, only if we are united for our collective interest.

The three national laws and policies of CAA, NPR and NRC have been implemented. How these will impact the people of Sikkim is a matter of concern. Furthermore, how they will impact Article 371F, the Old Sikkim Subject Register 1961, Sikkim Citizenship Act 1975 and hence our special protection, is something to give serious thought to. In Sikkim, there are 3.5 lakh Sikkim Subject holders under the Old Sikkim Subject Register. If you compare that with the current population of voters in Sikkim, you will know how our demography is changing. These are matters of concern and I urge all political parties, leaders, intellectuals, civil society members and the youth to work together to protect our rights and our special identity. We have been empowered by Article 371F to protect our special identity and we must

ViewPoint

use this responsibility given to us.

UNITED IN THE CAUSE OF SIKKIM
So on the occasion of State Day, I appeal to the people of Sikkim to delve on the issues mentioned with the seriousness it deserves. The hopes and aspirations with which we merged Sikkim into India and for which we are celebrating State Day today, are yet to be fulfilled. We must not let the threats looming upon the unique identity of Sikkim change the socio-political landscape of our state. The political rights of the Sikkimese people granted by Article 371F must be protected. For this, the Sikkimese people have to be united. Only if we live together in harmony as Sikkimese people will Sikkim be protected. If not, the future of Sikkim will be uncertain. I am also immensely proud that in the 25 years of my government, we protected the self-respect, special identity and rights of the people of Sikkim. I never let the dignity of the Sikkimese people be called into question. I am proud that we were able to introduce Sikkim to the world and make it an exemplary state for all of us to be proud of. Let us not throw what we have earned with much hard work and sacrifice to waste.

Today, our state also faces the crisis of the pandemic which has caused us to lose so many precious lives. The positivity rate is on the increase and Sikkim has the 2nd worst fatality rate in the country. This is a distressing time for all of us and I appeal to the people to take all necessary safety precautions and follow the COVID-19 protocol closely. We are all in this together and united, we can fight the scourge of the virus. I appeal to all people of Sikkim to take make self-protection a priority and to take the responsibility of protecting our Sikkimese family from the COVID-19 virus. With regard to Covid-19 battle, Sikkim is one of the worst performing states. Sikkim ranks number 2 with the second lowest recovery rate at 68.5 %. Our safety is declining, our vulnerability is increasing and our life is becoming ever more defenceless. It is time to demand greater vigilance and higher level of performance from the administration and to become more responsible citizens to take part in this battle. Together we certainly can.

I pray to our guardian deities to protect Sikkim from the challenges that face us.

Stay home and stay safe.
Happy State Day!

Rotarians begin Animal Ambulance in Siliguri



SUMMIT REPORT

RANGPO, 15 MAY:

The Rotary Club of Siliguri Metropolitan has launched an ambulance for animals to cater to the health of both, domestic and stray animals

in Siliguri. They will have their work cut out for them since West Bengal goes into a fortnight-long lockdown on Monday. The Animal Ambulance was handed over to Animal Helpline.

Heal Bridge offers home delivery of medical supplies and requirements



SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Heal Bridge, founded in September 2020 by Karan Singh and Sumeesh Thapa is an E-health platform providing at-home testing in Sikkim and home delivery of medicines and diagnostic tests and e-consultation.

With the ongoing pandemic, the role of di-



agnostic centres has escalated. However, people have to confront many challenges to visit them. Enter Heal Bridge offering an electronic gateway to provide health services right at the doorsteps. It is offering to make purchases simple, easy and affordable including home diagnosis, medicine delivery, doctor's appointments and home visits.

India's Covid situation hugely concerning, says WHO chief



UNITED NATIONS, 15 MAY

[PTI]: India's COVID-19 situation remains hugely concerning, with several states continuing to see a worrying number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Friday, warning that the pandemic's second year will be "far more deadly" than the first for the world.

Ghebreyesus added that the WHO is responding to the COVID-19 surge in India and has shipped thousands of oxygen concentrators, tents for mobile field hospitals, masks and other medical supplies.

"India remains hugely concerning, with several states continuing to see a worrying number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths," he said at the daily media briefing.

"And we thank all the stakeholders who are

supporting India," the WHO Director-General said.

India is in the midst of a deadly wave of the coronavirus pandemic, with 3,43,144 people testing positive for the virus on Friday, taking the country's caseload to 2,40,46,809. The death count stands at 2,62,317.

India's COVID-19 tally crossed the 10 million mark on December 19 and in under six months it has doubled, surpassing the grim milestone of 20 million cases on May 4.

Ghebreyesus pointed out that the emergency-like situation was not restricted to India.

"Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Egypt are just some of the countries that are dealing with spikes in cases and hospitalisations," he said adding that some coun-

tries in the Americas still have high numbers of cases and as a region, the Americas accounted for 40 per cent of all COVID-19 deaths last week.

There are also spikes in some countries in Africa. "These countries are in heightened response mode and WHO will continue to provide support in all ways possible," he said.

Noting that COVID-19 has already cost more than 3.3 million lives across the world, Ghebreyesus said, "We're on track for the second year of this pandemic to be far more deadly than the first."

He lamented that vaccine supply remains a key challenge and that saving lives and livelihoods with a combination of public health measures and vaccination - not one or the other - is the only way out of the pandemic.

Sports Cadre officers and PETs extend financial support for treatment of footballer Pabitra Limboo

SUMMIT REPORT

GANGTOK, 15 MAY:

Officers of the Sports Cadre and Physical Education Teachers of Sikkim have extended financial support to footballer Pabitra Limboo.


They have contributed a sum of Rs 41,000 so far in their individual capacities to help with her treatment. It is informed

that other sports cadre officials and PETs are also coming to contribute for her treatment. It is added that the Department of Sports & Youth Affairs would also extend support to the ailing footballer.

Pabitra Limboo is a national level footballer of Sikkim who hails from remote West Sikkim and

comes from an economically humble family. She met with an accident in the football field last week while coaching young players and is now in need to specialist medical attention.

Earlier, Sikkim Football Association had contributed a sum of Rs 25,000 to help with her treatment.



What is Novel Coronavirus - nCoV?

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

Symptoms of nCoV

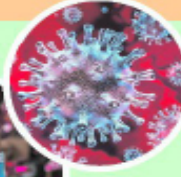


- Fever
- Difficulty in breathing
- Dry Cough
- Severe acute respiratory syndrome
- Pneumonia - like symptoms

Treatment

- Treatment is symptomatic and supportive based on the patient's clinical condition
- No vaccinations available as of now
- Visit Doctor in case symptoms detected

Precautions to Prevent nCoV

- Wash your hands often with soap.
- Use an alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Observe good personal hygiene.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people with possible symptoms.
- Avoid contact with animals and consumption of undercooked meats.
- Avoid travel to nCoV affected places.
- Wear a mask if you have respiratory syndrome. and cover your mouth while coughing or sneezing.



If you seek help, you may call :
-Toll free no. 104
District surveillance Officer
EAST : 7029372100
WEST : 9583287809
NORTH : 9541957468
SOUTH : 7407691463
New STNM
AMS : 9434711402

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM

Don't Lose Priorities to Panic

The blunt tool of lockdown requires precision testing to be of any use

Make enough noise, float enough conspiracy theories, and the continuing experience of the country shows that priorities can be easily displaced and disoriented by rabble rousing and hyper-ventilating. It is one thing for lay people to see lockdown as a panacea to SARS-CoV2, but inexcusable if those who know better cannot use a lockdown to actually contain Covid.

Spread enough panic and people will forget their demands for accountability and convince even themselves that a lockdown will somehow "break the chain." Even people responsible for managing Sikkim's preparation and response to Covid will serve up this falsehood because even they are convinced in their confusion that is the solution. While lockdown might have been the only immediate option, it is not a solution. Not by a long shot. May be a lockdown was required but even a child with a smartphone and knowledge of the right search commands will inform you that lockdowns can be of any use only if they are complemented with extensive testing. Sikkim begins another flirtation with a lockdown on Monday, which, the babus and the cops warn, will be strictly implemented [until an in-in, out-out confusion thumbs its nose at them i.e.]. While it will be welcome to see the administration get something right for once, if the lockdown is happening without a proper testing protocol, it will not have achieved anything when it ends.

What does a lockdown achieve?

It locks people in.

What does this achieve by way of halting transmissions?

Nothing more than a momentary pause.

So, what should happen during a lockdown?

Testing. Extensive testing.

What will this achieve? While a lockdown is underway, people cannot move about and that way, they do not shed the virus on to others, so spread is contained to an extent. Since nearly 70% of Covid-positive people do not even develop symptoms or become symptomatic late, when the lockdown opens, they step out and the virus travels out with them. Hence, the only way a lockdown serves any real purpose other than locking up Covid-positive people along with the rest of the population, is if extensive testing is carried out simultaneously. Since RT-PCR tests are time consuming and cannot be ramped up by much, these can be reserved for primary contacts while Rapid Antigen Testing can be extended to the lay population. Despite its propensity for false negatives, in the hands of professionals, it can be deployed well. Such exercises, however, require planning, precision planning, for which the blunt tool of a universal all-state lockdown is not the most conducive. May be, because the virus ran amuck in the second wave, this pause is required, but by itself, it will not achieve much.

