

# The Assam Rising

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Lone wolf Dominic Cummings continues to howl at the system

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Doctors protest

**Guwahati, June 2 :** The Junior Doctors' Association of the Jorhat Medical College and Hospital (JMCH) on Wednesday boycotted all essential services and diagnostic services of the hospital in protests against the brutal assault on a junior doctor in a Covid Care Centre at Hojai in Assam on Monday. The junior doctors, accompanied by several senior doctors, carrying placards and wearing black badges, staged protest in front of the casualty ward of the JMCH. Dr Arijit Ruma Baruah, general secretary of JDA, JMCH informed that only Covid treatment and emergency services were open. "We strongly condemn the barbaric act and it is disheartening to witness such an incident despite all the tireless efforts that the doctors have been putting in since more than a year," he said.

### Transfer of senior officials

**Guwahati, June 2 :** In yet another rejig in the Assam Police, orders of transfer have been issued for three more senior officials of the department. Deputy Inspector General of Police (Border-II), Guwahati - Lachit Baruah (IPS) has been transferred and posted as DIG (Special Branch), Kahilipara in Guwahati. Moreover, Additional Superintendent of Police (Special Branch), Chief Minister's Security - Rupam Phukan (APS) has been transferred as ASP (HQ), Darrang. Meanwhile, making a partial modification of an earlier notification, ASP (Security), Lakhimpur - Pranjal Borah (APS) has been transferred and posted as Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (Capital Complex Security), Guwahati. The order of transfer of these three senior Assam Police officials has been issued by the Home and Political Department of the Assam Government.

### CM Himanta Biswa met Prime Minister

**Guwahati, June 2 :** Assam chief minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi on Wednesday morning. It was Sarma's first visit to PM Modi since the former assumed office as the chief minister. Taking to his Twitter CM Sarma wrote, "Gratitude His towering vision has taken India to glorious heights of prosperity. Assam has especially been a beneficiary of Prime Minister Sri @narendramodi's generosity. It's a great pride to be serving under him as CM of Assam. Met Adamiya PM & took his blessings today." On Monday The chief minister also met Union Home Minister Amit Shah, vice president M Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla seeking guidance on issues related to the state.

## Assam Doctor assault case

Hojai Police swings into action, arrest 24 persons



**Guwahati, June 2 :** The police in Assam's Hojai district have swung into action arresting 24 persons in connection with the brutal assault on an on-duty doctor. The arrested 24 persons include the main perpetrators and conspirators. The arrested persons also include a woman, who was seen in the video of assault on the doctor that went viral in the social media. The development in the case has been informed by Special DGP of Assam Police - GP Singh. "Further action till 0400 Hours on June 2nd - 24 persons including main perpetrators & conspirators have been arrested. This includes the woman seen in the video," informed Special DGP of Assam Police - GP Singh.

GP Singh also said that the police would submit the chargesheet of the case at the earliest and bring the perpetrators to justice. "We would submit a strong charge Contd...Page 6

## India needs uniform, effective law against healthcare violence

IMA writes to Amit Shah



**New Delhi, June 2 :** The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has written to Union Home minister Amit Shah, requesting him to approve a comprehensive, uniform and effective law against healthcare violence. In a letter to the Home Minister the IMA said "India Contd...Page 6

## Centre cancels CBSE Class 12 exams, will have 'objective criteria' for results

**New Delhi, June 2 :** CITING "UNCERTAIN conditions due to Covid and feedback obtained from various stakeholders", the Central Government Tuesday announced the cancellation of this year's CBSE Board examination for Class 12 students following a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The results will be compiled as per "a well-defined objective criteria", the Government said. However, if a student wants

to appear for the examination, the CBSE will provide an option once the situation becomes conducive. The CBSE, sources said, will set up a committee to decide the alternative scheme for tabulating results. A student's

performance in internal school assessments, in all likelihood, will be a crucial part of the scheme. To keep inflation of marks in check, the Board may direct schools to ensure that marks awarded to their students are as per the school's past performance in the Class 12 Board exams. Shortly after the announcement, Haryana Education Minister Kanwar Pal Gujjar said that his state would follow the Government's decision on CBSE. Uttarakhand Education Minister Arvind Pandey said a decision would be taken soon but sources said the state Contd...Page 6

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## Assam have become the targets of the international drug-trafficking ring : DGP

**Guwahati, June 2 :** The metropolitan areas of Guwahati and Assam have become the new targets of the international drug-trafficking ring. In the past, drugs were supplied to other places through Guwahati, but now the metropolis itself has become the epicenter. Due to the increasing demand for drugs in the region, large quantities of narcotics are



being shipped here to different parts of the state for consumption. Assam, Director Contd...Page 6



## Plea filed in Supreme Court against Delhi HC order allowing Central Vista construction



**New Delhi, June 2 :** Days after the Delhi High Court's verdict allowing the construction of Central Vista construction, a plea was filed on Wednesday (June 2) before the Supreme Court challenging the order. The plea, filed by Pradeep Kumar Yadav, said that "the high court failed to appreciate that a bigger construction Contd...Page 6

## India lost 594 doctors during Covid second wave; most deaths in Delhi: IMA

**New Delhi, June 2 :** The Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Wednesday said that 594 doctors died during the more in-

fectious second wave of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic in the country. A chart showing the state-wise distribution of the fatalities in India was published by the organisation, and shared by news agency ANI on social media. Of the 594 doctors who died of Covid-19 during the second wave of the pandemic, the most were in the national capital, Delhi, which became one of the worst-hit hotspots in India during this phase, the Contd...Page 6



## Centre's claim of vaccinating all citizens before December is a hoax : Mamata Banerjee

**Kolkata, June 2 :** West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday slammed the Centre for not sending adequate doses of COVID-19 vaccines to the states and said that the Centre's claim of vaccinating all citizens by December this year is just a hoax. The Trinamool Congress chief further advised the Centre to procure

anti-COVID vaccines for States and give them free of cost to all. "That (vaccinating all citizens before December 2021) is just a hoax. They just say baseless things. The Centre is not sending vaccines to the States. The Centre should procure vaccines for States & give it free of cost to all," West Bengal CM Contd...Page 6



## Second wave of COVID-19 rendered 22.7 million Indians jobless: Mahesh Vyas

**New Delhi, June 2 :** The second wave of COVID-19 rendered millions of Indians jobless with 22.7 million jobs in being lost in just two months (April & May),

Mahesh Vyas, Chief of Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy said. "We lost 22.7 million jobs in April & May during second wave. Total number of jobs in the country is of the order of 400 million. Of these 400 million people who were employed, 22.7 million lost their jobs in past 2 months," said. Earlier this week, a PTI report citing Vyas had said that around 97 per cent of households' incomes have declined since the beginning of the COVID pandemic last year. The unemployment rate measured Contd...Page 6



## Don't let your guard down yet

When you protect yourself, you protect your loved ones as well.



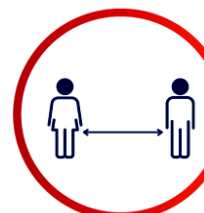
### Wash hands regularly

Also, wash away negative thoughts



### Always wear masks

Also, steer clear from rumours



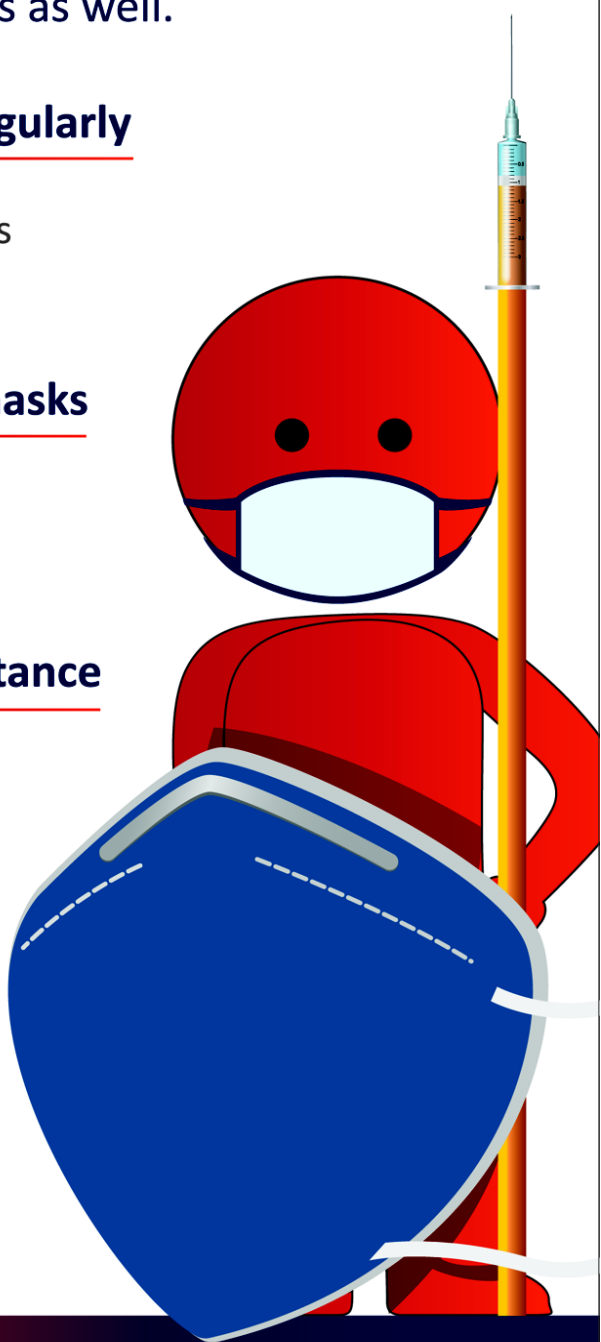
### Keep social distance

Yet, be there for each other

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Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma calling on Vice President of India M Venkaiah Naidu in New Delhi

## Keshab Mahanta Visits Biswanath, Reviews Covid Scenario In The District

**Biswanath Chariali, 02 June :** Health and Family Welfare Minister Mr. Keshab Mahanta today visited Biswanath and reviewed the Covid scenario of the district. Chairing a high-level meeting with the local MLAs, Deputy Commissioner and other top administrative as well as health officials at DC's Conference Hall, Mr. Mahanta took stock of the situation and measures being taken by the administration to fight the Covid-19 pandemic. The Minister asked the administration to take all possible steps to ensure that death rate slows down soon. He said there should not be any delay in detecting positive cases and providing required treatment to them. "We will have to bring the death rate down at any cost. For that the only way out is to provide timely treatment to positive cases. We will have to efficiently work on detecting positive cases at the earliest through testing so that required treatment starts immediately," said Mr. Mahanta. The minister also instructed formation of constituency level Covid monitoring committees under the chairmanship of the local MLAs within 3-4 days. He said such committees should work to find out the real Covid scenario in the interiors and help the administration cater to those places effectively. Mr. Pallab Lochan Das,

MP Tezpur, who was also present at the review meeting stressed on the need to ensure that the quality of food provided to Covid patients was up to the mark. He instructed the Circle Officers to pay personal visits to Covid Care Centres, particularly in tea gardens, and inspect the food quality. He also asked them to ensure that the relief material provided to economically poor people within containment zones were worth Rs. 2,000 as sanctioned by the government. Prior to chairing the meeting, the minister visited Gohpur's Sub-Divisional Civil Hospital and oversaw the medical facilities therein. Thereafter, the minister came to Biswanath Chariali town and visited the Biswanath Chariali Civil Hospital. He enquired about the condition of patients admitted at hospital and also the facilities being extended to them. Later, he also inspected the site for the proposed medical college in Biswanath Chariali town. The minister during his visit was also accompanied by Gohpur's MLA Mr. Utpal Borah, Biswanath's MLA Mr. Promod Borthakur, Sootea's MLA Mr. Padma Hazarika, Mr. Anurag Goel, Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare Ministry and Deputy Commissioner of Biswanath Mr. Pranab Kumar Samah.

## Hectares of hemp crops destroyed

**Biswanath Chariali, June 2:** Sonitpur SP Dhananjay Parshuram Dhanawat in association with Jamuguri and Sootea PS had initiated a destruction operation on hectares of hemp (Cannabis sativa) crop-fields that was grown on the char area of Gosain Chapori under Biswanath district near here on Tuesday. A team of Sonitpur police in accompaniment with Jamuguri and Sootea police destroyed hectares of hemp crops of Gosain Chapori under Biswanath LAC with the



## Asian Monitor Lizard knocked down by vehicle dies

**Guwahati, June 2 :** An Asian Monitor Lizard died while being knocked down by a vehicle on NH at Kaziranga National Park on Wednesday. The injured giant reptile with head injury lying on the NH at Bagori range was spotted by Minister for Finance, Ajanta Neog while on her way to Golaghat. Neog rang up Environment & Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya, who directed DFO, Kaziranga to rush to the spot and rescue the reptile. The rescuing team found the Asian Monitor Lizard lying with severe head injury and tried to resuscitate it. Despite its best efforts, the reptile could not be saved.

## Covid Surge and Human Elephant Conflict in a Parallel Way

**Golaghat, Jun 2 :** The people of Numaligarh and its adjoining areas in Golaghat district are now facing two problems at the same time. Surge of Covid in several tea gardens in the region has made the people worried and stressed. At the same time human elephant conflict has again seen in the region. Wild jumbos entering into the tea garden areas are creating terror. But some people are seen challenging the wild jumbos. They are trying to chase the group of wild jumbos. Such an angry group of wild jumbos tried to attack some people who were daring to challenge them and stopped the normal traffic for sometime at NH 39. The situation is still tensed in the region as the angry wild jumbos can do more havoc in search of food and shelter.

## Pabhoi AASU conducts sanitization drive



**BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 2:** The Pabhoi regional committee of AASU had conducted a mass sanitization drive in various public places of the greater Pabhoi area including Rangamati LPS, Pabhoi Bornamghar, Post office, Pabhoi HS, Pabhoi Samabai Samittee, Pabhoi Sate dispensary, vaccination centre of Pabhoi, ASTC bus

complexes etc and in various adjoining villages of Pabhoi area on Wednesday. The sanitization drive was also attended by Md. Ajmat Sheikh, vice president of Biswanath AASU, Nitu Bora, secretary of Biswanath sub-division AASU, Sushil Tanti, Amar Bey, Rishiraj Bora, Kamal Hazarika, Bimal Mura along with other office bearers of AASU.

