

The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

Vol. No. VI ■ Issue No. 91 ■ RNI-ASSENG/2014/58385 | GUWAHATI ■ MONDAY ■ MAY 17, 2021 | PAGES 8 ■ PRICE RS. 7.00



Dua Lipa reminds fans of the thrills of live music

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Supermarket flyover

Guwahati, May 16 : Assam chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday directed the public works department (PWD) to complete the Supermarket flyover in Guwahati by September 30. At a meeting held with PWD officials, CM Sarma reviewed the status of ongoing flyover construction in Guwahati. He directed the department to expedite the construction of all the flyovers in the city. He held a meeting with PWD and reviewed the status of ongoing flyover construction in Guwahati. He directed completion of Supermarket flyover by Sept 30 and expeditious construction of all other ongoing flyovers.

HS TET results

Guwahati, May 16 : Results of Assam Higer Secondary Teachers Eligibility Test (HS) will be declared within next week. Education minister Dr Ranaj Pegu on Sunday said the results would be out soon. On the other hand, Pegu met Board of Secondary Education (SEBA) chairman and secretary to discuss the future course of action on High School Leaving Certificate (HSLC) examinations.

Covid restrictions

Chandigarh, May 16 : The Punjab government on Sunday extended all the existing Covid restrictions in the state till May 31, amid a high positivity and fatality rate due to the disease. The announcement in this regard was made by Chief Minister Amarinder Singh. He also gave directions for strict enforcement of all the curbs.

Tornadoes in China

Beijing, May 16 : Two tornadoes ripped through China's central city of Wuhan and a town in the eastern province of Jiangsu, killing 12 people and injuring hundreds while destroying homes and property, the official Xinhua news agency said on Saturday. Eight people were reported dead in Wuhan, in Hubei province, with 280 injured after Friday's tornado ripped through the district of Caidian at 8:39 p.m., the agency said. The tornado toppled 27 houses and damaged 130 more, as well as two tower cranes and 8,000 sq. m. (86,111 sq. ft) of sheds at construction sites, it added. "I've grown up in Wuhan and I've never seen anything like it," one resident of the city posted on China's Weibo app. "There's been so much extreme weather recently."

CM Sarma reviews prevailing COVID situation with DCs, SPs, Joint Directors of Health through video conference

CM asks DCs to undertake visits to hospitals, Asks SPs to enforce complete adherence of COVID protocols in containment zones



Guwahati, May 16 : In view of the rising cases of the COVID 19 pandemic and its cascading effect on Assam, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma asked the Superintendents of Police in the district to sternly enforce the preventive directives at the containment zones to reverse the surging trends of the pandemic. In a video conference

held at the conference room of the Chief Minister's Office in Janata Bhawan here today with the Deputy Commissioners, Superintendents of Police and Joint Directors of Health, Chief Minister Sarma said that an exhaustive compliance of preventive measures meant for the containment zones would go a long way in strengthening the con-

tainment of the spread of COVID 19 pandemic. He, therefore, asked the Superintendents of Police to enforce the directives at the containment zones declared in several parts of the state. Chief Minister Sarma also asked the Deputy Commissioners of the districts to ensure delivery of critical care treatment to the COVID patients during odd hours in their respective districts. He also asked them to visit Medical College Hospitals and Civil Hospitals at their respective jurisdictions. Chief Minister Sarma also asked the DCs to fix responsibility on an ADC to oversee the vaccination drives undertaken in the districts. The ADCs should study and recommend the mea-

asures to be taken up to step up vaccinations in the districts. Chief Minister Sarma also directed the SPs to ask the officers in charge of their respective police stations to make a visit to the vaccination centres to ensure proper disciplines including adherence to COVID appropriate behaviour at the centres. Chief Minister Sarma also asked the DCs to do the arrangements of conveyance for **Contd...Page 6**