The authorities should consider mini-containment areas when the latest lockdown ends. Use the week at hand to develop a strategy and source the experts; then keep the Covid hotspots contained while the rest of Sikkim opens up with some logical restrictions on social and political gatherings. Carry out extensive testing in mini-containment areas and sanitise Sikkim one sector at a time. It would be ideal if such an exercise was carried out simultaneously across the State but for that Sikkim did not build capacity in the one year it had at its disposal, so it will have to be worked in segments. If focussed vaccination was also undertaken at the hotspots and mini containment areas, it would serve the State well. And now that the Centre has finally withdrawn from its ham-fisted management of Covid and the States have some leeway in planning vaccination, something like this can be worked out. And please, if such an option is considered, don't add these responsibilities to the already over-burdened officers like the DCs and SDMs and BDOs. Use them to execute orders, but leave the decision making and planning to public health experts. Accept it, Covid is a health emergency, not a law & order situation.

Returning to what Sikkim needs to do. Irrespective of whether the decision-makers decide to put the lockdown to any real use or not, one hopes that they expand the testing to beyond the primary contacts. There are already contact tracing teams to work with primary contacts, but till this remains the only engagement, Sikkim will always be chasing the virus, not getting ahead of it. Some random sampling has been undertaken in Rangpo and Majhitar and this needs to be expanded. But that cannot be done with the existing workforce of health workers who have been over-worked and also burdened by poor management and mediocre administration. Their numbers need to be bolstered and this is not an impossible task.

What Sikkim should also do is return to the copious amount of data it has collected about transmissions. The decision-makers need to be briefed on which have been the super-spreader events. Future planning should take this information into consideration and identify which activities need to be kept in check for longer and which are being pointlessly banned. For instance, should sports at Paljor Stadium and mega social gatherings considered same-risk activities. Have the same number of people contracted the virus while window-shopping at MG Marg as those who got Covid while reporting for duty in crowded government departments? The State surely has data at hand by now to offer some intelligent inputs on these queries and those should inform future interventions.

One could go on and on about all that could be considered...

To Navigate the Dangers of the Web, You Need Critical Thinking – but Also Critical Ignoring

SAM WINEBURG
theconversation.com

The web is a treacherous place.

A website's author may not be its author. References that confer legitimacy may have little to do with the claims they anchor. Signals of credibility like a dot-org domain can be the artful handiwork of a Washington, D.C., public relations maven.

Unless you possess multiple Ph.D.'s – in virology, economics and the intricacies of immigration policy – often the wisest thing to do when landing on an unfamiliar site is to ignore it.

Learning to ignore information is not something taught in school. School teaches the opposite: to read a text thoroughly and closely before rendering judgment. Anything short of that is rash.

But on the web, where a witches' brew of advertisers, lobbyists, conspiracy theorists and foreign governments conspire to hijack attention, the same strategy spells doom. Online, critical ignoring is just as important as critical thinking.

That's because, like a pinball bouncing from bumper to bumper, our attention careens from notification to text message to the next vibrating thing we must check.

The cost of all this overabundance, as the late Nobel Laureate Herbert Simon observed, is scarcity. A flood of information depletes attention and fractures the ability to concentrate.

Modern society, wrote Simon, faces a challenge: to learn to "allocate attention efficiently among the overabundance of sources that might consume it."

We're losing the battle between attention and information.

'GLUED TO THE SITE'

As an applied psychologist, I study how people determine what is true online.

My research team at Stanford University re-

cently tested a national sample of 3,446 high school students on their ability to evaluate digital sources. Armed with a live internet connection, students examined a website that claims to "disseminate factual reports" on climate science.

Students were asked to judge whether the site was reliable. A screen prompt reminded them that they could search anywhere online to reach their answer.

Instead of leaving the site, the vast majority did exactly what school teaches: They stayed glued to the site – and read. They consulted the "About" page, clicked on technical reports, and examined graphs and charts. Unless they happened to possess a master's degree in climate science, the site, filled with the trappings of academic research, looked, well, pretty good.

The few students – less than 2% – who learned the site was backed by the fossil fuel industry did so not because they applied critical thinking to its contents. They succeeded because they hopped off the website and consulted the open web. They used the web to read the web.

As a student who searched the internet for the group's name wrote: "It has ties to large companies that want to purposefully mislead people when it comes to climate change. According to USA Today, Exxon has sponsored this nonprofit to pump out misleading information on climate change."

Instead of getting tangled up in the site's reports or suckered into its neutral-sounding language, this student did what professional fact checkers do: She evaluated the site by leaving it. Fact checkers engage in what we call lateral reading, opening up new tabs across the top of their screens to search for information about an organization or individual before diving into a site's contents.

Only after consulting the open web do they gauge whether expending attention is worth it. They know that the first step in critical thinking is knowing when to deploy it.

CRITICAL THINKING

The good news is that students can be taught to read the internet this way.

In an online nutrition course at the University of North Texas, we embedded short instructional videos that demonstrated the dangers of dwelling on an unknown site and taught students how to evaluate it.

At the beginning of the course, students were duped by features that are ludicrously easy to game: a site's "look," the presence of links to established sources, strings of scientific references or the sheer quantity of information a site provides.

On the test we gave at the beginning of the semester, only three in 87 students left a site to evaluate it. By the end, over three-quarters did. Other researchers, teaching the same strategies, have found similarly hopeful results.

Learning to resist the lure of dubious information demands more than a new strategy in students' digital tool box. It requires the humility that comes from facing one's vulnerability: that despite formidable intellectual powers and critical thinking skills, no one is immune to the slippery ruses plied by today's digital rogues.

By dwelling on an unfamiliar site, imagining ourselves smart enough to outsmart it, we squander attention and cede control to the site's designers.

Spending a few moments vetting the site by drawing on the awesome powers of the open web, we regain control and with it our most precious resource: Our attention.

[the writer is Professor of Education and (by courtesy) History, Stanford University]



Herd Immunity Appears Unlikely for COVID-19, Vaccinated People Can Ditch Masks in Most Settings

WILLIAM PETRI
theconversation.com

When COVID-19 first began spreading, public health and medical experts began talking about the need for the U.S. to reach herd immunity to stop the coronavirus from spreading. Experts have estimated that between 60% and 90% of people in the U.S. would need to be vaccinated for that to happen. Only about 35% of the population has been fully vaccinated, and yet the CDC said on May 14, 2021 that fully vaccinated people can lose their masks in most indoor and outdoor settings.

An important question now arises: What happens if we don't reach herd immunity? Dr. William Petri is a professor of infectious diseases at the University of Virginia who helps lead the global program to achieve herd immunity for polio as the chair of the World Health Organization's Polio Research Committee. He answers questions here about herd immunity and COVID-19.

WHAT IS HERD IMMUNITY?

Herd immunity occurs when there are enough immune people in a population that new infections stop. It means that enough people have achieved immunity to disrupt person-to-person transmission in the community, thereby protecting non-immune people.

Immunity can result from either vaccination or prior infection. Herd immunity may exist globally, as it does with smallpox, or in a country or region. For example, the U.S. and many other countries have achieved herd immunity for polio and measles,

even though global herd immunity does not yet exist.

HAS HERD IMMUNITY BEEN ACHIEVED GLOBALLY FOR OTHER INFECTIONS?

This has happened only once on a global scale, with the eradication of smallpox in 1980. This was after a decadelong worldwide intensive vaccination campaign.

We also are also approaching global herd immunity for polio. When the Global Polio Eradication Initiative was formed in 1988 there were 125 countries with endemic polio and over 300,000 children paralyzed annually. Today, after 33 years of immunization campaigns, Afghanistan and Pakistan are the only countries with wild polio virus, with only two cases of paralysis due to wild poliovirus this year. So herd immunity can be achieved worldwide, but only through extraordinary efforts with global collaboration.

IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THE GOAL POSTS FOR HERD IMMUNITY KEEP CHANGING. WHY?

Experts estimate that between 60% and 90% of the U.S. population would need to be immune for there to be herd immunity. This wide range is because there are many moving parts that determine what is needed to achieve herd immunity.

Factors influencing whether the target is 60% or 90% include how well vaccination and prior infection prevent not only illness due to COVID-19, but also infection and transmission to others. Additional considerations include the heightened transmissibility of new variants of SARS-CoV-2 and the use of measures

to interrupt transmission, including face masks and social distancing. Other important factors include the duration of immunity after vaccination or infection, and environmental factors such as seasonality, population sizes and density and heterogeneity within populations in immunity.

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO HERD IMMUNITY IN THE U.S.?

Two factors could lead to failure to achieve high enough levels of immunity: not every adult receiving the vaccine because of "vaccine hesitancy" and the likely need to vaccinate adolescents and children. The FDA cleared the emergency use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for adolescents 12 to 15 years of age on May 10, 2021, so that could help. But an added barrier is the constant pressure of reintroduction of infection from other countries where vaccination is not as readily available as in the U.S.