# Meeting held to mitigate flood in Kaziranga National Park

**Guwahati, June 02 :** With a view to mitigating flood in the Kaziranga National Park and other issues concerning the park, a high level meeting was held between the Environment and Forest, Water Resources and Agriculture and Veterinary departments here on Wednesday. In this connection, a meeting was held at the office conference room of Agriculture and Veterinary Minister at the Janata Bhavan. As a follow up of the flood preparedness meeting chaired by Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma at Kaziranga, Minister for Environment and Forest, Parimal Suklabaidya, Minister for Agriculture and Veterinary, Atul Bora and Minister for Water Resources, Piyush Hazarika met together along with senior officials of concerned departments to formulate short and long term plans to mitigate the problem of erosion and excessive flooding in the national park. After being briefed by Minister Suklabaidya and officials of concerned department, Minister for Water Resources, Hazarika said concrete steps would be taken to prevent erosion at Agartoli on the eastern range of the Kaziranga National Park covering a stretch of around two km. "Necessary flood protection measures will be taken up to protect Kaziranga National Park, our pride and glory," said Hazarika, adding that dredging will be carried out on the outer fringe of the park to prevent excessive flooding. Minister Hazarika asked the Forest officials to submit plan and estimate for necessary action. As flash flood takes place due to release of water from Doyang, Rongamati and Bhutan dams, the meeting decided to take up the matter with the concerned authorities so that water is

not released simultaneously. Hazarika said as one of the dams concern Bhutan it would be placed before the Chief Minister for taking up the matter at appropriate level. Moreover, Commissioner and Secretary, Environment and Forest cum CEO, ASDMA, Tripathi informed that modelling is being done with coordinated protocols to streamline the release of water from dams within a month. In this context, he said that a number of initiatives have been taken by the Environment and Forest department for disaster risk reduction. Minister Suklabaidya directed the forest officials to share information regarding release of water from dams with the Water Resources department. Following threadbare discussion, the meeting resolved to build highlands vis-a-vis flood proofing structures, especially at Borbeel on the

fringe of the park to provide shelter to the flood affected people. The meeting also discussed setting up of helipads on the periphery of the national park for rescue operation of man-animals as well as for tourists. Building a spacious guest house on a sprawling area close to the helipad also figured in the meeting. It was decided to upgrade the veterinary sub centre at Kohora to a hospital under SoPD funds for better treatment of animals. Providing green fodder to the livestock living on the fringes of the park cropped up in the meeting. Veterinary officials informed that vaccination of livestock is going on which would help to prevent wild animals from being infected. The meeting was attended by Additional PCCF (Wildlife), MK Yadava, Chief Wildlife Warden, Amit Sahay and PCCF (Hoff) AM Singh.

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## ULFA guide dyke is in damaged state: 11 villages will submerge

**North Lakhimpur, June 2:** The guide dyke which was constructed by the United Liberation Force, Assam (ULFA) during the 90 decade from Jorkhat Bonia Gaon via Nagar gaon to Nepali gaon, connected to the eastern embankment of the Ranganadi river under Pachim Telahi Gaon Panchayat in Lakhimpur district, known as the ULFA guide dyke, is in a very damaged state for which 11 riverside villages under Panigaon and Pachim Telahi Gaon Panchayat might be submerged in the imminent flood. According to the officials of Pub-Ranganadi Baan Suraksha Sommitite, the Water Resources Department has not repaired this SDRF guide dyke for the last seven years. They also alleged that the former MLA of Lakhimpur Utpal Dutta did not give least importance to repair the dyke. So they hoped the new MLA of Lakhimpur Manab Deka will take immediate action to repair it. It is to be mentioned that if the guide dyke is not repaired in time, then it will surely breach in the imminent flood. As a result, about 983 families of the 11 villages (Amtola Major Chapori, Adarsha Milanpur, Milanpur, Patharichuk, a part of Jorkhat Bonia, Major Chapori, Nagargaon, a part of Bhoreki, Pokadol, Pub-Amtola, Shantipur etc.) will be reeled in severe flood.

help of excavators and tractors. On the basis of the statement of one Dharmakanta Nayak who was apprehended by Jamuguri police in connection with ganja supply recently, the Sonitpur police had conducted the operation on Tuesday. The operation against hemp destruction was also attended by Mantush Chakrabarti, Circle Officer of Naduar Revenue Circle, Pranjal Nath and Kalpajyoti Sarma, officer-in-charges of Jamuguri and Sootea PS respectively.

## In connection with the incident of attack on physician by a mob, 24 including a woman arrested

**NAGAON, June 2:** Tense situation was still prevailing in the entire Hojai district on Wednesday too after barbaric attack on an on-duty physician as well as two other nursing staff by an irate mob at Lanka Fultoli Model Hospital in Hojai district on Tuesday last. Meanwhile in pursuance of strict instructions from Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma as well as State Health Minister Keshab Mahanta, Hojai police had already identified almost all those culprits involved in the brutal attack on the physician as well as other nursing staff of the hospital and arrested 24 culprits including a woman among them in connection with the incident last night itself. According to sources, the arrested persons have been identified as Mahammad Kamar Uddin, Mahammad Jainal Uddin, Mahammad Rahan Uddin, Saiful Alam, Rahim Uddin, Rijul Islam, Taibur Rahman, Rahim Uddin, Abdul Kalam, Nurjul Islam Abdul Gumi, Dilwara Hussain, Abdul Hussain, Anuwar Hussain, Ikramul Hussain, Nasir Uddin, Alim Uddin,

Jamil Ahmed, Shahil, Sharif Uddin, Shafique Uddin, Mofijur Rahman, Motibur Rahman and only woman Misba Begum. Sources claimed that search operation against other people who involved in the gruesome incident and being escaped from the police net was on till the time of filing of this report. Significantly, the State Health Minister Keshab Mahanta rushed to Nagaon BP Civil Hospital last night just after a few hours later at night on Tuesday to preview the health condition of the victim physician Dr Seuj Senapati and strongly condemned the incident so far. Addressing the local media persons here at Nagaon Civil Hospital last night, Health Minister Mahanta said the government will not tolerate such barbaric attack on on-duty physician and other medical staff who are dedicating even their lives to serve the people during the ongoing COVID pandemic situation and will take strict action against the culprits involved in attack on doctors as well as medical staff. He also said that the BJP led state alliance government would ensure the security of the doctors and other medical staff at any cost across the state and would not exempt anyone in this regard. Speaking to this correspondent this afternoon, Superintendent of Police, Hojai, Barun Purukaistha said that the police had left no stone unturned to pick up all those culprits involved in the brutal attack on the physician as well as other medical staff at Fultoli Model Hospital and arrested 24 of them under various sections of Indian Penal Code including the section of attempt to murder till early this morning. Those who are being escaped from the police net will

**NAGAON, June 2:** Following the death of a COVID patient, a mob comprising of his relatives and other locals allegedly created ruckus at Lanka Fultoli Model Hospital today and beaten up the on-duty doctor as well as two nursing staff. In the attack of the irate mob, the on-duty physician named Dr Seuj Senapati had sustained serious injury for which he was referred to Guwahati Medical College Hospital this afternoon for better treatment, sources added. Sources claimed that one COVID patient named Giasuddin had died of COVID 19 on Tuesday. Alleging his death due to alleged negligence of physician as well as nursing staff, the family members and some other people from his native village went on a rampage and vandalised the Fultoli Model Hospital. Besides, the irate mob leaped on the on-duty



physician Dr Seuj Senapati and other other sisters who were too on duty at that time. Meanwhile police from Lanka PS rushed to the spot and were able to bring the situation under control, sources added.

## Keshab Mahanta reviews Covid situation in Lakhimpur

**North Lakhimpur, June 02 :** State Health and Family Welfare Minister Keshab Mahanta today visited Lakhimpur Medical College and reviewed the activities relating to treatment pro-

vided to Covid-infected patients and other issues relating to the process of recovering from the pandemic. The minister also inaugurated the VIROLOGY LABORATORY of Lakhimpur Medical College, and also inspected the Covid ward of the college. Later, the Covid-19 situation in Lakhimpur district was assessed in depth at a meeting held at the Conference Hall, Office of the Lakhimpur District Deputy Commissioner. It was attended by Lakhimpur MP Pradan Baruah, Lakhimpur MLA Manab Deka, Lakhimpur DC and SP, other top officials of Lakhimpur district administration and all the top officials of the Health Department. The Minister Keshab Mahanta directed the officials to perform the suggested activities. He also directed the officials to be more sensitive towards the Covid-19 patients. He also instructed the Public Health authority to carry out sanitization in the areas where it is needed. Moreover, he instructed the concerned contractor to provide 20 ICU-Bed and 40 Oxygen cylinder-bed in the Lakhimpur Medical College within 15 days. On the other hand, the Minister opined that Lakhimpur Medical College would be developed as a 300-bedded hospital within one month.

## 111 cases detected in Lakhimpur district

**North Lakhimpur, June 2:** In Lakhimpur district, total 111 people tested positive for COVID-19 on Wednesday and one succumbed to the virus. Till date, total 47 persons have been died of Covid in Lakhimpur district and 3660 people have tested positive. On Wednesday, 124 people were discharged after recovery. Again, the number of active cases is 1311.



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma calling on Union Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi



## G7 nations committing billions more to fossil fuel than green energy

**London, June 02** : The nations that make up the G7 have pumped billions of dollars more into fossil fuels than they have into clean energy since the Covid-19 pandemic, despite their promises of a green recovery. As the UK prepares to host the G7 summit, new analysis reveals that the countries attending committed \$189bn to support oil, coal and gas between January 2020 and March 2021. In comparison, the same countries - the UK, US, Canada, Italy, France, Germany and Japan - spent \$147bn on clean forms of energy. The support for fossil fuels from seven of the world's richest nations included measures to remove or downgrade environmental regulations as well as direct funding of oil, gas and coal. The analysis from the development charity Tearfund, the International Institute for Sustainable Development and the Overseas Development Institute showed that the nations missed opportunities to make their response to the pandemic greener. In most cases, money provided for fossil fuel industries was given with no strings attached, rather than with conditions requiring a reduction in emissions or pollution. The analysis found that eight in every 10 dollars spent on non-renewable energy came without conditions. This included lifelines that were thrown to the aviation and car industries, which received \$115bn from the G7 countries. Of that money, 80% was given with no attempt to force the sectors to cut their emissions in return for the support. Only one in every 10 dollars committed to the Covid-19 response benefitted the "cleanest" energies such as renewables and energy efficiency measures. The UK prime minister, Boris Johnson, will open the G7 summit in Cornwall on 11 June. He has said he wants to unite the nations to "build back better" from the coronavirus pandemic to create a greener, more prosperous future. As well as the G7, the UK has invited South Africa, Australia, India and South Korea to take part. The analysis of the actions of the seven major western economies in the last 15 months reveals they are not yet investing at sufficient scale in technologies that support fast decarbonisation of their economies, and they have not created green jobs at scale in response to Covid-19. Paul Cook, the head of advocacy at Tearfund, which operates in some of the poorest countries in the world most affected by global heating, said: "Every day, we witness the worsening consequences of the climate crisis for communities around the world - farmers' crops failing; floods and fires engulfing towns and villages; families facing an uncertain future." Choices made now by the G7 countries will

either accelerate the transition towards a climate-safe future for all, or jeopardise efforts to date to tackle the climate crisis. "The G7 countries are among the most polluting in the world. They represent a 10th of the world's population but are responsible for almost a quarter of CO2 emissions." Their actions can set the scene for success or failure at the UN climate talks being hosted by the UK in November," Cook said. During the Covid-19 pandemic, unprecedented amounts of public money were spent by nations; it is estimated that the 50 largest world economies committed at least \$14.6tn to fiscal stimulus measures in 2020. The authors said that well-designed and targeted stimuli could be used as a springboard for

Lufthansa, Japan Airlines, Alitalia, Renault and Honda. The financial support would end up sustaining highly polluting industries for decades to come, with very little pressure to "go green", the authors said. Since the bailouts, some G7 countries have increased their commitments to cleaner energy, including rail and electric vehicles. But the report said: "Investments in the transport sector remain significantly skewed towards fossil fuels and are at odds with G7 commitments to build back better." The propping up of the oil and gas sectors was particularly evident in Canada and the US, both major oil and gas producers. As well as direct support, both countries rolled back environmental regulations

on fossil fuel companies. Some G7 nations made positive steps towards halting support for dirty industries. In February, Italy extended a ban until September this year on fossil fuel drilling. The UK and France brought in policies designed to end international support for fossil fuels. The



launching low-carbon societies. The report analysed the support the seven nations, plus the four others invited to attend the summit in Cornwall, gave to five energy areas: the cleanest energy, such as wind and solar; clean energy that may still rely on fossil fuel power, such as electric vehicles; fossil fuel energy with conditions; fossil fuel energy without any conditions; and other energy sectors including biofuels and nuclear. The greatest support given by G7 countries was to transport. Bailouts were given to companies including Air France, British Airways, Ryanair, easyJet,

UK has also announced a ban on new petrol and diesel cars by 2030. "These actions should serve as a precedent for other G7 countries," the report said. This month, in the first comprehensive study of the journey to net zero, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said that pledges by governments, even if fully achieved, fell well short of what was required to bring global energy-related CO2 emissions down to net zero by 2050 and give the world an even chance of limiting the global temperature rise to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, as the Paris agreement states.