Three more firms get the nod to produce Covaxin

New Delhi, May 16 : In addition to three public sector enterprises (PSEs) that signed pacts with Bharat Biotech to produce Covaxin, three more Ahmedabad-based firms — including State-owned Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre — will produce the Covid-19 vaccine in the country, an official statement said on Saturday. Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre, Hester Biosciences, and OmniBRx Biotechnologies firmed up discussions with Bharat

Biotech for the Covaxin technology transfer, which would help them produce an additional 20 million doses per month. "Tech-



nology transfer agreements have been finalised with all manufacturers," the statement said. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT), as part of a recently announced **Contd...Page 6**

Containment Zones Withdrawn In Wards 8, 16, 28 in Guwahati

Guwahati, May 16 : Containment zones in Ward no. 8, 16, and 28 in Guwahati have now been withdrawn after a gradual decrease in COVID-19 positivity rate was witnessed during the last two weeks. This was informed via an official order issued by the office of the Deputy Commissioner. The

order however stated that people of the said three wards will need to maintain COVID-19 protocols in a strict manner in order to not spread the virus further. Details of the three wards — WARD 28 Northern Side of Ajanta Path to Basistha Road Junction point, up

to Hatigaon Chariali. Western Side of Basistha Road to Chandan Nagar Road to Tangora Satra Wooden Bridge. Eastern Side of Rukmini Bahini River to NH37 bridge in Basistha Chariali. North of NH37 upto Basistha Road. Eastern Side of Basistha Road upto southeastern extreme boundary of Basistha village of Basistha Road. WARD 16 On the northern side AK Dev Road to Ambari Tinali up to Moraborolu and Lakhara. On the eastern side, Moraborolu up to glass factory to Lakhara road, the eastern side of Lakhara road to Dhuboria road. On the southern side, Lakhara to Dhuboria road from bye lane 2 up to Moraborolu. On the western side, Moraborolu to bye lane **Contd...Page 6**



Chief Minister Sarma visits GMCH at 2.30 am to oversee delivery of critical care facilities at odd hours

Thanks doctors, nurses and paramedics over delivery of critical care treatment

Guwahati, May 16 : Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma made a visit to Guwahati Medical College and Hospital late mid night on Sunday to oversee the delivery of critical care facilities at odd hours and treatment facilities meted out to critical COVID patients at the hospital. In view of the COVID 19 pandemic taking a serious turn with more and more positive people are needing institutional treatment, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma paid a visit to the emergency ward of GMCH at 2.30 am to see how COVID patients are being given treatment especially

the critical care management for COVID patients. The Chief Minister however, expressed satisfaction over **Contd...Page 6**



Covishield second dose appointment booked already won't be cancelled : Govt

New Delhi, May 16 : Online appointments, already booked for the second dose of the Covishield vaccine, will remain valid and the same will not be cancelled on Co-WIN

platform, the Union health ministry on Sunday said. Requisite changes, however, have now been done in the Co-WIN digital portal, as a result of which further online or on-site appointment booking will not be possible if the period after the first dose date for a beneficiary is less than 84 days. "Already booked online appointments for the second dose

will remain valid and are not being cancelled by Co-WIN. Beneficiaries may be advised through suitable IEC that they should re-schedule their appointments for a later date beyond the 84th day from the date of first dose vaccination," a notification by health ministry released on Sunday read. As for pre-booked beneficiary who has already **Contd...Page 6**



MP Rajeev Satav Dies of Covid Related Complications

New Delhi, May 16 : Senior Congress leader and MP Rajeev Satav on Sunday in Pune this morning, days after recovering from coronavirus infection. "It's a big loss for us all," Rahul Gandhi tweeted, addressing Mr Satav as "my



friend" who embodied the ideals of the Congress. "I'm very sad at the loss of my friend Rajeev Satav," Gandhi, who was close to Mr Satav, tweeted. "Rajeev Satav became RT-PCR swab negative on May 9,