Achieving herd immunity to the extent of totally blocking new infections is therefore, while a laudable goal, not easily achievable. I think that for COVID-19 at this time, it will be possible only with the concerted global effort over years, similar to what led to smallpox eradication.

WHY ARE THERE 'VACCINE HESITANT' INDIVIDUALS?

People may be vaccine hesitant for several reasons, including lack of confidence in the vaccine, the inconvenience of receiving the vaccine, or complacency – that is, thinking that if they get COVID-19 it will not be severe.

Lack of confidence includes concerns for vaccine safety or skepticism

about the health care providers and public health officials administering them. Complacency reflects a personal decision that vaccination is not a priority for that individual because she or he perceives that the infection is not serious or because of competing priorities for time. Convenience issues include the availability and complexity, such as having to get two doses.

SINCE HERD IMMUNITY WILL NOT BE REACHED, WHAT WILL OUR LIVES LOOK LIKE?

At least into 2022 and likely for much longer, I do not expect there will be herd immunity for COVID-19. What there will be, probably by the end of this summer in the U.S., is a new normalcy. There will be far fewer cases and deaths due to COVID-19, and there will be a removal of social distancing and year-round masking, as evidenced by the CDC's new guidelines issued May 13, 2021, that vaccinated people do not have to wear masks in most places.

But there will be a seasonality to coronavirus infections. That means there will be less in the summer and more in the winter. We'll also see outbreaks in regions and population subgroups that lack adequate immunity, short-lived lockdowns of cities or regions, new and more transmissible variants and a likely requirement for vaccine booster shots. We cannot let down on the research and development of treatments and new vaccines, as studies show that COVID-19 is here to stay.

[the writer is Professor of Medicine, University of Virginia]

As infections surge uncontrolled in the country, WHO says Nepal has emergency needs

KATHMANDU, 15 MAY

[KATHMANDUPOST]: As the number of coronavirus infections continue to surge uncontrolled and deaths mount, World Health Organisation's director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said that Nepal has emergency needs.

While addressing a regular media briefing on Covid-19 on Friday, Ghebreyesus said that India remains hugely concerning, with several states continuing to see a worrying number of cases, hospitalisations and deaths.

WHO has shipped thousands of oxygen concentrators, tents for mobile field hospitals, masks and other medical supplies to India.

"But it's not only India that has emergency needs," said the UN health agency chief. "Nepal, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Egypt are just some of the countries that are dealing with spikes in cases and hospitalizations."

Nepal on Friday reported 8,467 new coro-



navirus cases and 203 deaths throughout the country. The country-wide death toll has now reached 4,669. The number of active cases stands at 107,336. The positivity rate was 40 percent on Friday, a dip from the mid-40spercent in the past few days and 52 percent on Monday.

Health facilities throughout the country, designated for treatment of the patients infected with coronavirus have already been overwhelmed. The nation-

wide immunisation drive, launched on January 27 has been halted for an indefinite period due to the lack of vaccines.

Ghebreyesus said that alongside public health measures, vaccination is key to controlling this pandemic.

"The fact that so many are still not protected is a sad reflection on the gross distortion in access to vaccines across the globe," said the WHO chief, who earlier in September warned about the threat of vaccine na-

tionalism. "In January, I spoke about the potential unfolding of a moral catastrophe. Unfortunately, we are now witnessing this play out."

He said that in a handful of rich countries, which bought up the majority of the vaccine supply, lower risk groups are now being vaccinated.

"I understand why some countries want to vaccinate their children and adolescents, but right now I urge them to reconsider and to instead donate vaccines to

COVAX," he said, referring to the programme to provide vaccines for free to the world's poorer countries.

The WHO said that in low and lower-middle income countries, vaccine supply has not been enough to even immunize health and care workers, and hospitals are being inundated with people that need lifesaving care urgently.

At present, only 0.3% of vaccine supply is going to low-income countries, Ghebreyesus said.

Jharkhand COVID fatalities plunge 37% of average in May

RANCHI, MAY 15 (PTI):

Tribal-dominated Jharkhand on Saturday saw its fresh fatalities plunge below 100 for the third time in May at 76, with capital Ranchi also witnessing COVID-19 related deaths coming down to 28.

This is a 37 per cent dip, compared to an average 121 fatalities during May so far.

The death toll in the state has climbed to 4,366, as per a Health Department bulletin.

Ranchi district recorded 28 new fatalities as compared to 40 a day before.

The state had recorded 97 fatalities each on May 13 and May 10 while to date this month, the highest number of 159 deaths was registered on May 2.

A look at the health bulletin of the state suggests that prominent cities of Jharkhand like Ranchi,East Singhbhum with headquarter at Jamshedpur,Bokaro, Hazaribag, Dhanbad and Ramgarh are witnessing an increasing trend of COVID cases, while relatively backward districts including Dumka, Garwah, Chatra and Gumla are logging lesser number of infections.

No deaths were re-

ported from eight of the 24 districts in the state during the last 24 hours which are Chatra, Dumka, Garhwa, Gumla, Godda, Lohardaga, Pakur and Ramgarh.

Battling sharp surge in COVID-19 cases during the second wave, the state government has extended the lockdown-like restrictions with stricter provisions, including seven days mandatory quarantine for people visiting the state, till May 27.

The state has suspended the operation of intra and inter-city bus services and put a cap on people attending weddings at 11 among others.

The state's positive tally has climbed to 3,10,024 with 3,776 new cases, the health department said in the bulletin.

The mineral-rich state now has 45,056 active cases, while the number of cases declared recovered and discharged so far stand at 2,60,602, it said.

Bokaro recorded 8 fatalities while a sharp decline in deaths was recorded in East Singhbhum at 7 fatalities. East Singhbhum which has been recording maximum fataliteis after capital Ranchi, had recorded 16 fatalities a day before.

Five casualties were reported from Giridih while four deaths each were recorded in Dhanbad, Hazaribag and Simdega.

Jamtara, Khunti and Palamu recorded three deaths each while two deaths were reported from West Singhbhum.

Deoghar, Koderma, Latehar, Sahebganj and Saraikela reported one death each, as per the bulletin.

Altogether, 76,39,859 samples have been tested in Jharkhand thus far, including 49,596 since Thursday, it added.

The mortality rate in the state remained higher at 1.40 per cent as against the nation's 1.10 per cent, while the recovery rate from the deadly virus stood at 84.05 per cent against India's 83.50 per cent.

In a bid to protect its citizens from the deadly disease, the Jharkhand government had on Friday launched a free vaccination drive for people in the age group of 18 to 44 years.

Over 1.57 crore people in the state are in the 18-44 years age bracket.

The state government could not roll out the inoculation drive for these people from May 1 as it was facing a shortage of vaccines.

Mamata Banerjee's brother dies of Covid-related complications



KOLKATA, 15 MAY [NDTV]:

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's brother Ashim Banerjee died of Covid-related complications at a hospital in Kolkata this morning. He was 60.

"He had tested positive for COVID-19 and was undergoing treatment," Dr Alok Roy, chairman of Medica Superspecialty Hospital in Kolkata, was quoted as saying by news agency PTI.

The last rites will be conducted this afternoon as per Covid protocols.

West Bengal reported

20,846 fresh COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, pushing the state's total caseload to over 10.94 lakh. 136 patients died in the same period.

Bengal is among the 12 states that cumulatively account for 79.7 per cent of India's total active cases, the Union Health Ministry had said on Friday.

India added 3.26 lakh new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total cases in the country to 2.43 crore. 3,890 more patients lost their battle to the deadly virus.

Assam CM meets family of grenade victims



GUWAHATI, 15 MAY

[NDTV]: Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday visited upper Tinsukia district where a grenade blast left two dead and promised strict action against those involved.

"We will take strong action against the persons who were behind the dastardly act. Peace should be maintained at any cost. We appealed everybody to maintain peace in the area. We would not tolerate such activities any means," Mr Sarma said.

Two others had suffered injuries in the incident which took place at the Tingrai market area under the Digboi police station on Friday. They are currently undergoing treatment at AMCH in Dibrugarh.

During his visit, Mr Sarma met the family members of the two killed in the blast.

The chief minister was accompanied by union minister Rameswar Teli, Digboi MLA Suren Phukan, Tinsukia MLA and cabinet minister Sanjay Kisan, Mar-

gherita MLA Bhaskar Sharma, and Naharkatia MLA Taranga Gogoi.

The team probing the incident has pinned the blame on ULFA(I), led by Paresh Baruah, which is active in the region. The insurgent group has, however, put out a release denying any role.

The blast comes days after a minor was killed in a another suspected grenade blast at Jagun in the same district. Twelve-year-old Suraj Hajong was killed at Khota Sema village on Tuesday.

Andamans reports 32 new COVID-19 cases, 2 more deaths

PORT BLAIR, MAY 15

(PTI): Andaman and Nicobar Islands reported 32 new COVID-19 cases, pushing the coronavirus tally in the union territory to 6,542, a health department official said on Saturday.