## US secretary of state warns Pacific leaders about 'coercion' in veiled swipe at China

**Washington, June 02** : The US secretary of state has warned leaders of Pacific countries about "threats to the rules-based international order" and "economic coercion", in what appears to be a veiled swipe at China's growing influence in the region. Antony Blinken was addressing leaders and their delegates from 11 Pacific countries and territories including Fiji, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, French Polynesia, Palau and Marshall Islands as part of the Pacific Islands Conference of Leaders, which is held in Hawaii. Blinken reiterated US support for Pacific island nations as they face the "shared challenges that we have to confront together", including Covid-19 and the climate crisis. He also appeared to make a criticism of Australia's action on the climate crisis, calling for "all countries, particularly the biggest emitters, to swiftly and dramatically reduce emissions." But the main focus of his televised address was China's growing influence in the



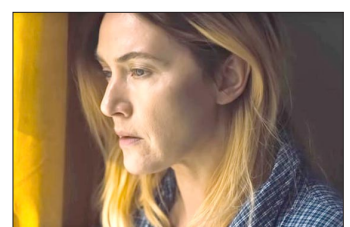
region. "Economic coercion across the region is on the rise. The US is all for more development and investment in the islands, but that investment should adhere to international standards for environmentally and socially sustainable development and should be pursued transparently, with public consultation," he said. "And every country, no matter its size, should always be able to make choices without fear of retribution." Jonathan Pryke, director of the Lowy Institute's Pacific Islands Program in Australia, said it was "pretty obvious" who Blinken had in his sights during the speech. "There's only one country that is engaging in the Pacific in a big way in the past few decades that isn't part of the traditional club and that is China," he said. "It's very thinly veiled who he is talking about when he's talking about economic coercion." China has deepened its connections with governments across the Pacific in the last few decades, amid a soft power push that sees it rivaling the influence of Australia. China has engaged in significant lending to Pacific countries, as well as paying for massive infrastructure projects. A report in 2018 found that Papua New Guinea, the largest country in the Pacific Islands with a population of roughly nine million, had been accepting unaffordable Chinese loans, and in 2019, Papua New Guinea asked China to refinance its entire government debt, a request that marked a "significant shift" in regional politics, according to Pacific analysts. "It's fully legitimate for China to be operating in the Pacific and there are legitimate concerns about the way China is operating in the Pacific as well," said Pryke. "I do think we underestimate the agency of Pacific nations and their ability to make decisions ... Pacific islands have wised up to China." Pryke also said that it was "a bit rich" for the US to be warning Pacific nations about China's influence given the country's almost nonexistent diplomatic presence in many Pacific countries. "They really have such a marginal footprint, it's one thing to say all these things about 'be careful, we need to stop this malign influence in your countries', but what are the alternatives you're providing?" Blinken's address was part of the Pacific Islands Conference of

Leaders, and was attended by leaders or delegates from 11 countries or territories, but representatives from a significant number of countries, including Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Samoa did not attend. By contrast, last week, China held a virtual China-Pacific island discussion which was attended by senior representatives from the governments of most countries, including the prime ministers of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu, the president of the Federated States of Micronesia, the premier of Niue and Fiji's defence minister. In his address, Blinken also affirmed the United States' commitment to taking action on the climate crisis, which he said posed a "threat that is existential for the islands." "Countries must make and beat ambitious commitments. The US is leading by example on this front. Biden has set out targets to reduce emissions by at least half by 2030," Blinken said. Dr Wesley Morgan, research fellow at Griffith Asia Institute, said it was "entirely possible" that Blinken had Canberra in mind when he made these comments. "They are also taking a swipe at Australia and want to see action on climate," he said. "The Pacific has for decades now wanted Australia to take strong action on climate change and now they see an ally in the White House and they also see an ally in Downing Street. The Pacific used to be seen as 'out there' in calling for an end to coal, but now it's Australia that is a long way out there ... the Pacific has all these global allies now and Australia is very isolated on climate."

## Kate Winslet says she refused offer to edit sex scene showing 'bulgy belly'

**Washington, June 02** : Kate Winslet has said she refused a director's offer to edit a sex scene in which she showed a "bulgy bit of belly" for her latest television series. The actor claimed Craig Zobel, the director of her new HBO series Mare of Easttown, had offered to show her body in a more flattering light. Winslet, who plays detective and a grandmother Mare Sheehan in a Pennsylvania town in the programme, the finale of which was broadcast in the UK on Monday, said she had refused and told Zobel: "Don't you dare." She also said she twice sent back the promotional poster for the drama because she felt it had been altered too much. "I'm like: 'Guys, I know how many lines I have by the side of my eye, please put them all back,'" Winslet, 45, told the New York Times. "I said to my husband [Edward Abel Smith]: 'Am I OK with that?' Is it all right that I'm playing a middle-aged woman who is a grandmother who does really make a habit of having one-night stands?' He's like: 'Kate, it's great.'" The actor added: "Listen, I hope that in playing

Mare as a middle-aged woman - I will be 46 in October - I guess that's why people have connected with this character in the way that they have done because there are clearly no filters. "She's a fully functioning, flawed woman with a body and a face that moves in a way that is synonymous with her age and her life and where she comes from. I think we're starved of that a bit." Winslet said, however, that she may not be "comfortable" with doing another nude scene. In an interview with the Guardian in February, Winslet said she had been forced to respond to derogatory comments about her weight from a young age. "In my 20s, people would talk about my weight a lot. And I would be called to comment on my physical self. Well, then I got this label of being bally and outspoken."



shows the remains of a newly discovered Roman basilica in Israeli city of Ashkelon. Israeli archaeologists have discovered a magnificent and rare 2,000-year-old Roman basilica, the Israel Antiquities Authority

## Israeli opposition parties face midnight deadline to form government

**London, June 02** : Israeli opposition politicians have until midnight on Wednesday to hash out final negotiations to build a coalition government that would end Benjamin Netanyahu's 12-year run as prime minister. Under the country's election laws, opposition leader Yair Lapid's 28-day mandate to forge a majority by allying with rival parties ends on Wednesday. By this time, he should have informed the president he has succeeded. If he fails, Netanyahu may be granted a political lifeline in the form of a snap election. Lapid and other party chiefs met near Tel Aviv on Tuesday afternoon to discuss the last agreements for a "government of change", amid reports of a handful of disagreements over control of ministries and committees. Under the proposed deal, Lapid will not immediately become prime minister. Instead, his political rival and far-right politician, Naftali Bennett, whose support is seen as vital to the coalition's success, will become Israel's leader for likely two years of a four-year term. Netanyahu and his ruling Likud party were desperately attempting to find defectors and scupper the plan, appealing especially to politicians on the religious

hard right not to join Lapid, who has described himself as a secular centrist. Lapid needs a 61-seat majority in the 120-seat Knesset, Israel's parliament, so losing one or two seats could end the attempt. On Tuesday, Likud lawmaker and speaker of the Knesset, Yariv Levin, said politicians should not abandon their ideology. "When you face a moment like this, you tell yourself: 'I must go with my truth, with my conscience, with what I've believed in for so many years, now is when I go with the public that supported me and to which I am committed. Now is when I act for the sake of the land of Israel. It is not too late,'" he told the public broadcaster, Kan. Lawyers for Likud tried to stop the emerging coalition by stating Bennett's right to serve



first as prime minister was illegal. However, Israel's president, Reuven Rivlin, knocked down the challenge on Tuesday. If Lapid tells Rivlin that he believes he can form a government, it does not immediately end Netanyahu's historic stretch in power or conclude a political deadlock that has brought four snap elections since 2019. Before that happens, lawmakers will need to vote on the deal, which is expected in the next few days. Then there will be a swearing-in, likely next week. Bennett, a religious nationalist, is a strong advocate for the settler movement in the Palestinian territories and has ruled out a Palestinian state. He will join with an unlikely assortment of parties, including the establishment Labor and anti-occupation Meretz. The group will also include the hawkish New Hope party of Netanyahu's former ally Gideon Sa'ar and Yisrael Beiteinu, a hardline secular party led by a Moldova-born settler, Avigdor Lieberman. Crucially, Lapid has also sought to secure backing from Arab Islamist members of parliament, who set aside ideological differences for the shared aim of dethroning "King Bibi", as Netanyahu is known. To avoid breaking apart in a row, his fragile government would be expected to focus on the economy and the pandemic while avoiding addressing the big issue of millions of Palestinians living under Israeli rule. Still, Bennett will have executive powers as the prime minister to effect change, or entrench the status quo. Netanyahu, who has been in high office for 15 years since 1996, is facing political danger and potential threats to his freedom. The 71-year-old, Israel's longest-serving prime minister, is currently fighting three corruption cases - on fraud, bribery and breach of trust charges, which he denies. If he were to go into opposition, he may be denied parliamentary immunity, and the new government could pass legislation to bar him from office in the future.



Children play with wood crafts during an event to celebrate International Children's Day in Prague, the Czech Republic



## THE ASSAM RISING

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## The another crisis

Covid-19 has killed millions around the world, but for some who are lucky enough to survive the infection, the nightmare is not over: adding insult to injury are deadly fungal infections that follow in the wake of the virus. Making matters worse, inequities that long predated the pandemic have left some countries without the capacity to combat these serious infections. In India, a fungal infection called mucormycosis has emerged in patients with Covid-19. This infection is caused by a group of fungi that are everywhere on the planet. In fact, all of us are probably inhaling spores of these fungi every day, but these are rapidly controlled by our immune systems. Rarely, our defences are breached, and the fungus takes hold, with devastating consequences. After establishing itself in the nose and sinuses, it begins to invade the tissue of the face, the jaw, the eyes and brain, blocking blood flow and causing tissue death. It is the black discoloration of dead tissue that conferred upon this mould its fearsome moniker in the Indian media: "the black fungus". Although the fungi are ubiquitous, mucormycosis is usually rare, and most specialists around the world will see fewer than a dozen cases in their entire careers. Even before the pandemic, rates of mucormycosis in India were estimated to be about 70 times higher than in the rest of the world. Even so, the tsunami of cases occurring in the wake of Covid-19 is of an unimaginable scale. More than 11,700 people were reported by a government minister to be receiving care for mucormycosis on 25 May. Two states, Maharashtra and Gujarat, have confirmed more than 5,500 cases. Whereas a large referral hospital in London might see three or four cases a year, some Indian hospitals are caring for more than 500 patients with mucormycosis right now. Mucormycosis cases in Covid-19 patients have also been linked to poorly controlled diabetes and therapeutic steroids, a triad of risk factors some have dubbed "the unholy trinity". Although steroids can be lifesaving in Covid-19 patients needing supplemental oxygen, they are a double-edged sword: they weaken the immune system that normally keeps fungi we inhale at bay. Undisciplined prescribing is likely to be playing a major role in driving the epidemic: one study at 16 Indian hospitals found that nearly two in three steroid prescriptions for Covid-19 patients were inappropriate (they were either used in patients who weren't sick enough to warrant them, or the dose was too high). Lack of access to oxygen may have resulted in doctors overcompensating by prescribing higher-than-recommended doses. Additionally, rates of diabetes have been increasing in India, and high blood sugars further weaken the immune system and increase the growth of fungi in the body. High blood sugars are also a well-known side-effect of steroids, particularly in diabetic or prediabetic patients, and over-stretched healthcare workers have been unable to adequately monitor blood sugar levels of Covid-19 patients on crowded wards. The confluence of these risk factors, plus higher-than-average background rates of mucormycosis, high numbers of spores in both indoor and outdoor environments, and the lack of hospital infection-control resources (like efficient air particle filters in ICU rooms, standard in resource-rich settings to filter out airborne spores) have allowed the fungus to run amok. Mucormycosis is rapidly fatal without prompt diagnosis, administration of antifungal medicines and - most importantly - emergency surgery to cut out the dead and infected tissue. This lifesaving surgery can be extremely disfiguring and lead to irreversible loss of one or both eyes. Even with surgery, half of those infected won't survive. Most cases develop in the second or third week following a Covid-19 diagnosis, when many patients are no longer in hospital. The partial closure of outpatient clinics and the shortage of specialised doctors have meant that affected patients present to hospital later in the disease, when the odds of survival are lower. The mucormycosis epidemic has been accompanied by a rush for antifungal treatments that have left India's medicine cabinet empty. The nation's supply of amphotericin B, the best antifungal to treat the infection, is nearly depleted and it is difficult to procure. The government has pledged to increase importation and ramp up domestic production of the drug, but this will take several weeks to months.

## The UK's forced adoption scandal was state-sanctioned abuse



When Ann Keen gave birth, the midwives refused to give her anything for the pain. That way, they told her, she would remember it and learn not to be so wicked again. To be treated like an animal in labour, denied the most basic compassion and respect, was simply part of the punishment she had supposedly earned for getting pregnant out of wedlock aged 17. The hospital discharged her without any follow-up care, as if the birth had never happened. But the most grievous part of the story is that she also went home without her baby. For Keen is one of a still unknown number of unmarried British women coerced into

handing over their newborns for adoption between the 1950s and the late 1970s, who are now seeking an apology from Boris Johnson on behalf of the governments of the day. But perhaps just as importantly, they want it acknowledged that they didn't give their children up willingly. Some were told that if they loved their babies they would want them raised by respectable married couples, not under the shadow of illegitimacy. Instead of being briefed about the financial support to which they might be entitled, they were warned that keeping the baby would bring great hardship on their families. And while some

### Gaby Hinsliff

consented to adoption under this kind of duress, others say forms were simply signed on their behalf by parents or so-called "moral welfare workers" supervising adoptions. They became, in effect, an unwilling human production line of babies for adoption by couples considered more deserving by virtue of their wedding rings. The grief for the mothers must have been lifelong, and for many it was handed down a generation when their children grew old enough to understand and be disturbed by what had happened. Oppressive morality, cloaked in religion, is the obvious explanation for how such unthinkable things could have happened. Pregnant teenagers such as Keen would be shipped off by their mortified parents to church-run mother-and-baby homes to hide them from the neighbours, and adoptions were often arranged through church-run agencies; the head of the Catholic church in England and Wales has already apologised for what he called the "hurt" caused by agencies acting in its name. Yet the long history of shame being weaponised

against women in the name of organised religion is really only half the explanation for cruelty meted out not in some secretive Magdalene laundry, but to women giving birth inside British NHS hospitals, who were singled out as different from other mothers. It was effectively state-sanctioned abuse and in a week when much of the country is understandably preoccupied instead with a much more recent failure of the state, it carries urgent lessons. When Ireland's taoiseach apologised recently for the "profound generational wrong" done to survivors of Irish mother and baby homes, following a public inquiry that exposed horrific brutality, some responded with a striking anger. They didn't want to be told that "society" or the culture of the time was to blame; they wanted names, audit trails, a forensic examination of government decisions and processes that had allowed this to happen. The British mothers have been refused a public inquiry, but seek the same recognition that this was fundamentally a failure of the state, something Keen understands perhaps better than most.



