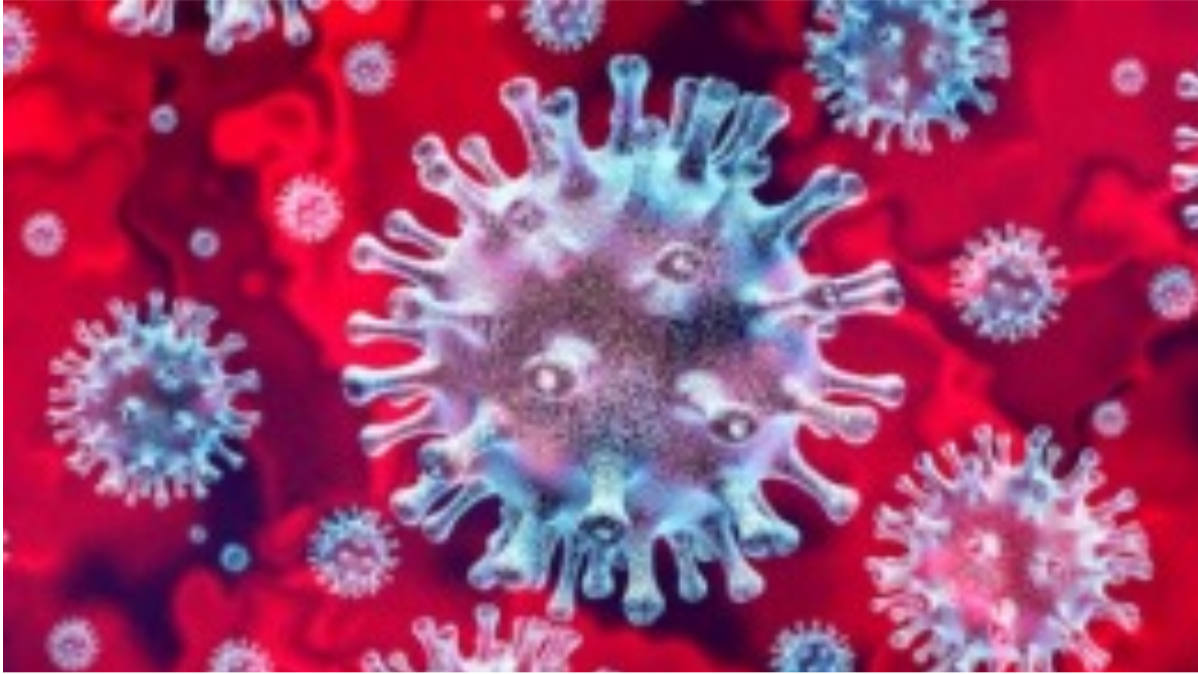


# Health Department discussing new COVID-19 variant



The Department of Health (DOH) says it is in consultation with scientists over a highly transmissible variant of the COVID-19 virus. This after media reports over the weekend said the

country had found its first case of the variant. “[The department] has been alerted about this highly transmissible XBB.1.5 variant and is currently in discussions with the scientists to gather

more information including its transmissibility and severity. Thus, an official communication will be made in due course.

“In the meantime [the department] is appealing to everyone to vaccinate, get boosters, wear your masks, keep the distance, avoid overcrowded places and wash your hands,” the department said. By last week Monday, some 38 261 917 vaccines had been administered in the country with more than 19 million people have been fully vaccinated. The last update by the department in December indicated that the cumulative number of COVID-19 cases had crossed 4 million with over 3.9 million recoveries at a recovery rate of 97.2%. Earlier this month, the department called for calm following an increase in the number of infections in China.

“[The department] is closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation in China and other parts of the world and will issue an alert if the country needs to take extra precautions. There is no need for panic. We urge people to vaccinate and get booster shots to enhance their immunity,” the department said. – *SAnews.gov.za*

# Release of matric results on track

The Department of Basic Education says it is on track to release the Matric 2022 results on 20 January. The Class of 2022 sat for their final school examinations from October 31 to December 7 last year. The department explained that results for the matric class of 2022 are currently being processed. “When the results are released, we urge [learners] to collect their results at the centre where [they] sat for the 2022 National Senior Certificate examinations,” the department said.

For learners who will return to school this year, the academic year will kick off on Wednesday for learners attending school in Gauteng, Free State, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the North West. In the coastal cluster – Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape and Western Cape – learners will have their first day of school on 18 January.



Meanwhile, Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Minister Blade Nzimande, has condemned the murder of Mboneli Vesele who was a bodyguard of University of Fort Hare Vice Chancellor Professor Sakhele Buhlungu.

This after an alleged attempted assassination of the vice chancellor on Friday.

“I outrightly condemn this barbaric murder of Mr Vesele and the attempt on the life of Professor Buhlungu. This attack is not only an attack on the University of Fort Hare but also an attack on the entire Post School Education and Training sector. “I also encourage all the Vice Chancellors (VC) and TVET College Principals to engage with my Department on all security related issues to enable us to engage with the Cabinet Security Cluster, particularly on security concerns that have an impact on the institutions’ ability to perform their duties,” Nzimande said.

The department is providing psycho-social support to Vesele’s family and university staff.

– *SAnews.gov.za*

# Higher Education warns of illegal colleges

Higher Education and Training Minister, Dr Blade Nzimande, has warned prospective students, who want to register at institutions of higher learning, not to fall for bogus colleges.

These institutions, also known as “fly by night” colleges, are not registered with the Sector Education and Training Authorities (Setas), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) or other relevant bodies as learning institutions.

The Minister warned that these institutions offer qualifications that are not recognised.

“These institutions lure and mislead future students into believing that these colleges offer qualifications that are recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). These illegal colleges offer compromised qualifications

that are not recognised for employment purposes or for further studying,” he said.

Nzimande said the department, together with law enforcement, has been hard at work to shut down these bogus colleges.

“The number of colleges that are operating illegally has decreased tremendously over the years. The decrease can be attributed to our monitoring and awareness campaigns, and our collaboration with both print and electronic media,” he said.

Prospective students, who want to enrol in private colleges, can check the registration status of that college at:

- The department’s toll-free number on 0800 872 222
- The departmental website at [www.dhet.gov.za/resources/registers](http://www.dhet.gov.za/resources/registers). – *SAnews.gov.za*

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