The COVID-19 death toll in the archipelago rose to 85 as two more persons succumbed to the disease in the last 24 hours, the official said.

Twenty-six new cases were detected during contact tracing and six were airport arrivals, he said.

People arriving by flight or by ship in Andaman and Nicobar Islands from other places have to undergo mandatory Rap-



id Antigen Test before they are allowed entry into the islands.

Twelve more people were cured of the disease during the period, taking the total number of recoveries in the archipelago to 6,225.

The union territory now has 232 active COVID-19 cases of which

223 are in South Andaman district and nine in North and Middle Andaman district. The Nicobar district has no active COVID-19 case at present, the official said. The Andaman and Nicobar administration has so far tested 3,78,887 samples for COVID-19, and the positivity rate is 1.73 per cent.

Malda's mango farmers hopeful of bumper harvest

ENGLISH BAZAR (WB),

MAY 15 (PTI): Mango farmers in West Bengal's Malda district are hopeful about a bumper harvest this year due to the clement weather and adequate rainfall. Farmers said the constant rainfall since May 10 has been helpful for the crops, on the back of which they are expecting a record harvest this year.

If no major natural calamity happens over the next few weeks, the farmers said that they expect 3.5 lakh metric tonnes of production this year.

However, the farmers said that even then they are apprehensive about making profits as COVID-related restrictions have been clamped in several

states, including West Bengal.

Though food items have been exempted from the purview of the lockdown, they fear it will affect transport.

Malda is one of the top mango producing regions of the country.

Mango is cultivated in 31,000 hectare of farmland in the district's eight blocks. English Bazar, Old Malda, Manikchak, Ratua, Harishchandrapur and Chachal have most of the mango orchards.

Last year, 1.2 lakh metric tonne mangoes were destroyed in nor'westers. Around 2.40 lakh metric tonne production was recorded, officials said.

No major damage to mangoes due

to nor'westers or hailstorms was reported so far this year, Krishnendu Nandan, the Deputy Director of the district Horticulture Department, said on Saturday.

Besides langra, the other types of mangoes produced in the district are gutthi, laxmanbhog, gopalbhog, himsagar, amrapali, mallika, fazli and ashwina.

Farmers said mangoes from the district will be available in the markets in West Bengal within the next ten days. Following that, it will be available in neighbouring states such as Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam.

The mangoes are also exported to countries such as the UK and those in Europe.

Nagaland logs 275 new COVID cases, 13 deaths

Kohima, May 14 (PTI): Nagaland on Friday registered 275 fresh cases of COVID-19 infection increasing the tally to 17,531, while 13 fatalities pushed the death toll to 190, a health official said.

The state now has 3,741 active cases while 13,034 patients have recovered from the disease so far.

"275 +ve cases of COVID-19 reported today. Dimapur- 176, Kohima- 74, Mokokchung- 13, Phek- 6, Mon- Peren- 2 each Zunheboto- Longleng- 1 each. 66 +ve patients have recovered.

Dimapur- 41, Kohima- 18, Peren- Phek- 2

each, Mon- Mokokchung- Longleng- 1 each," said Health Minister S Pangnyu Phom in a tweet.

Of the 13 deaths, eight were reported from Dimapur, three from Kohima and two from Zunheboto district, the official said.

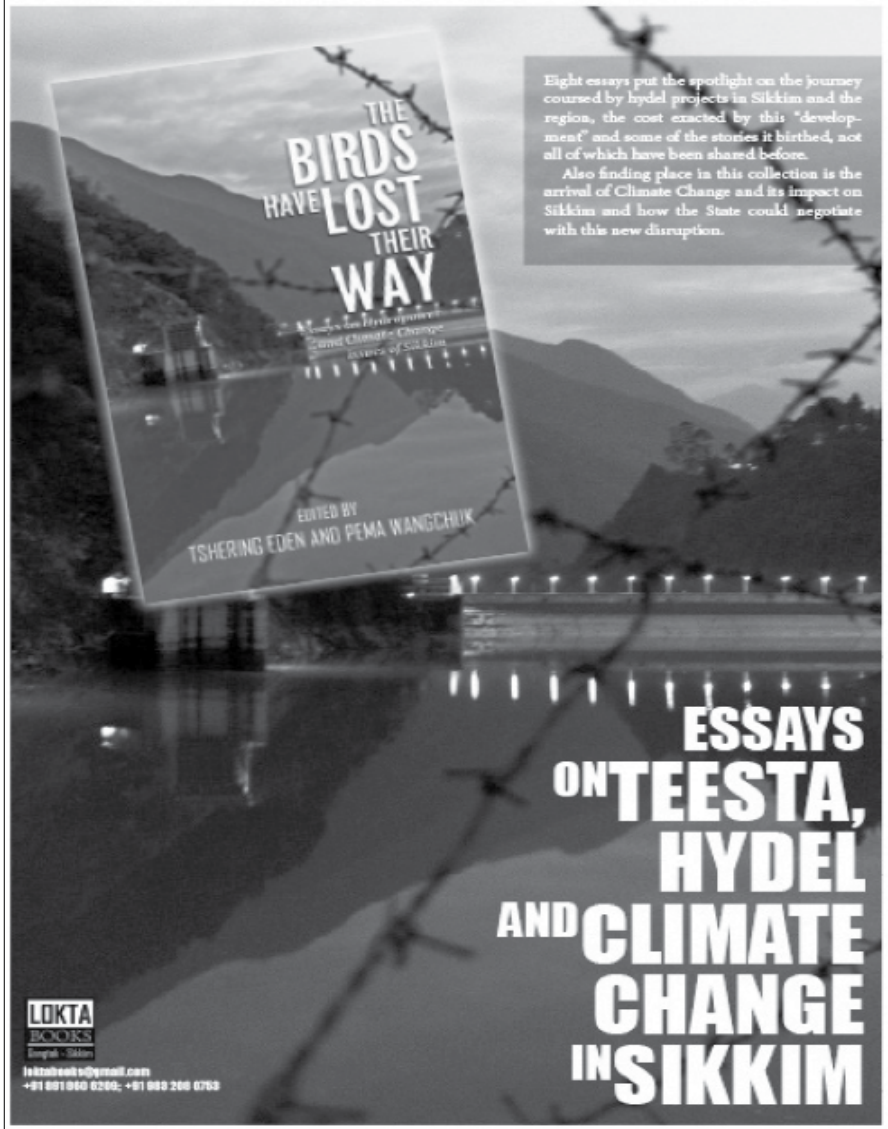
He said that 566 patients have migrated to other states.

So far, a total of 1,71,234 samples have been tested for COVID-19 in Nagaland.

Meanwhile, Nagaland has administered vaccine to 1,85,822 people to date, of whom 53,742 received the second dose, said State Immunization Officer Dr Ritu Thurr.

HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

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Torres hat trick as City earns record 4-3 win at Newcastle

NEWCASTLE (UK), MAY 15 (AP):Ferran Torres scored a hat trick as newly crowned champion Manchester City won a record 12th straight away game in the English Premier League, 4-3 at Newcastle.

The Spain winger was part of another heavily rotated lineup named by Pep Guardiola that also included third-choice goalkeeper Scott Carson, an on-loan 35-year-old who was making his first start in the top flight in 10 years on Friday.

With the title wrapped up on Tuesday with three matches to spare, City looks like it will have some fun in the final week of the campaign and Torres certainly enjoyed himself at St. James' Park.

He is finishing his first season at the club in impressive fashion, taking his tally to five goals in his last four league games by scoring twice in three minutes from the 64th as City fought back from 3-2 behind.

City moved 13 points clear of second-placed Manchester United, which handed its neighbor the title by losing to Leicester in midweek.

Newcastle, which is safe from relegation, went ahead through Emil Krafth's header at a corner in the 25th before Joao Cancelo equalized off a deflected shot that spun into the far corner from the edge of the area in the 39th.

Torres produced an impressive flicked volley in mid-air three minutes later as City moved ahead 2-1, only for Jolinton to get fouled in the area by Nathan Ake and dust himself down to convert the penalty past Carson in first-half stoppage time.

Newcastle was awarded another penalty when Joe Willock was tripped by Kyle Walker and the fouled player again took the spot kick. This time, Carson made the save, but the ball rebounded out and Willock converted into an empty net in the 62nd.

Walker teed up Torres to equalize, and the winger was on hand to volley the winning goal high into the net when Cancelo's shot came back off the post.

City's class of 2020-21 had been tied on 11 away straight victories with Chelsea (2008) and the Man City team from 2017, also managed by Guardiola.

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Curry, Embiid help 76ers top Magic, clinch top seed in East

PHILADELPHIA (AP): Joel Embiid and the 76ers are happy to have earned home-court advantage for the playoffs — but they are a long way from their goal.

Seth Curry scored 20 points, Embiid had 13 points and 11 rebounds and Philadelphia clinched the top seed in the Eastern Conference with a 122-97 victory over the Orlando Magic on Friday night.