Dominic Cummings's marathon appearance in front of MPs on Britain's coronavirus response was by some distance the most extraordinary Commons event of its kind in a decade. There has been nothing to match it since Rupert Murdoch was finally compelled to give evidence to a select committee on phone hacking, back in 2011. In some ways, though, the two events were important for the same reason. In both cases, here were immensely powerful men - dethroned in Cummings's case, throne tottering in Murdoch's - going through the elaborate pretence of public contrition in front of a governmental body that, at heart, they despised. In both, the glimpses into their minds were compelling. But, in both, the apparent penitent submitted to the process for a similar reason - the hope of emerging to resume their respective crusades against the liberal order. To understand what Cummings was doing it is important not just to be riveted by his hypocrisies and his U-turns. It is also necessary to grasp the larger significance of what he is up to. At times on

Wednesday, as Cummings offered

### Martin Kettle

Westminster, official secrecy and many others. Many got a second dose of his anger in the committee hearings. To Cummings, all are to some degree or other incompetents in the grip of various forms of groupthink in institutions that are being weakened by entropy. People like him, by contrast, are holy solitaries rather than team players. Occasionally, his tweets will celebrate an ally who is deemed worthy - one is "a brilliant young neuroscientist I recruited to No 10", another "a brilliant young woman" whose work averted some of the Covid social care crisis in 2020. Last week he approvingly retweeted that "It's not only in actual politics that earnestness seems to be a handicap, but also in office politics and academic politics." People like this, Cummings added, are "seen as mad/unreliable and are weeded out". If this makes Cummings in many ways the colleague from hell, it is important to also acknowledge that, in many respects, he was also right, more right than many of those around him, and that he had his supporters, notably the

## Telemedicine, a long term game changer for India's burden of NCDs

As an unprecedented health crisis grips India and we find our selves careening past any known indicators of health system collapse, telemedicine is helping thousands access critical and timely treatment. According to recent figures published by the Ministry of Health, e-Sanjeevani the government telemedicine platform has clocked more than 50 lakh consultations in the past year. Everyday at least 40,000 Indians are dialing in from various corners of the country to use this contactless and risk free health facility. With 63% of all deaths annually due to NCDs and millions at risk of falling critically ill and dying, the pandemic has revealed how telemedicine can be a long term game changer in managing India's

burden of chronic non-communicable diseases particularly to the rural underserved populations

Soon after the national lockdown was announced last year, 45 year old Gagandeep Kaur from the Ropar district of Punjab, fainted one day. She had been feeling fatigued and breathless as she went out about her household chores. With health services and transport remaining disrupted, her family rushed an unconscious Gagandeep to the nearest Health and Wellness Centre (HWC). Gagandeep, who has never had a health condition before, is amongst millions of Indians who develop severe hypertension and are at risk of getting a stroke or heart attack.

As per government data, this past

year, states have rushed to adopt telemedicine seeing a sharp rise in consultations taking place. Public health experts emphasise that this upsurge in telemedicine should not be specific to the circumstances of the pandemic. Instead, this attention that has poured in - in the form of investments, technological advancements and innovations in delivery - should not be tapered off. For a country that spends as little as 1.2% of its GDP on healthcare and has always struggled with last mile delivery of care and treatment, remote access to specialists or in many care general practitioners can be a game changer.

The concern is aggravated by the fact that underlying disease conditions or co morbidities increase the risk of fatality and serious illness in people who get Covid-19. Soon after the pandemic broke, a study had revealed 61% reduction of people reporting stroke which was not the result of reduction in disease but those seeking treatment as a result of lockdowns. Thousands of cancer cases remain undiagnosed every month, progressing to more serious and untreatable stages. A rapid survey conducted by the World Health Organization across 120 countries showed that essential health services were disrupted in over 80% of the countries, including in India. In the midst of such collapse, tele medicine has emerged as a life saver.

The HWC where Gagandeep's family took her, was set up as a tele medicine site by Punjab Government. The community health officer (CHO) facilitated a remote consultation with the attending doctor at the hub. "Within a few minutes, a doctor appeared on the computer screen. She was calm and guided the CHO to take my pulse, re-check my blood pressure which was very high and counseled me to take medicines regularly, without fail and never ignore even the slightest symptoms." Gagandeep was immediately put on medications. "The tele consultation saved my life. We shudder to think what might have happened if tele-medicine facility was not available at the HWC near my home," she reminisces.

The National Telemedicine Service, set up by the Ministry of Health can be availed of in two ways. The doctor to doctor telemedicine platform called eSanjeevani AB-HWC (Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres) is being implemented at select HWCs in the country at the initiative of the state government. It is a hub and spoke model in which the patient comes to an HWC where the Community Health Officer

chief scientific adviser, Patrick Vallance. Cummings's account to MPs of the shambolic unpreparedness and delay in February and March 2020 is doubtless not comprehensive and is bound to have been self-serving. But it sounds extremely compelling. The crucial part of that account was not what it said about the failings of Johnson or Hancock, damning though it is. It was what it said about Britain's government and the UK state. These institutions, like others in the world, were desperately badly prepared for what Covid threw at them. To a degree, this may be understandable. Covid was not the type of pandemic the NHS had exercised for. But the state, which Cummings is not alone in seeing as structurally dysfunctional, had also been run down, unable to respond on the scale and at the speed that was needed. Even the most able political leader would have struggled with the legacy of so many cuts and so much disorganisation. Johnson was out of his depth, as were others. As a result, thousands died who need not have done so. The immediate political question is whether Cummings has knocked the government seriously off course in any way. The answer is no. The vaccine programme has got the government and the state off the hook. Johnson has kicked the official inquiry into the pandemic into the long grass. He has no interest in accelerating it, especially now. That is a tragedy for reformers of all kinds. But Cummings will not be surprised. He tweeted last week that the "point of the inquiry is the opposite of learning, it is to delay scrutiny, preserve the broken system & distract public from real Qs". The lone knight will be undeterred, because railing against the system is the way he likes it.

(CHO) uses a telemedicine platform to connect to a doctor at the telemedicine hub, situated in state headquarters. According to the latest figures from the Ministry of Health, eSanjeevani AB-HWC has been implemented at more than 18,000 HWCs. The government aims to operationalise eSanjeevani in 1,55,000 HWCs by December 2022. The other module, called eSanjeevani OPD (Out Patient Department), is a direct patient-to-doctor consultation which the patient can avail of from within the confines of their homes. This service has been rolled out in 28 States/UTs. Over 350 OPDs have been set up on eSanjeevani OPD, over 300 of which are specialty OPDs. More than 30 lakh patients have been served through eSanjeevani OPD.

Of the ten states that have availed of this service the most, Tamil Nadu is at the top, followed closely by Uttar Pradesh. Punjab which has a high burden of heart disease, cancers and hypertension prevalence, has as a policy measure, prioritized telemedicine as critical to tackling its NCD and COVID crisis. We see the benefits of telemedicine not just now when hospitals are focusing on the Covid emergency, but later for those who have always struggled to access healthcare. From training of field staff to ensuring seamless connectivity, we are paying utmost attention to making telemedicine universally accessible.

Ashim Sanyal, COO of Consumer Voice, India's leading consumer rights organization, called for a paradigm shift in the way consumers access medical facilities. "Telemedicine has been a great boon during COVID for consumers and has really helped reduce disparities in access. Patients who have underlying health conditions such as hypertension or diabetes, should not delay or suspend their treatment and avail of remote consultations. Hospitals are a hotbed of infection right now. So seeking tele-consult with your doctor will keep you safe. At the same time, it relieves the pressure on our already stretched health systems."

A recent study has revealed that the impact of telemedicine is felt most by those who have historically faced health disparities. As this pandemic rages on in our country, scaling up the government's telemedicine services, making medicines available and ensuring that citizens can avail of the best treatment will safeguard countless lives.

**- Advocate Ajoy Hazarika**  
Secretary, Consumers' Legal Protection Forum, Assam



## Yamaha India revised the Price of FZ 25 & FZS 25 models



**Guwahati, June 02** : At Yamaha Motor India, it is our constant endeavor to provide customers with competitive products that are exhilarating and technology advanced. In the recent past, there has been an increase in the input costs, which has led to increase in the Ex-showroom prices of our products, especially in the FZ 25 series. Our team has finally managed to bring down these input costs for the FZ 25 Series & being a responsible manufacturer we would like to pass on the benefit to our customers. Taking this opportunity, we hereby announce the revision in the Ex-showroom prices of FZ 25 & FZS 25 models. With this step we will reach out to our potential audience by making the FZ 25 range more approachable. Irrespective of the price reduction, the Yamaha FZ 25 series will continue to retain its standard features and specifications. The revised prices are as under: - Yamaha FZ 25: Rs. 1,34,800 (Ex-showroom, Delhi) Yamaha FZS 25: Rs. 1,39,300 (Ex-showroom, Delhi)

## Rs 3-lakh-crore guaranteed loan programme: Now, cheaper credit to set up oxygen plants



**Mumbai, June 02** : Moreover, the new scheme has made a provision of extra ECLGS assistance of up to 10% of the outstanding as of February 29, 2020, to borrowers covered under ECLGS 1.0, in sync with restructuring under the RBI guidelines of May 5, 2021. By end-February, loans of Rs 2.46 lakh crore were sanctioned under the scheme. The demand thereafter hasn't risen much, bankers say. By end-February, loans of Rs 2.46 lakh crore were sanctioned under the scheme. The demand thereafter hasn't risen much, bankers say. The government on Saturday launched a new version of its Rs three-lakh-crore guaranteed loan programme, under which cheaper credit will be made available to hospitals for setting up on-site oxygen generation plants to fight the pandemic. It also allowed civil aviation companies, struggling to cope with the damage caused by the pandemic, to tap an earlier avatar of the Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme (ECLGS) by expanding its scope. mindshareMindshare wins agency of the year at FOMGThe IA is part of the Global Accelerator Network, a group of 100-odd top accelerators in the world. "The IA model closely follows that of TechStars and other internationally-known accelerators,"

he said. Creating new companies: India Accelerator funded 27 start-ups in 2020; aims to mentor 100 start-ups in 2021. The validity of the ECLGS has also been extended by three months through September 30 or until guarantees for the entire amount of Rs 3 lakh crore are issued, the finance ministry said in a statement. Similarly, the last date of disbursement has been extended up to December 31. By end-February, loans of Rs 2.46 lakh crore were sanctioned under the scheme. The demand thereafter hasn't risen much, bankers say. Under the ECLGS 4.0 announced on Saturday, the government will offer full guarantee on loans up to Rs 2 crore to hospitals, nursing homes, clinics, medical colleges for setting up on-site oxygen generation plants. The interest rate on these loans has been capped at 7.5%. The ministry also relaxed the tenure of the loan repayment and introduced more flexibilities. Borrowers who are eligible for restructuring as per the latest RBI guidelines and had availed of loans under ECLGS 1.0 can now repay in five years. They have to repay only interest in the first two years, which will be followed by the repayment of principal and residual interest in three years thereafter. Prior to the move, the loan tenure was four years. Borrowers were supposed to pay

**New Delhi, June 02**: realme, India's first brand to launch a 5G enabled smartphone, introduces its latest and cutting-edge smartphone the realme X7 Max 5G, which features India's first MediaTek Dimensity 1200 5G processor, along with NextGen realme Smart TV 4K that gives an all-round package with 4K cinematic experience. With a 6nm chip, the realme X7 Max 5G is equipped with India's first MediaTek Dimensity 1200 5G processor which is a 6nm chip and comes with dual 5G standby, a huge battery, a newly updated 50W SuperDart Charger, with an impressive triple camera with super nightscape. Whereas realme Smart TV 4K comes in two sizes 43" & 50" and is an all-in-one product that provides customers with a 4K spectacular cinematic experience with Dolby Vision® HDR technology, Dolby Atmos® immersive audio and comes with

only interest in the first year, followed by the repayment of principal and interest in three years after that. Moreover, the new scheme has made a provision of extra ECLGS assistance of up to 10% of the outstanding as of February 29, 2020, to borrowers covered under ECLGS 1.0, in sync with restructuring under the RBI guidelines of May 5, 2021. While allowing civil aviation companies to tap the ECLGS 3.0, the government also scrapped the extant ceiling of Rs 500 crore of loan outstanding for eligibility under ECLGS 3.0. This is subject to a maximum additional ECLGS assistance of up to 40% or Rs 200 crore, whichever is lower. Earlier, the ECLGS 3.0 covered businesses in hospitality, travel and tourism, leisure and sporting sectors. Eligible companies must have had total credit outstanding not exceeding Rs 500 crore as of February 29, 2020, and overdue, if any, was for 60 days or less, on that date. "Modifications in ECLGS would enhance the utility and impact of ECLGS by providing additional support to MSMEs, safeguarding the livelihoods and helping in a seamless resumption of business activity. These changes will further facilitate the flow of institutional credit at reasonable terms," the finance ministry said. The tenor of loans granted under ECLGS 3.0 would be 6 years, including a moratorium period of 2 years. The ECLGS 1.0 was announced as part of the government's Rs 21 lakh-crore relief package in May 2020. Under this, the government had pledged full guarantee for up to 20% extra, collateral-free working capital loans, subject to the Rs three-lakh-crore limit. While this scheme was initially meant for only MSMEs, the government has periodically broadened its scope to enable a wider pool of businesses and professionals to benefit from it.