2021. However, after a prolonged illness he succumbed to secondary pneumonia with multi-organ dysfunction on May 16 at 4:58 am," Jehangir hospital, where the Congress leader was admitted, said in a statement. The 46-year-old Congress leader was in critical condition after he was diagnosed with a new viral infection. "Rajiv Satav was on the path of recovery, but his health deteriorated again and he is now critical. The doctors found he has Cytomegalovirus infection," Mr Tope was quoted as saying by news agency PTI on Saturday. Satav, who hailed from Maharashtra, was in charge of the party's affairs in **Contd...Page 6**

Cyclone Tauktae to bring light thunderstorms, rain over coastal Gujarat, Claims 4 Lives

New Delhi, May 16 : The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Sunday (May 16) predicted light to moderate rain over isolated places in Gujarat's Sabarkantha, Aravalli, Narmada, Tapi, Surat, Bharuch, Dang and Dahod. The downpour will be accompanied by light thunderstorms with lightning and surface wind 30-40 kmph (in gust). The predicted weather is very likely to occur during the next three hours, as per the weather department. The IMD reported that

heavy to very heavy rainfalls over parts of Gujarat will occur on May 17. "Heavy to very heavy falls with extremely heavy falls at isolated places very likely over Saurashtra and Kutch, Diu and south Gujarat region on 17th and heavy to very heavy falls at a few places with extremely heavy falls (>= 20 cm)," tweeted IMD. In a series of tweets, the IMD advised fishermen not to venture into the Arabian sea off Gujarat coast till May 18. "Fishermen are advised not to venture into

Eastcentral Arabian Sea along & off Karnataka coast till 17th Morning and into Eastcentral Arabian Sea and along & off Maharashtra-Goa coasts and into North-east Arabian Sea along & off Gujarat coast till 18th May." Meanwhile, the National Disaster Rescue Force (NDRF) has deployed a total of 101 teams across the states that will most

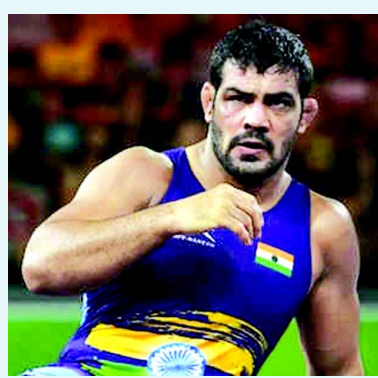


likely be affected due to cyclone Tauktae. As many as 79 teams, along with 22 on standby have been deployed. **Contd...Page 6**

Non-Bailable Warrant Against Wrestler Sushil Kumar, 6 Others

New Delhi, May 16 : A Delhi Court on Saturday issued non-bailable warrants against two-time Olympic medalist Sushil Kumar and six others in connection with the Chhatrasal Stadium brawl that led to the death of a wrestler here, police said. This comes days after a lookout notice was issued against Kumar in the same case. A senior police officer said, "We moved an application before the court to issue non-bailable warrant (NBW) against wrestler Sushil Kumar and six others in the case and as per request, the application was approved and accord-

ingly NBWs have been issued against them." The police have already recorded the statements of the victims allegedly involved in



the brawl. The clash had taken place over vacating a flat in the Model Town area, police said. Kumar, who has been named in the FIR, is on the run, and efforts are on to trace him, a senior officer had said earlier, adding that raids were being conducted in the Delhi-NCR region and neighbouring states to nab him. The victims alleged that Kumar was present at the spot when the clash took place, he had said. The wrestler who died was 23 years old. He and two of his friends were brutally assaulted allegedly by other wrestlers inside the

Chhatrasal Stadium in the northern part of the city last Tuesday night. According to the police, the brawl involved Kumar, Ajay, Prince Dalal, Sonu, Sagar, Amit and others. A case was registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Arms Act at the Model Town Police Station. Dalal (24), a resident of Jhajjar in Haryana, was held in the case, police had said. Kumar, who has been named in the FIR, is on the run, and efforts are on to trace him, a senior officer had said earlier, adding that raids were being conducted **Contd...Page 6**

'Arrest Me Too': Rahul Gandhi challenges over arrests on posters critical of PM Narendra Modi

New Delhi, May 16 : Congress leader Rahul Gandhi once again slammed the Centre over the recent arrests of several people on the allegation of putting up posters critical of the Prime