Ben Simmons added 13 points and nine assists to help the 76ers improve to 48-23. Philadelphia could've clinched earlier this week, but lost at Indiana on Tuesday and at Miami on Thursday. Embiid didn't play against the Pacers due to illness and logged just 25 minutes against the Heat while still looking sluggish.

But he was more engaged in the second quarter against the undermanned Magic, helping Philadelphia outscore Orlando 39-19 in the period to take firm control. Embiid showed the edge that has made him arguably Philadelphia's most-loved athlete when he picked up a technical for a confrontation with Shane Bacon with 3:16 left in the period.

"I'm happy about what we accomplished, but we have a long way to go," Embiid said. "Now's the time to lock in and go get the whole thing."

Philadelphia fans reigned down "M-V-P!" "M-V-P!" chants on Embiid in the first half. And those cheers



will get even louder in the postseason, as the city announced this week that the 76ers' home arena can have 50 percent capacity when the playoffs begin. That will mean about 10,000 fans can be in attendance, or about double the current allowance.

The 76ers improved to 28-7 at home. "Home-court advantage helps a lot," Embiid said. "We've been dominant at home; we barely lose here. It means a lot to have the No. 1 seed."

Embiid, Simmons and the rest of Philadelphia's starters relaxed on the bench in the fourth quarter with the 76ers

up big. "I told our guys to enjoy the second," coach Doc Rivers said. "It's not what we want, but it's part of what you can get on your way to what you want."

IgnasBrazdeikis scored 21 points for the Magic. They have lost six straight.

"They're great, they're an elite team, championship level, ton of talent," Magic coach Steve Clifford said. "That game was important to them. The second quarter when they really turned up the defense, it was a struggle."The 76ers last took the top seed in 2001 when Allen Iverson won the MVP, Larry Brown the Coach

of the Year and Aaron McKie the Sixth Man award. That team reached the NBA finals before losing to Kobe Bryant, Shaquille O'Neal and the Lakers in five games.

Philadelphia has made the playoffs 10 times since, but hasn't gotten close to the finals. The club started from scratch under former GM Sam Hinkie, famously rebuilding beginning in 2013-14. The 76ers won just 47 games over the first three seasons of The Process before using high draft picks on Simmons and Embiid helped turn things around. They will enter the playoffs for the fourth

straight season, but the hope of a Process-produced championship has remained elusive. Philadelphia hasn't even reached the conference finals during the recent stretch, and last year's first-round playoff exit cost former coach Brett Brown his job.

Now, Rivers and GM Daryl Morey, Hinkie's ex-boss in Houston, will try to help bring Philadelphia its first championship since 1983. The 76ers will begin that quest on May 22 and have home-court advantage as long as they stay alive in the East. They'll start with a series against the No. 8 seed, which will come by way

of a play-in tourney between the No. 9 and 10 seeds.

"We did it as a group, felt like everybody contributed," Embiid said. "Great coaching staff, great front office, the group we've had this year has been exceptional. As good as we were in the regular season, I think we're going to be even better in the playoffs."

SHOT-CLOCK MALFUNCTION

The shot clock didn't work at the start of the second half. The public-address announcer called out when there were 15 seconds and then 10 seconds remaining before counting down the last five seconds.

TIP-INS

Magic: Mo Bamba returned after missing the last two games due to illness. ... Fell to 10-25 on the road. ... Were without Michael Carter-Williams (sprained left ankle), James Ennis III (sore right calf), Markelle Fultz (torn ACL left knee), Jonathan Isaac (left knee rehab), ChumaOkeke (sprained left ankle), Otto Porter Jr. (left foot pain) and Terrence Ross (back spasms).

76ers: Matisse Thybule (swelling left hand) missed his third straight contest. ... Backup center Dwight Howard served a one-game suspension for picking up his 16th technical of the season on Thursday against the Heat.

UP NEXT

The teams wrap up the regular season in a rematch on Sunday night in Philadelphia.

Nadal ends losing streak against Zverev with win in Rome

ROME, MAY 15 (AP): Rafael Nadal ended a run of three straight losses to Alexander Zverev with a convincing 6-3, 6-4 win over the German to reach the Italian Open semifinals.

Zverev beat Nadal in straight sets at the same stage in Madrid a week ago and their latest meeting was also one-sided.

Nadal raced to 4-0 in the first set and saved all eight break points he faced in the second.

I played more solid than Madrid. Conditions are different," Nadal said, alluding to the fact that the high-altitude of the Spanish capital allowed Zverev to dominate more with his serve.

Here are little bit more normal conditions. I was able to control a little bit more.

Nadal, aiming for a record-extending 10th Rome title, will next face big-serving American Reilly Opelka, who reached his first Masters semifinals by edging Argentine qualifier Federico Delbonis 7-5, 7-6 (2).

Novak Djokovic's quarterfinal against StefanosTsitsipas was suspended due to rain with Tsitsipasahead 6-4, 2-1 and up a break in the second. The match, which had already been interrupted for 3 hours before resuming briefly, was scheduled to be completed on Saturday.

Another quarterfinal, AndreyRublev vs. Lorenzo Sonogo, didn't get started.



In the women's tournament, top-ranked Ash Barty retired from her rainy quarterfinal against 17-year-old Coco Gauff while leading 6-4, 2-1 due to a right arm injury.

The pain was becoming too severe, so it was important that I listen to my body and of course try and do the right thing, knowing that we have a Grand Slam in two weeks, Barty said, referring to the French Open.

Barty was coming off a period in which she played finals in three of four tournaments on two continents.

It's a pre-existing injury, Barty said, adding that the arm issue first bothered her when she was 15 or 16 years old, and that it just pops up every now and again.

Gauff's opponent in her first clay-court semifinal will be French Open

champion IgaSwiatek or two-time Rome champion ElinaSvitolina. Their quarterfinal was also postponed.

In the other half of the draw, 2019 Rome champion Karolina Pliskova rallied past 2017 French Open winner JelenaOstapenko 4-6, 7-5, 7-6 (1) and will play Petra Martic.

Martic eliminated Jessica Pegula 7-5, 6-4 for her biggest result since recently hiring former French Open champion Francesca Schiavone as her coach.

The only real moment of concern for Nadal came when he tripped over the service line while running down a drop shot when he was serving for the first set.

The crowd of about 2,500 let out a collective gasp as Nadal tumbled onto the clay and rolled

over onto his back wincing in apparent pain.

After putting Nadal's reply away for an easy winner the Spaniard still managed to get the ball over the net Zverev hopped over the net to check on the 20-time Grand Slam champion.

Nadal got up, though, dusted himself off and served out the set with his back and even headband still covered in clay.

Some lines are higher than the rest of court, so when you touch the line it's dangerous," Nadal said.

Zverev, the 2017 Rome champion and Madrid winner last weekend,had numerous opportunities to recover from an early break in the second set but Nadal stepped up his game each time and closed it out on his first match point with a per-

fectly executed serve-and-volley.

I played a very solid match, with not too many mistakes playing the way that I have to, Nadal said.

It's an important victory for me against a great player.

The 6-foot-11 (2.11-meter) Opelka, not previously known for his clay-court tennis, overwhelmed Delbonis with 18 aces to record his fourth straight-set win of the week.

I'm surprised. Clay is not really my thing, Opelka said.

It's probably just a fluke. But I'm OK with it. Opelka also saved all four break points he faced. But it wasn't just his serve that made the difference.

The 47th-ranked Opelka hit a delicate slice volley drop-shot winner in the final game before the tiebreaker and produced a difficult backhand cross-court passing shot to set up the only match point he needed.

Opelka entered Rome on a six-match losing streak that included dealing with a bout of COVID-19 The first 10 weeks of the year I just didn't play well. It wasn't COVID-related at all, Opelka said.

After you lose eight weeks in a row, the one thing you want to do is practice not get COVID and be stuck inside for 2 weeks. But I guess it worked out.

Copa Libertadores match is played amid tear gas in Colombia



BOGOTA, MAY 15 (AP): Players breathed in tear gas during a Copa Libertadores group stage match in Colombia where they were unwittingly caught up in protests against the country's government.

While Brazilian visitor AtlticoMineiro was winning at Am rica de Cali 3-1, the match was interrupted eight times, as sirens and explosions echoed outside Romelio Martinez Stadium in Barranquilla late Thursday.

That is the same city sche1duled to host the final of the Copa America on July 10, and Lionel Messi's Argentina in a World Cup qualifying match on June 8.

Uruguayan referee Andr s Cunha allowed the match to continue despite complaints from teary-eyed players as police and protesters clashed around the stadium. One of the interruptions stopped the game for nine minutes.

Barranquilla authorities said five people were injured in the clashes.

To play like we did is almost impossible and we have a big frustration for the situation that Co-

lombia endures," America de Cali coach Jerson Gonzalez said. AtlticoMineiro coach Cuca agreed.

This was the worst thing I ever lived through," Cuca said.

"We couldn't stay on the pitch because every part of us hurt. The eyes, the throat, the nose.

CONMEBOL ratified on Thursday that Colombia and Argentina will co-host the Copa America next month. Colombia's association of professional footballers said it was against playing matches under such social tensions.