listed companies such as Chemcon Speciality Chemicals, Aurobindo Pharma, Honeywell Automation India, Jamma Auto Industries, JBF Industries, Kolte-Patil Developers, Lloyds Steels Industries, Magma Fincorp, Man Industries,



**Mumbai, June 02** : Trends on SGX Nifty suggest a gap-down start for the BSE Sensex and Nifty 50 with drop of 56 points or 0.36 per cent. The Nifty futures were trading at 15,436.50 on the Singaporean Exchange. Today, all eyes eyes would be on GDP growth data for January-March quarter of FY21. Besides, movement of the rupee against US dollar, Brent crude oil prices and foreign institutional investors investment trends would also be looked at by market investors for further direction. According to technical analysts, the short term trend of Nifty continues to be positive. "Having, moved above the resistance at 15430, one may expect further upside in the coming sessions. The next upside targets to be watched around 15800 (pattern target of broader high low range breakout at 15000-14200) lev-

## realme launches India's first smartphone with MediaTek Dimensity 1200 5G processor realme X7 Max 5G, along with realme Smart TV 4K an all-round package with 4K cinematic experience



the prestigious TÜV Rheinland Low Blue Light Certification. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Madhav Sheth, Vice President, realme and Chief Executive Officer, realme India and Europe said, "We are delighted to launch these two new products which are a result of realme's highly advanced technological innovations and will offer an immersive experience to our customers. realme's aims to provide its customers with the best tech-lifestyle experience possible, and the launch of both these products is another step in that direction. realme X7 Max 5G, which will feature India's first MediaTek Dimensity 1200 5G processor will provide an unparalleled 5G smartphone experience, which is nothing but the best

in the industry. realme Smart TV 4K reaffirms our commitment to bring NextGen technology to our customers and highlights our strong presence in the Smart TV segment. I am confident that both the products will be of huge success with the support and love of our realme fans". India's first MediaTek Dimensity 1200 5G smartphone, the realme X7 Max 5G, features a 5G dual SIM dual standby support and a 120Hz super AMOLED full screen with a 360Hz touch sampling rate. The smartphone has a massive 4500mAh battery that is charged by a 50W SuperDart Charger that can charge 50% of the battery in approximately 16 minutes. realme X7 Max 5G is a 179g slim smartphone with a Sony 64-megapixel triple camera with

super nightscape and a 16-megapixel wide-angle selfie camera. The X7 Max 5G also features stainless steel vapour cooling and a next-generation steel-copper composite structure. realme X7 Max 5G is available in three colours - Mercury Silver, Asteroid Black & Milky Way and in two storage variants priced at INR26,999 (8GB+128GB) and INR29,999 (12GB+256GB). The first sale is scheduled for June 4th from 12 noon onwards on realme.com, Flipkart.com and mainline channels. realme Smart TV 4K, an all-round package with 4K cinematic experience, brings a spectacular viewing experience with Dolby Vision® imaging technology. It also offers a smooth experience with the chroma boost function and restores the true details, brightness and colours close to human eyes through a unique human visual model of the algorithm engine. The Smart TV 4K comes, featuring a LED screen and has Dolby Atmos® immersive audio, Google hands-free voice control, powerful 64-bit MediaTek quad-core processor, ultra-bezel-less design and TÜV Rheinland Low blue light certification. With the latest Android 10 version in realme Smart TV 4K, viewers will have access to unlimited content like Prime Video, Netflix, YouTube and Google Play. Priced at INR27,999 for 43" and INR 39,999 for 50", the first sale of the latest realme Smart TV 4K is scheduled for June 04 from 12 noon onwards on realme.com, Flipkart.com and mainline channels. realme Smart TV 4K comes with a one-year warranty plus a one more year screen warranty.

## Covid relief items: Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma-led GOM to examine GST cut

**Shillong, June 02** : "(To examine) medical grade oxygen, pulse oximeters, hand sanitisers, oxygen therapy equipment such as concentrators, generators and ventilators, PPE kits, N95 masks, surgical masks, temperature checking equipment and any other items required for Covid relief," it said. The GOM will submit its report to the GST Council by June 8 for the Council's consideration. In eight member group of ministers (GOM) led by Meghalaya chief minister Conrad Sangma will examine the need for reduction of or exemption from Covid vaccines and other related healthcare items from goods and service tax (GST). "In pursuant of the decision of the GST Council at its 43rd meeting on May 28, 2021, a group of ministers has been constituted to examine the issue of GST concessions/ exemption to Covid relief material. The GOM shall examine the need for GST concession and make recommendations on Covid vaccines, drugs and medicines for Covid treatment and testing kits for Covid detection," according to the GOM's terms of reference. Late fee relief to non-filers of GST returns to help small biz, add to revenue: Experts GST Council meet GST Council Meet Highlights: Covid-19 relief material, black fungus drug exempted from tax; return filing simplified. "(To examine) medical grade oxygen, pulse oximeters, hand sanitisers, oxygen therapy equipment such as concentrators, generators and ventilators, PPE kits, N95 masks, surgical masks, temperature checking equipment and any other items required for Covid relief," it said. The GOM will submit its report to the GST Council by June 8 for the Council's consideration. Besides convenor Sangma, the other members of the GOM are Gujarat deputy CM Nitinbhai Patel, Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar, Goa transport minister Mauvin Godinho, Kerala finance minister KN Balagopal, Odisha finance minister Niranjan Pujari, Telangana finance minister T Harish Rao and UP finance minister Suresh



Kumar Khanna. Currently Covid vaccines attract 5% GST for domestic supply and commercial import, the fitment committee is learnt to be asked for retaining the rate. As for oxygen concentrators, medical grade oxygen, pulse oximeters and Covid testing kits, 12%

GST exist on domestic supplies and commercial imports. The committee favoured cutting the rate to 5% till July 31. No change in rates was recommended by fitment committee on ventilators (12%), N95 mask/surgical masks (5%), RT-PCR machines (18%).

## Honda resumes production of Activa, Shine & more at its plants

**Mumbai, June 02** : Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India (HMSI) has announced that it has resumed production at its plants in Manesar (Haryana), Tapukara (Rajasthan), and Vithalapur (Gujarat) in a staggered manner. The company has also announced support for its authorized dealers who were under complete lockdown. Under

the initiative, HMSI says that it shall bear the full interest cost of the dealer's inventory under complete lockdown for 30 days or more. Speaking on the development, Atsushi Ogata, Managing Director, President & CEO, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India Pvt. Ltd. said that the company is gradually resuming production operations following all Covid-19 compliance and lockdown guidelines by the respective state governments. He added that while there are visible signs of recovery in India, Honda will continue to monitor the situation very closely and is moving forward with the safety and well-being of all its stakeholders as a top priority. Commenting on how HMSI is prioritizing business continuity at its dealer partners in these challenging times, Yadvinder Singh Guleria, Director, Sales & Marketing, Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India Pvt. Ltd. said that in these difficult times, Honda 2Wheeler India is proactively extending financial support to its dealers. He said that the company is confident that full interest support on the existing dealer inventory of those dealers who are under lockdown for 30 days or more will ease their immediate business continuity concern. Moreover, there is a positive momentum visible in the Covid-19 vaccination drive along with the various other measures taken by the Central and State governments. Guleria says that HMSI is moving forward with a calibrated approach across its entire ecosystem ensuring synergy for stable and efficient operations. Earlier, Honda 2Wheeler India announced the extension of warranty and free vehicle service benefits till 31st July 2021 to offer better convenience to the customers. The said extension is applicable for customers whose vehicle's free service, warranty and extended warranty was or is ending between 1st April 2021 and 31st May 2021.



## Bharti Airtel, SBI, Coal India, Aurobindo Pharma, Glenmark Pharma, BoB stocks in focus

**Mumbai, June 02** : Trends on SGX Nifty suggest a gap-down start for the BSE Sensex and Nifty 50 with drop of 56 points or 0.36 per cent. The Nifty futures were trading at 15,436.50 on the Singaporean Exchange. Today, all eyes eyes would be on GDP growth data for January-March quarter of FY21. Besides, movement of the rupee against US dollar, Brent crude oil prices and foreign institutional investors investment trends would also be looked at by market investors for further direction. According to technical analysts, the short term trend of Nifty continues to be positive. "Having, moved above the resistance at 15430, one may expect further upside in the coming sessions. The next upside targets to be watched around 15800 (pattern target of broader high low range breakout at 15000-14200) lev-

els and this could be achieved in the next one week. Immediate support is now placed at 15350-15300 levels," said Nagaraj Shetti, Technical Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. Aurobindo Pharma, Honeywell Automation India: BSE-

Marksans Pharma, Narayana Hrudayalaya, Prakash Industries, Rupa & Company, Shilpa Medicare, Uttam Galva Steels, Vascon Engineers, and Venus Remedies, among others will release their Jan-Mar quarter earnings on May 31. Supreme court Banks move Supreme Court against RTI disclosure, seek direction to RBIIBA chairman Rajkiran Rai G said the products have been standardised with approvals from all public sector banks' boards last week. SBI should be able to build a book of Rs 2,000 crore through expanded ECLGS: Dinesh Khara State Bank of India: SBI's chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara on Sunday said that as per preliminary assessment, the bank should be able to build a book of Rs 2,000 crore through expanded emergency credit line guarantee scheme (ECLGS). Khara made this

comment at a joint press conference of SBI and Indian Bank's Association (IBA) to launch standardised Covid loan products by public sector banks. Bharti Airtel: Bharti Airtel on Sunday said it has upgraded its mobile network in North East by adding 10 Mhz spectrum in the 2300 Mhz band for offering the best experience to its customers. The new addition will enable improved network availability and data speed as more and more people access high speed data services from their smart devices, the company said in a statement. Coal India: Coal India is likely to report dry fuel production of around 41.7 million tonnes and offtake of nearly 55 million tonnes this month as against production of 41.43 million tonnes and sales of 40 million tonnes in the corresponding period last year, the official said.



## Contd. From Page 1

## India needs uniform, effective law

needs a comprehensive, uniform and effective law against the healthcare violence. We request you to kindly approve an effective and strong act against the healthcare violence. The real size of the problem is largely unknown and recent information shows that the current knowledge is only the tip of the iceberg." "The incidences of healthcare violence have increased over the years and have become widespread and the dreaded entity poses to be threat to the medical practice," the IMA wrote. This comes after a doctor was attacked by a group of people in Assam's Hojai district yesterday, following a Covid patient's death. "While the entire medical fraternity stands with you and is working tirelessly during the pandemic, it is also facing a serious threat from healthcare violence. There are many incidences of healthcare violence taking place across the country," the IMA said.

## Assam have become the targets

General of Police, Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta speaking exclusively to Niyomiya Barta revealed that a six-layered network was running an empire of banned drugs in Assam. At the top of this network is an international level production manager who produces opium, the raw material needed for drugs. "Opium is mainly produced in Myanmar, but it does not meet the demand. Therefore, the production managers have used the remote hilly areas of Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, etc. in the northeast for opium cultivation. This work involves the second level of the drugs network. They are responsible for protecting the opium poppy fields and in return collect large sums of money from the production managers", added Mahanta. Various extremist groups in the Northeast provide protection to opium poppy cultivation. Later, this opium is transported to Myanmar. According to the market demand in Myanmar, different types of drugs are manufactured and taken to the third tier of the network i.e. distributors. All of these distributors are responsible for transporting drugs to various locations at a later stage. They send large quantities of drugs to Assam and other places in the North East at regular intervals. After this, a large number of local people became involved in the drug network. Local drug dealers play an important role in the entire business, known as 'receivers'. The last level of the drug network is the local distributor. They sell poisonous drugs in different parts of Assam through agents. Some of the distributors have taken over the responsibility of selling the drugs themselves while others have been selling drugs through their trusted people and addicted youths. In addition, some young people who do not use drugs themselves have recently resorted to selling drugs. This particular trend came to light after the Assam Police started with a massive crackdown and investigation. DGP Mahanta said that many mafias from Bihar-Uttar Pradesh have started cultivating opium or cannabis in Assam. For this purpose, they take over the lands in the interior areas and the lands near the rivers of the state and employ the locals to cultivate the land. The Assam Police has uprooted 69 bighas of opium plantation in 2020 and 15 bighas till May 2021. According to the Assam Police, the crop is mainly grown in Barpeta, South Salmara and Kamrup district areas. Citing statistics on the growing prevalence of drugs in Assam, DGP Mahanta said that there were 455 cases of illicit drug trade in 2018, 826 in 2019, 980 in 2020, and 552 till May 2021. Similarly, 694 people have been arrested in 2018, 1,226 in 2019, 1,652 in 2020 and 838 till May 2021. The quantity of drugs and other banned substances seized during these years is as follows: In 2018, 7 kg of heroin, 10 kg of opium, 1.25 lakh bottles of cough syrup and 4 lakh meth tablets; In 2019, 24 kg of heroin, 26 kg of opium, 55 thousand bottles of cough syrup, 15.37 lakh meth tablets and 6 kg of morphine; In 2020, 28 kg of heroin, opium 17 kg, 87 thousand bottles of cough syrup, 12.7 lakh meth tablets, 24 kg of morphine and cocaine have been seized by the authorities. As of May 2021, 17 kg of heroin, 30 kg of opium, 14,974 bottles of cough syrup, 7.48 lakh meth tablets and 1.5 kg of morphine have been seized. During the current year, the number of drug-related cases reported per month has increased by 105 percent. On an average, 187 criminals are arrested every month. DGP Mahanta informed that in order to stem the tide of social degradation, the police were planning to hit the 'supply chain' of drugs so that emanate in the region would decline and supply would be cut off. At the same time, the police are conducting search operations for the main smugglers. There is clear evidence that such smugglers have links to extremist organizations. A case has already been handed over to the Narcotics Control Bureau.