On Wednesday, similar protests in Barranquilla also interrupted another Copa Libertadores match between local side Atltico Junior and Argentina's River Plate. They drew 1-1 as clashes erupted outside their stadium.

Separate demonstrations on the same day in the city of Pereira delayed the start of another Copa Libertadores match. Colombia's AtleticoNacional and Uruguay's Nacional drew 0-0 after the start of their game was delayed for one hour.

China lands on Mars in major advance for its space ambitions

BEIJING (AP): China landed a spacecraft on Mars for the first time on Saturday, a technically challenging feat more difficult than a moon landing, in the latest step forward for its ambitious goals in space.

Plans call for a rover to stay in the lander for a few days of diagnostic tests before rolling down a ramp to explore an area of Mars known as Utopia Planitia. It will join an American rover that arrived at the red planet in February.

China's first Mars landing follows its launch last month of the main section of what will be a permanent space station and a mission that brought back rocks from the moon late last year.

"China has left a footprint on Mars for the first time, an important step for our country's space exploration," the official Xinhua News Agency said in announcing the landing on one of its social media accounts.

The U.S. has had nine successful landings on Mars since 1976. The Soviet Union landed on the planet in 1971, but the mission failed after the craft stopped transmitting information soon after touchdown.

A rover and a tiny helicopter from the American landing in February are currently exploring Mars. NASA expects the rover to collect its first sample in July for return to Earth in a decade.

China has landed on the moon before but landing on Mars is a much more difficult undertaking. Spacecraft use shields for protection from the searing heat of entering the Martian atmosphere, and



use both retro-rockets and parachutes to slow down enough to prevent a crash landing. The parachutes and rockets must be deployed at precise times to land at the designated spot. Only mini-retro rockets are required for a moon landing, and parachutes alone are sufficient for returning to Earth.

Xinhua said the entry capsule entered the Mars atmosphere at an altitude of 125 kilometers (80 miles), initiating what it called "the riskiest phase of the whole mission."

A 200 square meter (2,150 square foot) parachute was deployed and later jettisoned, and then a retro-rocket was fired to slow the speed of the craft to almost zero, Xinhua said. The craft hovered about 100 meters (330 feet) above the surface to identify obstacles before touching down on four buffer legs.

"Each step had only one chance, and the ac-

tions were closely linked. If there had been any flaw, the landing would have failed," said Geng Yan, an official at the China National Space Administration, according to Xinhua.

Touchdown was at 7:18 a.m. Beijing time (23:18 Friday GMT; 7:18 p.m. EDT), although more than an hour passed before ground controllers could confirm the landing was a success, Xinhua said. The rover had to open its solar panels and antenna, and then it took more than 17 minutes for its signals to traverse the distance between Mars and Earth.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, in a congratulatory letter to the mission team, called the landing "an important step in our country's interplanetary exploration journey, realizing the leap from Earth-moon to the planetary system and leaving the mark of the Chinese on Mars for the first time.

... The motherland and people will always remember your outstanding feats!"

NASA Associate Administrator Thomas Zurbuchentweeted his congratulations, saying, "Together with the global science community, I look forward to the important contributions this mission will make to humanity's understanding of the Red Planet."

China's Mars landing was the top trending topic on Weibo, a leading social media platform, as people expressed both excitement and pride.

The Tianwen-1 spacecraft has been orbiting Mars since February, when it arrived after a 6 1/2-month journey from Earth. Xinhua described the mission as China's first planetary exploration.

The rover, named after the Chinese god of fire Zhurong, is expected to be deployed for 90 days to search for evidence of life. About the

size of a small car, it has ground-penetrating radar, a laser, and sensors to gauge the atmosphere and magnetic sphere.

China's space program has proceeded in a more cautious manner than the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the height of their space race.

The launch of the main module for China's space station in April is the first of 11 planned missions to build and provision the station and send up a three-person crew by the end of next year. While the module was successfully launched, the uncontrolled return to Earth of the rocket drew international criticism including from NASA Administrator Bill Nelson.

China has said it wants to land people on the moon and possibly build a scientific base there. No timeline has been released for these projects. A space plane is also reportedly under development.

China cancels Everest climbs over fears of virus from Nepal

BEIJING, MAY 15 (AP): China has cancelled attempts to climb Mount Everest from its side of the world's highest peak because of fears of importing COVID-19 cases from neighbouring Nepal, state media reported.

The closure was confirmed in a notice Friday from China's General Administration of Sport, the official Xinhua News Agency said.

The move reflects the abundance of caution China has taken in dealing with the pandemic. While China has mostly curbed domestic trans-

mission of the coronavirus, Nepal is experiencing a surge with record numbers of new infections and deaths.

China had issued permits to 38 people, all Chinese citizens, to climb the 8,849-meter (29,032-foot) -high mountain this spring. Nepal has given permission to 408 people. Climbing was not allowed from either side last year because of the pandemic.

In Nepal, several climbers have reported testing positive for COVID-19 after they were brought down from the Everest base camp.

The month of May usually has the best weather for climbing Everest. Scores have reached the summit this week and more are expected to make attempts later this month once the weather improves. Two climbers have died on the Nepalese side, one Swiss and one American.

China earlier said it would set up a separation line at the peak and prohibit people on its side from coming into contact with anyone on the Nepalese side. It was unclear how that would be done.

Israeli airstrike on Gaza home kills 10, mostly children

GAZA CITY, GAZA STRIP (AP): An Israeli air raid in Gaza City killed at least 10 Palestinians, mostly children, early Saturday in the deadliest single strike since the battle with Gaza's militant Hamas rulers erupted earlier this week. Both sides pressed for an advantage as cease-fire efforts gathered strength.

The latest outburst of violence began in Jerusalem and has spread across the region, with Jewish-Arab clashes and rioting in mixed cities of Israel. There were also widespread Palestinian protests Friday in the occupied West Bank, where Israeli forces shot and killed 11 people.

The spiraling violence has raised fears of a new Palestinian "intifada," or uprising at a time when there have been no peace talks in years. Palestinians were set to mark Nakba (Catastrophe) Day on Saturday, when they commemorate the estimated 700,000 people who fled or were driven from their homes in what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. That raised the possibility of even more unrest.

U.S. diplomat HadyAmr arrived on Friday as part of Washington's efforts to de-escalate the conflict, and the U.N. Security Council was set to meet Sunday. But Israel turned down an Egyptian proposal for a one-year truce that Hamas rulers had accepted, an Egyptian official said Friday on condition of anonymity to discuss the negotiations.

Since Monday night, Hamas has fired hundreds of rockets into Israel, which has pounded the Gaza Strip with strikes. In Gaza, at least 139 people have been killed, including 39 children and 22 women; in Israel, seven people have been killed, including a 5-year-old boy and a soldier.

Rocket fire from Gaza and Israel's bombardment of the blockaded Palestinian territory continued into early Saturday, when an airstrike on a three-story house in a refugee camp in Gaza City killed eight children and two women from an extended family.

Mohammed Hadidi told reporters his wife and five children had gone to celebrate the Eid al-Fitr holiday with relatives. She and three of the children, aged 6 to 14, were killed, while an 11-year-old is missing. Only his 5-month-old son Omar is known to have survived.

Children's toys and a Monopoly board game could be seen among the rubble, as well as plates of uneaten food from the holiday gathering.

"There was no warning," said Jamal Al-Naji, a neighbor living in the same building. "You filmed people eating and then you bombed them?" he said, addressing Israel. "Why are you confronting us? Go and confront the strong people!" The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Hamas said it fired a salvo of rockets at southern Israel in response to the airstrike.

A furious Israeli barrage early Friday killed a family of six in their house and sent thousands fleeing to U.N.-run shelters. The military said the operation involved 160 warplanes dropping some 80 tons of explosives over the course of 40 minutes and succeeded in destroying a vast tunnel network used by Hamas.

Lt. Col. Jonathan Conricus, a military spokesman, said the military aims to minimize collateral damage in striking military targets. But measures it takes in other strikes, such as warning

shots to get civilians to leave, were not "feasible this time."

Israeli media said the military believed dozens of militants were killed inside the tunnels. The Hamas and Islamic Jihad militant groups have confirmed 20 deaths in their ranks, but the military said the real number is far higher.

Gaza's infrastructure, already in widespread disrepair because of an Israeli-Egyptian blockade imposed after Hamas seized power in 2007, showed signs of breaking down further, compounding residents' misery. The territory's sole power plant is at risk of running out of fuel in the coming days.

The U.N. said Gazans are already enduring daily power cuts of 8-12 hours and at least 230,000 have limited access to tap water. The impoverished and densely populated territory is home to 2 million Palestinians, most of them the descendants of refugees from what is now Israel.

The conflict has reverberated widely. Israeli cities with mixed Arab and Jewish populations have seen nightly violence, with mobs from each community fighting in the streets and trashing each other's property.

Late on Friday, someone threw a firebomb at an Arab family's home in the Ajami neighborhood of Tel Aviv, striking two children. A 12-year-old boy was in moderate condition with burns on his upper body and a 10-year-old girl was treated for a head injury, according to the Magen David Adom rescue service.