## Assam Doctor assault case

sheet in shortest possible time and ensure the criminals are brought to justice," said GP Singh. The arrested persons have been identified as: 1) Md Kamaruddin 2) Md Jainal uddin 3) Rehanuddin 4) Saidul Alam 5) Rahim Uddin 6) Rajul Islam 7) Tayebur Rahman 8) Sahil Islam 9) Rahimuddin 10) Abdul Kalam 11) Nurzul Islam 12) Abdul Gumi 13) Dilwar Hussain 14) Abdul Hussain 15) Anuwar Hussain 16) Ikramul Hussain 17) Nasiruddin 18) Alimuddin 19) Jamil Ahmad 20) Sarifuddin 21) Safiquddin 22) Mofizur Rahman 23) Matibur Rahman 24) Misba Begum. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said: "24 culprits involved in this barbaric attack have been arrested and the chargesheet will be filed at the earliest. I am personally monitoring this investigation and I promise that justice will be served. "24 culprits involved in this barbaric attack have been arrested and the chargesheet will be filed at the earliest. On Tuesday, an on-duty doctor attached to Fultali Model Hospital under Lanka Police Station in central Assam's Hojai district was allegedly brutally assaulted by a group of men following the death of a COVID-19 patient at the hospital. Sources said the relatives of the deceased patient mercilessly beat up the doctor, Seuj Kumar Senapati, and also beat up some of the nurses of the hospital on duty at the time. In a video of the incident that went viral in the social media, a group of people can be seen charging at the doctor with slippers and sticks in front of the hospital building. According to sources, Giasuddin, a COVID-19 patient from Udali area, died at the hospital around 10 am on Tuesday. Some people, including relatives of the patient, immediately became enraged at the sudden death of the patient and attacked the doctor as well as other staffers of the hospital. Meanwhile, the assault on an on-duty doctor has evoked strong condemnation from across the State. IMA Assam State Branch said: "IMA Assam State Branch condemns in all strongest terms the barbaric assault on a freshly passed out doctor Dr Seuj Kumar Senapati at one of the Covid Care Centres in Hojai District. IMA and all the doctors are at a loss at this gruesome reward to a frontline worker in Covid duty." Assam Health Minister Keshab Mahanta visited the victim doctor and took stock of his health condition. He said: "Such barbaric attack on our frontline warrior will not be tolerated & shall not go unanswered. The perpetrators will be brought to justice. Dr Seuj Kr Senapati will be under our care and protection till his complete recovery. Justice shall prevail!"

## Plea filed in Supreme Court

work with huge number of innocent laborers workers continuing their work during the peak COVID-19 pandemic period is a serious public health issue concern." "High Court was not justified in holding that the Central Vista Avenue Redevelopment project is essential activities during the peak COVID-19 Pandemic crisis, especially when the whole country has stopped essential functioning during the lockdown period," said the plea. It further said that the high court was not justified in calling the petition motivated and "not a genuine public cause by drawing presumption and assumption in the absence of proven material facts and evidence". On May 31, the Delhi High Court dismissed the plea for halting the construction work of the Central Vista saying it was a "vital and essential" national project. A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh said that the petition was "motivated" and "not a genuine PIL". It also said as the workers are staying on the site, there is no question of suspending the construction work for the project. The Central Vista is an ambitious project of the Narendra Modi-led NDA government, which aims to redevelop a 3.2-km stretch called the Central Vista that lies at the heart of Lutyens Delhi built by the Britishers in the 1930s. The project involves demolishing and rebuilding several government buildings, including iconic landmarks, and constructing a new Parliament at a total cost of Rs 20,000 crore.

## Centre cancels CBSE Class 12

board examination will most likely be cancelled because "BJP-ruled states will follow the Prime Minister's view". Opposition-ruled states such as Maharashtra and Rajasthan said they would decide the fate of their Class 12 Board examinations in the next few days. Rajasthan will take a call during a State Cabinet meeting Wednesday. Sources said that during Tuesday's meeting, the Prime Minister was briefed about the national consultation held on May 23 and states' feedback about the two options proposed by the CBSE for conducting the school-leaving examination. Under Option A, exams for 19 major subjects were to be held in the "existing format" at designated examination centres, and marks for minor subjects calculated on performance in major subjects. Class 12 is a milestone exam in the life of a student, and the gateway to higher education. Given that different state boards compete with the CBSE and ISC, the challenge for universities will be to evolve a level playing field to screen candidates for admission. Under Option B, exams for major subjects were to be conducted in the students' own schools, instead of designated centres, with each exam having a shorter duration of 90 minutes. On Tuesday, sources said, the Prime Minister was briefed about a third option that wasn't discussed with the states - the possibility of scrapping the examination, given the fluidity of the situation and the health implication of 20 lakh students stepping out to appear for the examination. (The) PM said that the Covid situation is a dynamic situation across the country. While the numbers are coming down in the country and some states are managing the situation through effective micro-containment, some states have still opted for a lockdown," the statement said. "Students, parents and teachers are naturally worried about the health of the students in such a situation. The PM said that students should not be forced to appear for exams in such a stressful situation," it said. Tuesday's move comes after 32 states and Union Territories supported the conduct of the Class 12 Board examination this year. Of these, 29 states and UTs either supported the curtailed format or agreed to support any decision taken by the Centre. Only four - Delhi, Maharashtra, Goa, and Andaman & Nicobar - categorically opposed pen-and-paper examinations. In the national consultation held on May 23, School Education Secretary Anita Karwal had described the Class 12 exam as "cutting-edge" and told the states that the Centre was keen on going ahead even with a truncated format. The Government is expected to inform the Supreme Court of its decision Thursday. On Monday, the Centre told the Supreme Court that it would decide in the next two days whether or not to hold the Class XII board exams amid the pandemic. The decision will have a cascading effect on admissions to higher education institutions. According to the Education Ministry's estimate, about one crore students get admission in colleges and universities based on their performance in Board examinations. "There is a substantial risk of inflation of marks by schools. Normalising the differences in results prepared by schools will be a big challenge for CBSE. And it remains to be seen if universities will consider these results for admission," said a ministry official. The higher education department of the Education Ministry will look into the admission process only after CBSE announces the "objective criteria" for evaluating Class 12 students. According to sources, the common entrance test proposed for all central universities in the new National Education Policy may get a fillip now. Tuesday's meeting was attended by Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, I&B Minister Prakash Javadekar, and Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani. Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal couldn't attend as he was admitted to AIIMS-Delhi Tuesday morning for post-Covid complications.

## India lost 594 doctors during

data showed. Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Jharkhand were close on their heels, with all of these states witnessing the deaths of scores of doctors during the second wave of Covid-19. The data shared by IMA showed that as many as 107 doctors had died in Delhi during the second wave. Bihar saw the deaths of 96 doctors, while 67 died in Uttar Pradesh, 43 in Rajasthan, and 39 in Jharkhand, too. However, the IMA being a voluntary organisation of physicians in India, it is possible that the actual number of fatalities far exceeds these statistics, since the association only keeps a record of its 3.5 lakh members, out of the 12-lakh-odd doctors in the country. The IMA data, however, provides a reliable approximation of the physician community's plight in India, in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. The five states which saw the highest number of deaths of doctors during this phase, according to the IMA, are: 1. Delhi (107) 2. Bihar (96) 3. Uttar Pradesh (67) 4. Jharkhand (39) 5. Andhra Pradesh (32) The entire IMA Covid registry pertaining to the doctors' deaths can be found here: On a related note, the IMA has also recently raised its voice against violent incidents directed against doctors, healthcare staff, and healthcare establishments with or without reason. These incidents of healthcare violence have increased over the years and have become widespread and pose threat to the medical practice, it said. The IMA has urged Union home minister Amit Shah to consider its appeal on an emergency basis and implement an effective and strong law "against healthcare violence", to safeguard the healthcare professionals of the country.

## Second wave of COVID-19

by the think-tank is expected to come at 12 per cent at the end of May as against 8 per cent in April. Vyas told adding this signifies that about 10 million or 1 crore Indians have lost jobs in this period. Unemployment rate had touched a record high of 23.5 per cent in May 2020 because of the national lockdown. Many experts opine that the second wave of infections has peaked and states will slowly start to ease the economic activity-impacting restrictions in a calibrated fashion, said Vyas further told the news agency that an unemployment rate of 3-4 per cent should be considered as "normal" for the Indian economy, hinting that the unemployment number will have to decline for longer before the situation improves. Meanwhile, the government on Monday released India's GDP figures, with data showing that India's economy contracted by less-than-expected 7.3 percent in the fiscal year ended March 2021. The data furnished by the National Statistical Office (NSO) showed that real GDP or Gross Domestic Product at constant (2011-12) prices in 2020-21 attained a level of Rs 135.13 lakh crore, as against the 'first revised estimate' of GDP for the year 2019-20 of Rs 145.69 lakh crore. "GDP at Constant (2011-12) Prices in Q4' of 2020-21 is estimated at Rs 38.96 lakh crore, as against Rs 38.33 lakh crore in Q4 of 2019-20, showing a growth of 1.6 per cent," according to the GDP estimates released by the Central Statistics Office (CSO). Besides, the CSO said: "There was a sharp spike from Rs 2.27 lakh crore in BE 2020-21 to Rs 5.95 lakh crore in the revised Estimates for the major subsidies (especially food subsidies) of Centre, presented in Budget 2021-22, in RE 2020-21."

## Centre's claim of vaccinating

Mamata Banerjee said. It may be noted that several states, including West Bengal, Odisha, Delhi and Maharashtra, have complained to the Centre over shortage of vaccines and delay in their supply. These states have also urged the Centre to maintain uniformity in the rates of COVID-19 vaccines being used in India. Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday wrote to all the chief ministers in the country, urging them to build a

consensus over procurement of the COVID vaccines by the Centre for distribution among the states. In the letter, Patnaik wrote that no state is safe unless all the states adopt vaccination as the topmost priority and execute it on war-footing. "The only way to protect our people against future waves and provide them with a hope of survival is vaccination," Patnaik wrote in the letter that he shared on Twitter, tagging all the chief

ministers. "But this cannot be a battle among the states to compete against each other to procure vaccines," he added. Patnaik noted that after the Centre announced phase 3 of the vaccine policy, allowing vaccination for everyone above the age of 18 and opened procurement for the states and private sector, the demand increased. "Many states have floated global tenders for vaccine procurement. However, it

is quite clear that the global vaccine manufacturers are looking forward to the Union Government for the clearances and assurances," he said. Meanwhile, the Union Health Ministry said on Wednesday that more than 1.64 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses are still available with the states and UTs to be administered, it said. As part of the nationwide vaccination drive, the Centre has been supporting the states and UTs by providing them COVID-19 vaccines free of cost.

procurement categories, more than 23 crore vaccine doses to states and UTs. Of this, the total consumption, including wastages, is 21,71,44,022 doses, the ministry said. A total of 1,64,42,938 COVID-19 vaccine doses are still available with the states and UTs to be administered, it said. As part of the nationwide vaccination drive, the Centre has been supporting the states and UTs by providing them COVID-19 vaccines free of cost.



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma calling on Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in New Delhi

## 24 persons involved in Doctor attack at Udali, produced before Sankardevnagar Court

**Hojai, June 2 :** At a time when Covid Warriors are working round the clock to serve the society, some gruesome incidents demoralise the spirit and energy of the warriors to work for the society. Such an incident took place at a Covid Care Centre located at Udali under Hojai District. This centre is around 25 Kilometer away from the main town Hojai. As per information, a Covid Patient namely Gaisuddin, a resident of No. 2 Pipalphukuri, was admitted in the centre at around 11 am on Tuesday and he succumbed to death at 2 pm on the day itself. Irked over the death some miscreants, physically assaulted and tortured Dr. Seuj Kr Senapati and health staff, who were on duty at Udali Covid Care Centre. Till now Hojai Police have arrested total 24 people who were indulged in this incident and produced before the Sankardevnagar Court. On the other hand, Health Minister Keshab Mahanta visited the site at around 1:30 am on Wednesday midnight, he took stock of the barbaric incident. He said such incidents will never be tolerated and stringent action will be initiated. DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta also reached the spot. While talking to reporters, DGP said attacks on frontline workers will never be tolerated. The Doctors and health staffs of Hojai FRU also protested wearing black badge to show-case their protest. Condemning the brutal incident, Assam Medical Service Association Hojai Unit have submitted a memorandum to Deputy Commissioner Dr. Sadnek Singh, IAS regarding the assault. As per the memorandum signed by Dr. Ramen Ch. Bordoloi, President and Dr. Subrata Banik, General Secretary, have condemned such incident which demoralises the service of Doctor to the mankind and the Community as a whole. AMSA Hojai Unit have asked the administration to provide 24x7 security, installation of CC cameras, 24 hours electricity supply at all the hospitals and especially at Covid Care Centre, to prevent such incidents in future. IMA Assam State Branch have also condemned in all strongest terms the barbaric assault on a freshly passed out doctor Dr. Seuj Kumar Senapati at Udali Covid Care Centres in Hojai District. Nagaon District Medicine Dealer Association, Assam Chamber of Commerce Hojai District Unit, Nilbagan Unit, Hojai District Karamchari Parishad, Marwari Samellan, Hojai Unit, All Assam Minority Students Union, Hojai District Unit, Ajmal Foundation and many other organisations have condemned the brutal attack on medical fraternity.

## SDO(c) of Nazira interacts with senior citizens



**Nazira : 2nd June :** New SDO(c) of Nazira, Sabyasachi Kashap chaired a meeting today with the leading citizens at his conference Hall. The objective behind this interaction was to gather first hand information from the senior citizens regarding the areas that needs attention of the administration. The senior citizens apprised the SDO(c) about issues related to proper disposal of garbage, proper drainage system to avoid flash flood, construction of an alternate bridge over River Dikhow, gas cremation etc. The SDO(c) assured that focus would be paid to the issues raised by the leading citizens. He said: "Since I have taken the charge of Nazira Subdivision newly, I want to reorient the focus of the administration on areas that needs immediate attention. To do that the first thing that is required is proper knowledge on the subdivision. So the purpose of the interaction today was to gather informations and feedbacks from you. All issues raised by you all will be addressed to your satisfaction soon by the administration." The leading citizens also expressed their satisfaction on the assurances given by Mr. Kashyap and they hope that in the coming days the administration of Nazira under SDO (c) Sabyasachi Kashyap will work more competently for the holistic development of the subdivision. Secretary of Nazira Senior Citizen Association Bijoy Borah, ex. Professor Provat Borthakur etc. were also present in the event alongwith other dignitaries.



## Cool hand Kane Williamson plays down New Zealand's run of success



**London, June 02 :** For all those books explaining what the British could learn about health, happiness and everything else from the Scandinavians, Japanese and French, no one seems to have done anything much on what the New Zealanders have to teach us. Perhaps the problem is in persuading them to talk openly about their achievements. Like Tim Southee said the other day: "It's not really the Kiwi way." So here they are, one of the smallest cricket-playing countries, with one of the slightest budgets and the sparsest player pools, ranked first in the one-day rankings, second in Tests, third in T20s and about to play India in the first World Test Championship final. Before that there are two Tests against England, and a return to Lord's for the first time since the World Cup final in 2019, the ricochet off Ben Stokes's bat, the super over, the boundary countback and all that. They have seemed a little reluctant to open up about that match, despite attempts to lure them into talking about how they are out for bloody revenge this week. Their captain, Kane Williamson, does not seem to much go in for that sort of thing. He seemed to have some pretty warm memories of it all. "There's certainly no thought of 'owing' anybody anything. We were both part of a fantastic game that was decided, in the end, by things that were largely outside both teams' control," he said. "Both teams went at it to the best of their abilities on a wicket that offered a little bit for everybody." It was a special game to be a part of. You can feel whatever you want about the result, but there was some fine print and a few other

bits and pieces that went on in the game. It will still be a game that will be remembered fondly, whether you were on the right side or the wrong side." There was a fleeting reference to "some rule being adjusted and whatnot" - the International Cricket Council scrapped boundary countback that year and replaced it with a second super over - but Williamson quickly followed with the caveat that "it's all part and parcel of sport". There is no sense wasting yourself worrying about what you cannot control. That phlegmatic attitude is one of the things that has helped his team to improve the way they have. He is a cool hand, a calm mind and a capable captain, as well as a great batsman. When Williamson made his debut in 2010, New Zealand were ranked eighth in the world. Soon after, they went through an 19-month stretch winning one Test out of 19. Ten years later, they recently reached the top of the Test match rankings for the first time. "We've seen a lot of improvement in the side over a long period of time and being a part of that growth has been really enjoyable." Just do not ask him to explain how they have done it. "It is really difficult to stop for a moment in time and make a judgment on it all, when you know that you know the next day there's another challenge to address and there's always room to improve." Here we are now facing another tough challenge against England and then India. So we're very realistic about where our focus needs to be and it's certainly not looking backwards. "It helps that the core of his team - Southee, Trent Boult, Neil Wagner, Ross Taylor, BJ Watling - have been alongside him all the way. They are a formidable group. In New Zealand's history, 12 regular batsmen have averaged more than 40 in Test cricket and 12 regular bowlers have averaged less than 30. Four of the first lot are in this side and so are three of the second.

## England an impossible job no more given talent at Southgate's disposal

**London, June 02 :** Alea iacta est. The die, after endless beard-scratching permutation, is cast. Squad chemistry has been distilled, club finals waited out, and the story cycle of Trent and the fourth-place right-back slot enshrined in the national myth kitty for centuries to come. And so here we are with a list of names. The intangibles around England's Euro 2020 squad have finally been unravelled, options refined, full-backs stockpiled. It is now time to cross the Rubicon into these delayed Covid Euros, and a period of high-summer crisis that will, rightly or wrongly, define Gareth Southgate's time as England manager. In the end there were no major surprises. No need here for the smooth noodling sounds of Kenny G as Southgate - always more of a Britpop figure - shed seven of his training squad with a minimum of fuss. Trent Alexander-Arnold is in, which was always the correct decision. Sport is about talent, character and achievement. For two years Alexander-Arnold was one of the best full-backs in Europe. He swallowed his own poor form through the season's endgame. He can pass a ball with every part of his right foot, can do extreme things, break a game open. Any 26-man England squad that can't find a place for this level of talent risks losing the public interest. What does seem odd is the wealth, the glut of defenders: 10 of them, including four right-backs, compared with five midfielders. But that accent on defensive versatility does at least speak fluently to Southgate's priorities. Perhaps England really can paint Europe a shade of right-back this summer. Only eight players remain from the 2018 World Cup. That squad was drawn from 11 Premier League clubs. This one comes from 15 clubs and includes three players from overseas leagues, the first in an England tournament squad since Owen Hargreaves and David Beckham in 2006. Harry Maguire will take his injured ankle to the Euros, such is his tactical importance. Otherwise Southgate has got off pretty lightly, with Joe Gomez the only serious absentee. For all the grumbling about timings and workloads, he has no excuses on personnel. Among the offcuts James Ward-Prowse has cause to feel disappointed. But the fact remains Jordan Henderson is at another level, a midfielder with a body of work, and a status in

European football that may just make a dent in the occasion. He was always coming back in. As for Jesse Lingard, sometimes a 28-year-old footballer will have a run of form. It doesn't always demand fireworks. Ollie Watkins will also be disappointed, but he might also be proud to have made it this far this quickly. Otherwise the usual fiddling at the edge of the squad feels like a weirdly overpromoted subplot. Look back through tournaments past and there is a case to be made that Adam Lallana, Jake Livermore, and Lewis Cook might have altered England's destiny as Luka Modric



steadily devoured their midfield, that Danny Drinkwater was the missing spark in the collapse against Iceland? In practice, tournament football is not a mass squad game. We have that list of players now. But this has only ever really been about what Southgate does with them. So what have we got? Jadon Sancho is a significant presence. It is in his area of the pitch that Southgate's loyalties, his risk averse nature, may come to bite him. On form, and indeed on basic footballing skills, Sancho should start ahead of Raheem Sterling and Marcus Rashford as the thrust in England's attack. Sterling and Rashford either side of Harry Kane may be the default option. Form and class say Sancho and Phil Foden. Southgate has every excuse here to put his most expressively talented attacking players on the pitch at the start of a tournament. Will he stay true to his occasionally revolutionary spirit? Or take the path of least resistance? This is one area of interest. Another is how successfully Southgate can enact his - commendable - fluidity on formations. The evidence suggests strong opposition will get the back three, weaker teams the back four (we can only picture the high dudgeon in Zagreb as Southgate wheels out his "minor nation" back four, the tactical equivalent

of swiping left). There is a danger Southgate will be hostage to the fashionable vice of "overthinking", a charge that shouldn't worry him. This is still England football, a place where any kind of thinking, any kind of tactical plan, is to be celebrated. But he has also given himself a lot of work to do with only 10 days to the start of the Euros. Plus of course there is a danger, as he pores over the minute gradations of a James, a Trippier, a Walker, of becoming bogged down in his own innate caution. As things stand the England XI is likely to be made up of five defenders, two deep midfielders, plus Mason Mount, Sterling and Kane. Is this really the best use, the most stirring deployment, of a rare wealth of talent? This is the real point about that squad list. Just read the names and for the first time there is pressure on Southgate. It is a powerful, classy, well-rounded group of players. This hasn't always meant much. Going to Russia, England's top scorer was Danny Welbeck with 16 goals (third top was Ashley Young) but the effect was a kind of liberation. Here there are no holes, no get-outs, no obvious weak spots. Add to this the fact England have a fine record in two previous home tournaments, at a time when home advantage really will be a bonus point. Factor in the lack of through-the-roof international teams out there (just some very good ones). There are so many obstacles in the way of actually winning the thing. But it is no longer the impossible job. This might partially explain Southgate's own public manner of late, which has veered between the sombre style of a high-end funeral director planning an unusually detailed family funeral, and a slight tensing up around that final selection. Southgate delayed the announcement to his final training session. He fussed about the "unknowns". He fuffed about club football finals. He added to the pointless drama around Alexander Arnold by musing in public on the dynamics of their relationship. And yet, there are still plenty of reasons to believe. Southgate has shown himself to be expert at managing the noise around England; and to have that rare thing, an identifiable plan, and a degree of stubbornness that might yet turn out to be just what this talented group requires.

## Sport loves athletes with mental health issues - if they just shut up and play

**London, June 02 :** The grand slams say Naomi Osaka's decisions about press are 'injurious' to tennis. Perhaps they should look closer to home. Naomi Osaka at a press conference after winning the Australian Open in Melbourne, February 2021. Amazing, really, that the most appalling people in tennis are not the ones who applaud piously when the Wimbledon umpire tells the crowd to ensure their mobile phones are switched to silent, nor even the ones who are far more hysterically enchanted by the appearance of a pigeon on Centre Court than they ever could be by an otherworldly Roger Federer forehand. Much more ghastly are those simply unable to deal with world No 2 Naomi Osaka announcing last week that she didn't feel mentally up to doing press conferences at the French Open. This drew frothing anger from all the usual suspects, including the only highly paid news anchor in history so fragile that he recently stormed off air on his own show. The French Open fined Osaka for missing her first-round press conferences, and the official Roland Garros Twitter account posted (then later deleted) a collage of players doing press conferences with the leadenly pointed caption: "They understood the assignment." On Monday, Osaka announced that she would be pulling out of the entire tournament, revealing she had had long bouts of depression since winning the US Open in 2018, and had often struggled to cope. You do have to admire tennis's position on health. The women's No 2 has been pushed into withdrawing from a grand slam for having the temerity to take a small step to protect her own mental equilibrium, while the men's No 1 has spent the past 14 months continually honking out anti-Covid vaccine messages.

Novak Djokovic has not been officially censured for that, nor for the ridiculous super-spreader tournament he hosted across the Balkans last summer against all advice, which saw several players (including him) catch Covid. As for the hierarchy of the sport's sins, how predictable that it should be "doing press conferences" that united all four slams in a joint condemnatory press release, while they remain utterly silent on world No 6 Alexander Zverev many

that we even use the same word for asking a tennis player what went wrong with their serve as we use for asking a health minister if he lied about discharging untested vulnerable people into care homes. We don't know quite why the frothers are so angry about Osaka, because they're currently too angry to precisely explain. So I'm only speculating, but I imagine one woman's decision not to do press conferences at the French Open is regarded as that most all-



months after he was accused in great detail of domestic violence and mental abuse by his ex-girlfriend. Zverev issued a denial; and denial in any case remains tennis's comfort zone. For a major sport it is fundamentally incurious, testing for performance enhancing drugs, according to a 2016 investigation, at the same levels as kayaking or handball. Anyway, back to Osaka. If you're not familiar with the French Open, it's a tournament in which the best tennis players in the world are split by means of a draw and have to outperform each other at a series of press conferences. I mean, I think? Otherwise how much can it honestly matter if a 23-year-old does or doesn't turn up to them and go through the banalities? This is TENNIS. Watch the match, listen to the commentary, read the analysis, and if there's still something you didn't understand, then honestly just naff off and read a children's book instead. Alas, it seems that "scrutiny" is a cornerstone of both liberal democracy and clay-court singles. And yet, it does seem quite mad

purpose of bogeymen: the thin end of the wedge. The thin end of the wedge is the street name of the slippery slope. One minute you're allowing a 23-year-old not to say whether she does or doesn't feel the third set tie-break could have gone better; the next, no one is answering any questions about third set tie-breaks, fans are only able to find out how players feel from their multiple daily social media updates, and sponsors are paying stars less because no one's sitting in front of their logos to take questions any more. In which case, I'm going to go out on a limb and say ... whatever? Never mind? Big wows? Fred Perry never had to take this many questions, and maybe the players of the future won't either. I know we have to pretend there's a continuum between this and actual totalitarianism, but let's not and say we did. The weird thing is that we DO want athletes to have mental health issues - very much so in fact - but we only want them to reveal them at a time and a place that suits us. Namely, after they've retired, and in a book. Then we can profess ourselves fascinated to have

learned that an athlete walked out for this or that fixture absolutely broken inside. They key thing is that you couldn't tell from the outside - that's the bit we love. The hidden pain, the belated literary reveal. If they won the fixture, we like to learn from the book that they didn't mean whatever elated thing they said to the journalists at the press conference afterwards - they were just going through the motions because they were broken inside. If they lost, we like to learn from the book that it wasn't for whatever reasons they gave the journalists at the press conference afterwards - they were just going through the motions because they were broken inside. It's almost as if the common denominator here is the fact that the press conference is mostly a place where one goes through the motions and just says some shit to shut them up. Any athlete lauded for their honesty about mental health - "demons", in sporting parlance - is only lauded if it's long after the event. The same people who raved about Tony Casarino's brilliant autobiography Full Time would have lost their minds if the footballer had dared voice any of his turmoil while he was actually playing. Tennis was quick to tell us Osaka had been fined for behaviour judged "detrimental or injurious to the grand slam tournaments". This reminds me of the Football Association's charge of "bringing the game into disrepute", which it likes to level at players who've done a bad tweet, when no one has done as much to bring the game into disrepute quite so serially as the FA itself. It's the same with tennis. Do remember that the minute she came back off a drugs ban, Maria Sharapova was given a wildcard into the main draw of the US Open, and other players bumped off Arthur Ashe for all her primetime matches. In many and various ways down the years, no one has acted in a way more injurious to grand slams than the grand slams themselves. You'll never see them do a press conference about that, though, so let's not wet our pants when the mere players don't feel able to either.