In the occupied West Bank, on the outskirts of Ramallah, Nablus and other towns and cities, hundreds of Palestinians protested the Gaza campaign and Israeli actions in Jerusalem. Waving Palestinian flags, they trucked in tires that they set up in burning barricades and hurled stones at Israeli soldiers. At least 10 protesters were shot and killed by soldiers. An 11th Palestinian was killed when he tried to stab a soldier at a military position.

In east Jerusalem, online video showed young Jewish nationalists firing pistols as they traded volleys of stones with Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah, which became a flashpoint for tensions over attempts by settlers to forcibly evict a number of Palestinian families from their homes.

On Israel's northern border, troops opened fire when a group of Lebanese and Palestinian protesters on the other side cut through the border fence and briefly crossed. One Lebanese was killed. Three rockets were fired toward Israel from neighboring Syria without causing any casualties or damage. It was not immediately known who fired them. The tensions began in east Jerusalem earlier this month, with Palestinian protests against the Sheikh Jarrah evictions and Israeli police measures at Al-Aqsa Mosque, a frequent flashpoint located on a mount in the Old City revered by Muslims and Jews.

Hamas fired rockets toward Jerusalem late Monday, in an apparent attempt to present itself as the champion of the protesters.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed that Hamas will "pay a very heavy price" for its rocket attacks as Israel has massed troops at the frontier. U.S. President Joe Biden has expressed support for Israel while saying he hopes to bring the violence under control.

Iran's hard-line judiciary chief registers presidential run

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (AP): The hard-line cleric in charge of Iran's judiciary who also took part in a panel involved in the mass execution of thousands of prisoners in 1988 registered Saturday to run for the country's presidency. Ebrahim Raisi has been named as a possible successor to Iran's 82-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, leading some to suggest he wouldn't run in the race. However, his registration shows he still has interest in the office he failed to obtain in 2017.

His close ties to Khamenei and popularity in part from his televised anti-corruption campaign could make him a favorite in an election in which analysts already believe that hard-liners enjoy an edge. A crush of journalists followed Raisi through the Interior Ministry as he registered, the 60-year-old cleric waving to staffers as he passed.

In a statement just before his registration, Raisi promised to fight "poverty and corruption, humiliation and discrimination" if he becomes president. He added his tenure in office would seek to have a "popular administration for a powerful Iran," a dig at Iran's current president, the relatively moderate Hassan Rouhani, who has struggled under re-imposed U.S. sanctions after then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew America from the nuclear deal.

Raisi, wearing his black turban that identifies him as a direct descendant of Islam's Prophet Muhammad, offered fiery remarks to journalists on his campaign. He vowed that if he wins the June 18 vote, corruption will be "dried up."

"Those who founded and partnered with the current situation can't claim they can change it," Raisi said. "People are complaining about the current situation. They are upset. Their disappointment is on the rise. This should be stopped." Activists, however, hold

a far different view of Raisi over his involvement in the 1988 mass execution of prisoners at the end of Iran's long war with Iraq. After Iran's then-Supreme Leader Ruhollah Khomeini accepted a U.N.-brokered cease-fire, members of the Iranian opposition group Mujahedeen-e-Khalq, heavily armed by Saddam Hussein, stormed across the Iranian border in a surprise attack.

Raisi ultimately blunted their assault, but the attack set the stage for the sham retrials of political prisoners, militants and others that would become known as "death commissions." Some who appeared were asked to identify themselves. Those who responded "mujahedeen" were sent to their deaths, while others were questioned about their willingness to "clear minefields for the army of the Islamic Republic," according to a 1990 Amnesty International report.

International rights groups estimate that as many as 5,000 people were executed, while the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq puts the number at 30,000. Iran has never fully acknowledged the executions, apparently carried out on Khomeini's orders, though some argue that other top officials were effectively in charge in the months before his 1989 death. Raisi reportedly served on a panel involved in sentencing the prisoners to death.

Raisi has never publicly acknowledged his role in the executions, even while campaigning for president in 2017. He ultimately lost to Rouhani, though he still garnered nearly 16 million votes in his campaign. Khamenei appointed him as head of the judiciary in 2019, signaling he still had hopes for Raisi's political career.

In 2016, Khamenei appointed Raisi to run the Imam Reza charity foundation, which manages a vast conglomerate of businesses and endowments in Iran. It is one of many bonyads, or charitable foundations,

fueled by donations or assets seized after Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution. These foundations offer no public accounting of their spending and answer only to Iran's supreme leader. The Imam Reza charity, known as "Astan-e Quds-e Razavi" in Farsi, is believed to be one of the biggest in the country. Analysts estimate its worth at tens of billions of dollars as it owns almost half the land in Mashhad, Iran's second-largest city.

Analysts have speculated that Khamenei could be grooming Raisi as a possible candidate to be Iran's third-ever supreme leader, a Shiite cleric who has final say on all state matters and serves as the country's commander-in-chief.

Within Iran, candidates exist on a political spectrum that broadly includes hard-liners who want to expand Iran's nuclear program, moderates who hold onto the status quo, and reformists who want to change the theocracy from within.

Those calling for radical change find themselves blocked from even running for office by the Guardian Council, a 12-member panel that vets and approves candidates under Khamenei's watch.

Other candidates who registered Saturday include Ali Larijani, a prominent conservative voice and former parliament speaker who later allied himself with Rouhani.

At the same time Larijani registered, so too did Mohsen Hashemi Rafsanjani, the eldest son of the late former Iranian President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Rafsanjani, a member of Tehran's city council, has been described as a reformist by political commentators.

Rouhani's senior Vice President Eshaq Jahangiri, also registered Saturday, just days after authorities detained his brother to serve a two-year prison sentence over fraud and foreign currency smuggling charges.



POP STAR! The "Deja Vu" singer, Olivia Rodrigo is dressed in a black and green outfit while heading into rehearsals for Saturday Night Live in NYC.

Hannah Berner is Leaving Summer House After a "Whirlwind" Experience to Focus on Stand-Up Career

Hannah Berner is saying goodbye to Summer House after three seasons, revealing that she'll spend this summer "telling fart jokes at comedy clubs" instead of hanging out with her Bravo co-stars.

Hannah Berner is bidding adieu to the summer house after a rocky season.

The Bravo reality star, 29, announced on Friday, May 14, that she will not return for season six of Summer House.

"This past year has been one of the most important in my life for self reflection, love, and learning a lot of s--t," she wrote on Instagram. "I've welcomed new career ventures, challenges and obstacles, and opportunities for growth. As we climb out of the emotional trenches of 2020, I look forward to an exciting summer, but with mixed emotions I'm announcing I won't be spending it living in the summer house."

Hannah reflected, "These last three summers have truly been a whirlwind and the show has, without a doubt, changed my life and I will forever be thankful for the platform it has provided me."

However, fans haven't seen the last of her. She's now moving on from reality TV to spend this summer on tour as a standup comic instead. "Making people laugh is what brings me joy," she said, noting that she'll soon be "telling fart jokes at comedy clubs and theaters near you."

The Berning in Hell podcast host explained that dates and ticketing information will be announced soon, but

she's planning stops in New York, New Jersey and Nashville. She ended with, "I cannot wait to see you all in person!!!"

Co-star Ciara Miller commented on the post, simply writing, "I love you."

Hannah's personal life has kept her busy this year. After getting engaged to co-star Des Bishop, 45, in February, she hinted on Bravo's Chat Room that she already has her dream dress picked out and will tie the knot in August on Shelter

fractured friendship."

The network revealed, "Finally, tension comes to a head when Hannah is confronted about what she and her new fiancé Des did in Kyle and Amanda's bathroom, leading to shocking admissions and shaking the house to its core."

Earlier this month, Hannah apologized for making controversial comments about mental health two years ago on her podcast, which was brought



Island in New York.

She joined Summer House in 2019 for season three and most recently appeared in season five's reunion episode, with part two out on May 6. As Screen-Rant noted, Hannah made an enemy out of most cast members and became "the de facto villain" of the fifth season.

"In the dramatic conclusion of the Summer House reunion," Bravo teased, "Luke accuses Hannah of turning the house against him, while Paige is caught in the middle of Hannah and Amanda's

up during the reunion.

"I want to apologize for my insensitivity regarding such a serious topic," the comedian wrote on Instagram on May 5. "I consider myself to be a very fierce advocate for mental health awareness, and I understand that I crossed the line. To everyone who has brought this to my attention, I want you to know that I hear you, and I am sorry."

A rep for Bravo declined to comment on Hannah's departure when contacted by E! News.

Kardashians reveal mystery behind Nori's Black Book

NEW YORK (AP): Kardashian fans were tickled by a big reveal: A California government worker is behind a mystery social media handle that's been cranking out troll posts

excited after ruling out various family members and friends as the creator of @norisblackbook on Twitter and Instagram.