## England Test series with New Zealand brings welcome sense of normality

**London, June 02 :** England have not yet fully emerged from the team environment previously known as the bubble but the start of a bumper international summer nevertheless feels like a fresh page being turned. After a previous chapter spent befuddled by the spin of Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel on India's baked soil, they return to home comforts and the familiarity of pace on the ball. The marketing folk would probably describe it as a soft launch, with new players being explored and spectators returning in reduced numbers. But the two-match series against New Zealand - one of cricket's friendliest rivalries - still provides plenty of the good stuff that Test cricket lovers feast upon and administrators should keep in mind the next time they talk down the format's future. Granted the series has been laid on as a goodwill gesture for the broadcasters and the grounds and does not form part of the World Test Championship. But neither did the 2,000-plus Tests staged before it began in 2019. We still have two enticing sides on show, while the return to Lord's - scene of a belting Test between the two countries in 2015 - and then Edgbaston offers a much-needed sense of normality returning after a season spent schlepping between the bubbles at the Rose Bowl and Old Trafford and back again. New Zealand are the far more settled team and the global final against India would cap their enviable rise under Kane Williamson. England, meanwhile, are actively broadening their player pool and begin a new regime with Chris Silverwood, now head coach and sole selector. His support staff has been finalised after a year of temporary roles and the Ashes tour has, unashamedly, been pinned on the wall as the long-term goal. Ed Smith's de-blazing in April has simplified the decision-making process, smoothing out the lines between

squad and first-team selection that had become blurred at times (and erupted on occasion when Stuart Broad found himself mixing the drinks). His work lives on, however, with Wednesday's two possible debutants, James Bracey and Ollie Robinson, detected by his radar and now set to earn their chance. Bracey, who will be the first Test player from Gloucestershire since Jon Lewis in 2006, sees his future as a top-order batsman but an unfortunate slip in the dressing room by Ben Foakes means the left-hander starts out behind the stumps. After a year learning how international cricket operates from the wings, it will be fascinating to see how this 24-year-old fares on centre stage. They will be bursting with pride at Winterbourne Cricket Club in Bristol. The likelihood is that Bracey will slot in at No 7 and above him sits a lineup that is shorn of Ben Stokes and, bar Joe Root and perhaps Dom Sibley, has individuals jostling for position as they look to fulfil Silverwood's orders for 400-plus totals by hook or by crook. Only one Englishman has made his Test debut since Root in late 2012 and averaged more than 40 and though he is in the squad Haseeb Hameed's recall after a rebirth at Nottinghamshire is initially as cover. Personal stats were damaged during the 3-1 defeat in

India - a tour that with the rotation policy felt more like an obligation fulfilled rather than a challenge fully attempted - and so Rory Burns, Zak Crawley, Ollie Pope and Dan Lawrence will want to get the graph moving upwards again. Do so against a high-class Kiwi attack, one that Robinson, ejected to the switch from Kookaburra ball to Dukes, and memories of Rishabh Pant chuckling away behind the stumps after their various demises will soon start to melt away. If Bracey has been identified on potential and temperament then there is a case to say any selector would have done well to overlook Robinson. Sussex were in Division Two before the rejig of the past two seasons but with a notably high release point from a 6ft 5in frame, synapses that crackle with plans and 195 first-class wickets at an average of 17 over the past four seasons, the 27-year-old was becoming impossible to ignore. So, too, Craig Overton, who Lewis, now the England bowling coach, fancies has been driven by an early summer rivalry with Robinson, although the Somerset man may have to wait his turn. England have been toying with an all-seam attack - Root and Lawrence providing the spin options - but if Jack Leach does make way it may be for the more explosive pace of Mark Wood or Olly Stone.





# French Open's response to Naomi Osaka is a shameful moment for tennis

**Paris, June 2 :** On Monday evening the four-time grand slam champion Naomi Osaka, the brightest young star across the world of tennis, withdrew

things should be done and it has led to numerous constructive conversations. Her underlying message was received with a clear lack of empathy



from Roland Garros because she felt that her attempts to preserve her mental wellbeing were a distraction to her peers. In other words, it marks a shameful moment for tennis. Osaka had announced in a statement last week that she would not conduct her press obligations during the tournament, a decision that led to six days of attention and widespread discussion across the internet. While Osaka's initial announcement and communication was far from perfect, it was bold of her to challenge the system instead of simply accepting the way

from many quarters. As Osaka noted in both statements, she has a strong rapport with numerous members of the press and her candour has, ironically, always been a strong argument for the value of press conferences. Rather than this being the case of athlete and press clashing, Osaka has demonstrated the unique difficulties of these encounters that often occur during some athletes' lowest moments and every person reacts differently. For some players, their thoughts and discomfort in the press room follow them home and it is logical that it can af-

fect their mental health. Osaka is also a black and Asian woman charged with fielding questions to an audience of majority white men, a dynamic that has led to numerous uncomfortable questions over the years. With their heavy-handed statement, the grand slam tournaments have much for which to answer. They responded to Osaka as if she was a threat, an all-too-familiar sensation for black athletes who step outside of the box. Osaka said she expected to receive fines, as other players have received for skipping press in the past, and she was prepared to pay them and then discuss further solutions after the event. That should have been enough for the time being. Instead, as the tournament finally began and interest in the story waned, the grand slam tournaments escalated the situation by warning that by repeatedly skipping press conferences she could be defaulted or even risk suspension from future grand slam tournaments. By applying such unnecessary pressure, they forced Osaka to choose between defiance and the possibility of unprecedented punishments or the deep discomfort of facing the media. Withdrawing was the option to minimise her stress. With her departure, she explained that she suffers from depression and is struck by anxiety before press encounters. The press conference that the French Tennis Federation president, Gilles Moreton, held on Monday night further underlined just how badly the tennis authorities handled this situation. In a statement uttered from the press room his organisation demanded that Osaka enter, he wished Osaka "the quickest possible recovery", as if depression is an injury that will heal shortly. After he and his colleagues had postured about the importance of press confer-

ences a day earlier, he left without fielding a single question. Ultimately, their behaviour reflected old institutions that are desperate to maintain control, uninterested in the human cost. As the fallout from Osaka's decision to withdraw from Roland Garros continued, her fellow athletes rallied behind her to offer their support. Shortly after her first-round win against Irina Camelia Begu on Monday night, Serena Williams said she empathised with Osaka. "The only thing I feel is that I feel for Naomi," she said. "I feel like I wish I could give her a hug because I know what it's like. Like I said, I've been in those positions. We have different personalities, and people are different. "Others responded directly to Osaka on social media. The NBA guard Kyrie Irving, who himself has been fined a total of \$60,000 for skipping media obligations this season, commented: "We are all with you Queen. Just be you, that will always be enough." Stephen Curry said: "You shouldn't ever have to make a decision like this - but so damn impressive taking the high road when the powers that be don't protect their own. Major respect. "The events have also led to a discussion about the utility of press conferences. Speaking on the BBC Radio 4 Today programme, the British player Laura Robson explained the obstacles that players face during their mandatory post match press conferences: "It can be really difficult and when you've come in after a loss and you're already feeling bad about how you've played on court and then you're reminded it in a question, it's absolutely not easy so I totally understand why Osaka has had to withdraw for her mental wellbeing.

## 'Courageous': Japanese athletes and sponsors voice support for Naomi Osaka

**London, June 2 :** Athletes and sponsors in Naomi Osaka's native Japan have joined much of the tennis world in rallying behind the player after she withdrew from the French Open, citing struggles with anxiety and depression. The Japanese world No 2 left the grand slam tournament on Monday, days after she had been fined and threatened with expulsion for refusing to attend press conferences, saying she needed to protect her mental wellbeing. Messages of support flooded in after Osaka, who is of Japanese and Haitian descent, tweeted a statement describing her struggle with her mental health since her first grand slam win, a victory over Serena Williams at the 2018 US Open. "The first thing to be considered is Ms Osaka's health. I wish her the earliest possible recovery," wrote Toshihisa Tsuchihashi, the executive director of the Japan Tennis Association. The Japanese government's top spokesperson, Katsunobu Kato, said that he would "watch over her quietly" when asked to comment by reporters. There was backing, too, from one of the sponsors that have helped take Osaka's earnings to \$55.2m over the past 12 months, according to the sports business website Sportico. Nissin Foods,

struggles. "Having to take a step back and say, 'Hey, I need to do this for me', we should support her and applaud her, because a lot of people wouldn't do that," Stephens said at Roland Garros on Tuesday. "A lot of people play through being miserable and being upset and not being able to speak out and say those things. We should be more accepting and allow her to take the time she needs to work on herself and better herself so she can be in a better position to play tennis and be happy and enjoy her tennis. "But I think there definitely needs to be more open dialogue on what not only her but everyone on tour goes through. I think we don't talk about it enough. "Stephens said she hoped Osaka would take all the time she needed before returning in better shape, a sentiment shared with another American player, Coco Gauff, who said she hoped Osaka can "come out better and stronger". "It's unfortunate that she's going through what she's going through," said Gauff. "I can only lend out a hand for support. The Tour isn't the easiest. I talk to other players and they have gone through similar things in the past." After Serena Williams had expressed her sympathy for Osaka, saying she wished she could give her a hug, her sister



# Roger Federer eases to comfortable win over Denis Istomin on slam return

**London, June 2 :** Even at some of the lower points in his career, Roger Federer has rarely entered a grand slam without at least leaving the door slightly ajar for the possibility of a magical outcome. But these are unique times as he continues to return from two knee surgeries not far from his 40th birthday and Roland Garros appeared on the horizon this month, he was unusually frank: "Roland Garros is not the goal," he said. "The goal is the grass. For as long as he is in Paris, though, that does not mean that he cannot have fun. On Monday, Federer returned to grand slam competition for the first time since the 2020 Australian Open 487 days ago and he finally looked like he was enjoying himself on court as he dismantled Denis Istomin 6-2 6-4 6-3 to move into the second round. Even against No. 204 Istomin, a qualifier and the lowest-ranked player Federer has faced in his four matches since his return, every win is positive reinforcement in the midst of a comeback. Thus, the freedom Federer played with over the swift 93-minute win marked a clear step forward. This comeback has already had its obstacles. After a hopeful re-

turn at the Qatar Open in March, losing in his second match to eventual champion Nikoloz Basilashvili, Federer did not resurface until two weeks ago in Geneva where he lost in the first round to No 75 Pablo Andujar after leading by a break in the final set. Afterwards, his frustration was palpable and he felt that his training was not translating to his match. Monday was an entirely different sensation: "I just felt overall much clearer, much better," he said. "Clearly also maybe the type of opponent allowed me to have many different ways to win the point. I knew if I came to the net, that was an option. Hitting a drop shot was always an option. Taking the ball early was an option. "With minimal pressure applied by Istomin, Federer was in control of the majority of exchanges and he demonstrated his confidence from the opening game by executing the first in an array of drop shots throughout the match. Federer looked comfortable in every part of his game - he confidently moved to the net when he could and he controlled the match

with his forehand. The enduring question for Federer upon his return was how his two knee surgeries will affect his mobility, but his movement has been solid. Against Istomin, he defended well into both corners and he remained extremely agile in the drop shot exchanges close to the net. Towards the end of the third set, Federer chased down a drop shot and then lob before attempting an exhibi-



tion-style tweener. He very nearly went viral in his first grand slam match back. In his press conference in the evening, Federer concluded by noting that one of his obstacles right now is as simple as growing accustomed to the minutiae of competition once more: "I think getting used

to tournament and match rhythm again, the whole thing with the towels there, the shot clock there, everything that goes with it," he said. "I don't know, I really felt like I didn't find the rhythm. I think the biggest difference for me was in Geneva, now looking back, is that I feel like you play a lot of points very quickly. I think that's what got me at the end. I rarely took the extra two, three, four, five seconds I usually take by getting the towel or waiting for the crowd." Federer will face former US Open champion Marin Cilic in the second round, a match-up that last took place in the 2018 Australian Open final. Meanwhile, second seed Daniil Medvedev won his first ever match at Roland Garros with a comfortable 6-3 6-3 7-5 victory over Alexander Bublik. Medvedev, who is well known for his intense, vocal dislike of clay, described his prospects in far more positive terms and compared the conditions to hard courts. "I feel really hopeful," he said. "As I say, you could see it today in the match, I'm feeling that here, at least this year with this weather, with these balls, I can play like on hard courts.

which makes the Cup Noodle range of instant ramen, said it hoped she would make a speedy recovery. "Above everything else, we wish for Ms Naomi Osaka's quickest recovery and hope she will continue to perform well." Nike praised Osaka's courage in sharing her experience of depression, while Mastercard said: "Naomi Osaka's decision reminds us all how important it is to prioritise personal health and wellbeing." The Japanese carmaker Nissan said it stood in solidarity with its brand ambassador. Fellow Japanese players had mixed feelings about Osaka's decision. Misaki Doi said she had been "surprised" by Osaka's withdrawal. "I can't imagine what she's been going through, but I hope she doesn't regret her decision," Doi told reporters after making an early exit in the women's singles. Doi conceded that attending press conferences after a defeat could be "unpleasant", but added that they helped draw a line under a match and that she considered interacting with reporters part of her job. "It's sad to see Naomi-chan withdraw," said Yoshihito Nishioka, who won his opening match in the men's singles. "I wanted to see her compete despite the hardships involved. "Reaction in the wider tennis community has been mixed, but Sloane Stephens, the American former US Open champion and WTA Players' Council member, voiced support for Osaka, saying she should be applauded for speaking out about her

Venus revealed how she dealt with the pressures of press conferences. "For me personally how I deal with it was that I know every single person asking me a question can't play as well as I can and never will," she said. "So no matter what you say or what you write, you'll never light a candle to me. That's how I deal with it. But each person deals with it differently. "Martina Navratilova, an 18-times grand slam champion, said the situation had made her "so sad", but added that the issue was about more than attending post-match media calls. "I truly hope she will be OK," Navratilova wrote. "As athletes we are taught to take care of our body, and perhaps the mental and emotional aspect gets short shrift. This is about more than doing or not doing a press conference. "People in Japan, where Osaka's phenomenal rise has prompted a discussion on Japanese identity, said the tennis star had revealed the unseen psychological toll competing in sport at the highest level can take on athletes. "I think she's under a lot of pressure, more than we can imagine," Tomomi Noguchi, a kimono dresser in Tokyo, said of Osaka, who was 20 when she beat Williams. "She got to the top when she was young so I think we can't really imagine what she's going through. "Vickie Skorji, who manages TELL, a non-profit counselling service in Japan, said society needed to be "more respectful and supportive" of mental health issues.

**The bond of love and devotion.**

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