"She is everything and

vice for a state agency, said she got the idea from Suri's Burn Book, a popular blog that's still alive on social media commenting on the world from the eyes of Suri

migrated as other platforms developed. Her posts, paired with video clips and photos, have poked fun at just about everyone in the Kardashian world, noting Kim's reputation as a terrible dancer and dragging Kim's sister Kourtney and Scott Disick with: "Hating work is what keeps Scott and Auntie Kourt together."

So what does North think of all of this? She was unaware, and unimpressed. Kim got her daughter on FaceTime to meet Franklin and she barely looked up from her bowl of ice cream.

"I love North West so much. I feel like I created this little monster, if you will," Franklin said. "I was very happy to see that she lived up to my every expectation of not being interested. I wouldn't have it any other way."

The Kardashian-Jenner tribe is ending its 20-season show in June, but Franklin has no plans to put @norisblackbook to bed.

"I want to keep writing it," she said. "I don't think the Kardashians are going away any time soon."



from North West's point of view since Kim's eldest was born seven years ago.

She's Natalie Franklin, 34, of Sacramento, and she was thrilled to appear on Thursday night's episode of "Keeping Up With the Kardashians" after Kim and sister Khloe tracked her down.

"Oh, my God, it was so great," Franklin told The Associated Press after the episode aired. "I've never met famous, famous people before."

The sisters were equally

more," Kim said on the show of meeting Franklin. "She started this account before North even had a personality, so she made up this personality and luckily that's who North's personality is."

Khloe added: "I have a legend right in front of us."

Fans and the family took to Twitter as the reveal unfolded, swamping Franklin's secret account as the show rolled on.

Franklin, who manages websites and internet ser-

Cruise. Franklin decided to make North a tad on the snarky side at a time when Kim and dad Kanye West often dressed their first born in black, hadn't yet revealed her face and the Kardashians had a kid clothing line at Babies R Us.

"I was telling a friend, can you imagine being North West and you have to wear this cheap Babies R Us? She should be in Prada, Balenciaga, Chanel!," Franklin said.

She started on Tumblr but

Prosecutors ask to drop most charges in doctor rape case

SANTA ANA, CALIF. (AP): State prosecutors on Friday asked a judge to dismiss most sex crime charges filed against a reality TV doctor and his girlfriend, who are accused of drugging and raping several women at their Southern California home.

The attorney general's office, which took over the case from the Orange County district attorney's office last year, filed a motion asking for dismissal of 10 charges involving six of the seven alleged victims.

"We have no reason to believe that any of these victims are being untruthful," but a review found that some allegations couldn't be proved beyond a reasonable doubt, the prosecutor said.

The motion said a review found that some allegations couldn't be proved beyond a reasonable doubt.

However, Orange County Superior Court Judge Steven D. Bromberg asked the state to file a brief with more information before he rules on the motion, which could happen next month.

Noting twists and turns in the case, Bromberg said it is "becoming the never-ending story."

Dr. Grant Robicheaux, a surgeon who previously appeared on a Bravo TV show called "Online Dating Rituals of the American Male," was charged in 2018 with in connection with seven victims, and Cerissa Riley was charged

in connection with five. At the time, authorities said the pair plied their victims with drugs and sexually assaulted them when they were incapable of resisting.

Robicheaux, 40, and Riley, 33, have pleaded not guilty, saying the sex was consensual.

If the charges are dropped, the case would be pared down to allegations that Robicheaux and Riley assaulted a woman in 2017 at their Newport Beach home with intent to commit sexual offense. The state is asking for dismissal of a charge that they kidnapped the woman.

At the same time, state prosecutors want to file four additional charges alleging that the couple gave the woman drugs in an effort to have sex with her while she was unable to resist.

If convicted of assaulting one woman, Robicheaux and Riley could face 10 years in prison. If the judge won't dismiss the other charges, a conviction could carry a potential life sentence.

"We have no reason to believe that any of these victims are being untruthful," but a review found that some allegations couldn't be proved beyond a reasonable doubt, Deputy Attorney General Yvette Martinez said in court.

"Obviously, the victims are not in favor of this" and want the chance to testify, said Mike Fell, an attorney for one alleged victim who could be removed from the case.

Aries:

You're all kinds of beautiful, Aries, and you possess strength of character that cannot be put into words. Today, the Universe is holding up a mirror in front of you—a mirror that's helping you realise your own power. You have what it takes to slay the demon in front of you. You have what it takes to change the world for the better. Listen to the voice of courage within that's whispering words of encouragement into your ears. PS: It's time to go forth and conquer.

Tip: Baby, you were born to slay!

Taurus:

At any point of time, you have two options: to continue to do things the way they have been by those who walked the path before you, or shake things up. Somebody's got to start the revolution, Taurus. Why not you? Don't expect to get a pat on your back for every bold move, though. Change will always be met with opposition, especially by those who thrive on staying within the comfort zone. Find the courage to challenge the norms nonetheless, knowing that in the long-term, victory will be yours.

Tip: It's all about the bold moves.

Gemini:

Gemini, you're all kinds of beautiful! You possess the kind of magnetism that makes everybody in the room take notice of you. If only "you" could see yourself as the world sees you.

If only you could replace the judgements and self-doubt with the light of love. What the cards want you to remember is that there is nothing you "cannot" achieve when you put your mind to it. So, put the 'ifs and 'buts' behind you and make that bold move. You won't come to regret this decision—we promise!

Tip: All or nothing.

Cancer:

We get so caught up in our identities and define ourselves with labels that have to do with our caste, colour, and country of origin. What we forget is that none of these measures define us. They are simply a part of our constructed personality, which gives no real insight on who we are. So dig deeper, Cancer. Sift through the many layers. There is a radiant being of light waiting to meet you there. A radiant being of light who understands that we are an extension of Source energy and that Source is dancing the dance of life through us.

Tip: It's time to meet the "real" you.

Leo:

You've played this scenario in your head over and over, and you've seen yourself as the victim every single time. Did it ever occur to you to observe things from the point of view of the other person? Did it ever cross your mind that they were not trying to harm you? They were simply protecting themselves. There are many, many sides to each story. Letting go of your prejudices will help you become receptive.

Tip: Open your heart and your mind, Leo.

Virgo:

What are the things that keep us from living our most magnificent lives? Is it the fear of being inadequate, or the fact that we will grab too much attention if we shine our light? You've been playing it small, Virgo, and you've been playing it small for some time now. So let go of the self-judgement. Release the need to please those around you. Know that allowing yourself to step into your power will be your greatest gift to the world.

Tip: Free yourself from the judgements.

Libra:

Could it be that you've been admiring a part of yourself with the pride of a parent who has watched their child secure the first place in a tennis tournament, while secretly begrudging the aspects of your being that do not meet societal standards? It's time to replace the self-loathing and self-judgement, Libra. It's time to bring love and gentleness into the equation. Today marks a major transformation within and without, one that will permanently change your relationship with yourself for the better.

Tip: This chapter in your life is about accepting yourself as you are.

Scorpio:

This is a beautiful time in the Scorpio HQ. You are moving closer and closer to fruition season. You're witnessing your

labour of love come to life. So, take a moment to gaze at your harvest with awe and wonder. Take a moment to offer a prayer of gratitude to the mysterious forces and share your harvest with the less fortunate around you. If the Wiccan rule of three is anything to go by, then everything you put into the Universe will come back to you threefold.

Tip: 'Abundance' is your magic word.

Sagittarius:

"When you are discontent, you always want more, more, more. Your desire can never be satisfied. But when you practice contentment, you can say to yourself, 'Oh yes—I already have everything that I really need.'" Reflect upon these beautiful words by the Dalai Lama as you sip on your tea this morning. You have so much to be grateful for, Sagittarius. So much that's working out for you despite the fact that everything around you seems to be falling apart. The transcendence of desires in order to find inner peace is going to be an important theme for you in the days to come.

Tip: 'Contentment' is the magic word.

Capricorn:

Let's take a moment to look into the rearview mirror, Capricorn. Remember how unsure you were of your own potential when you first started walking this path. Look at how far you have come since then. Look at how many mountains you have moved in order to get where you are today. What your guides are whispering gently: you will continue to grow from strength to strength,

beautiful. The best is yet to come!

Tip: Your spirit team is marvelling at all the ways in which you have grown since you first started walking this path.

Aquarius:

Sometimes we settle for less because we don't believe we deserve better, or because we're convinced the Universe isn't playing on our team. Spoiler alert, Aquarius: there are bigger and better things on the horizon for you. So, stop playing it small, honey! Stop sabotaging all the growth opportunities that are being presented to you. If the cosmic cues are anything to go by, you'll find the courage required to look your fears in the eye and move forward despite their presence.

Tip: Go forth and conquer.

Pisces:

You've been weighed down by regret for a while now, and it's time to do something about it. While you cannot change the past, the future is still in your hands. So, write your person a letter about how you wish you could have done things differently as you vow to become a better version of yourself. Even if your correspondence is met with resistance in the beginning, trust that they will see things from your perspective eventually. Whispering these words to a tree you connect with could be another way of sending messages to your ancestors and descendants.

Tip: Make amends.