Minister Narendra Modi's Vaccine Maitri mission. Taking to microblogging site Twitter, Gandhi wrote "Arrest me too" with a picture of the poster and also changed **Contd...Page 6**

Less of the backstory, Angela Rayner, it's beginning to wear a bit thin

Labour's deputy leader, Angela Rayner, resting on her working-class laurels rather too much? She emerged triumphant from the recent by-election/reshuffle not only having avoided being demoted by Keir Starmer, but gaining more positions and power, with some claiming that she could win a leadership contest. Really? I've found Rayner's behaviour snaky; if she'd thrown Starmer under the bus any harder, he'd be scrubbing tyre marks off the front of his shirt. It's also said she's been briefing against him. Still, that's politics. Why shouldn't she be ambitious, even ruthless? But there's another big problem with Rayner: the relentless pushing of her backstory. She is hardly alone in this: I'm no slouch when it comes to flashing my own working-class origins and impeccable council-house credentials.

Westminster is important; the insights gained from experience are hugely valuable. Still, Rayner doesn't half bang on about it or let others do it for her. If you believe the hype, she's everything from streetwise Boudicca to factional Labour's all-healing queen to a veritable red-wal whisperer. It has reached the point where I wonder whether people, by whom I mean overawed, middle-class politicians, have been cowed into unquestioningly gulping down Rayner's self-mythology or whether she herself feels that her righteous background makes her untouchable. That could be a dangerously overplayed hand: a working-class background doesn't set Rayner apart (Starmer is also of humble stock). It doesn't (or shouldn't) give her a magic pass within the Labour party.

people who are reliably underwhelmed by a "working class" origin story are... working-class people! It's highly patronising to presume that this is all it takes to get their attention or their vote. Working-class people are like everybody else - they want credible, workable policies that benefit them. Stuff your backstory. The only people who lap that up are the middle classes or soppy former council-house brats like me. Rayner prides herself on being a straight talker, so she'll appreciate me speaking frankly. Whatever the short-term gains, and desirable, despite the whooping of her fan club, recent events outed her as untrustworthy and slippery, someone caught red-handed playing both sides who managed to bluster her way out of it. Likewise, if a chippy sort like me has wearied of her posturing, so, presumably, have others. Class credibility is always valid, but as a starting point. Sooner or later, the question will always be: what else have you got? Prince Harry: 'Is he ever going to find work where His Royal Highness isn't the post-royal moneyspinner?' Oh, that it has come to this. As someone who felt genuine sympathy for Meghan and Harry - and I still do, in some ways - it becomes increasingly difficult to defend them as they sink ever deeper into the bubbling Californian quagmire of therapy-speak. Harry's latest podcast outburst, talking to actor Dax Shepherd, was a toecurler. Apparently, Meghan got him into therapy. Gosh, really - not Princess Anne then? He's broken the cycle of "genetic pain and suffering". Eh? He says "there is no blame", but then says that his parents and grandparents suffered first

Barbara Ellen



And Rayner's story is powerful: she left school at 16, pregnant, without qualifications, becoming a social care worker and union rep, before entering politics. Impressive. Working-class visibility in

Most importantly, it doesn't mystically endow a politician with vision, ability or a hotline to working people. Rayner is so deep into her "Angie from the block" shtick that she has forgotten that the only

The Green party can show Labour how to connect with its former heartlands

In the week before the Hartlepool by-election, a still loyal Labour voter gave a bleak assessment of her hometown to a reporter from the Financial Times. "We are at the arse-end of the world, just a sprawling housing estate. We don't really make anything any more." The floppy union jack hanging outside Labour's Hartlepool HQ at the insistence of Keir Starmer's London-based team turned out to confirm, rather than refute, that verdict. In the absence of making things, Labour tried to make meaning through the display of empty symbols and lost, catastrophically. But there's another way to create something meaningful: by building relationships. This is where, away from the by-election media frenzy, the Green party excelled in some of last week's other elections for local councils in England. You don't get Green candidates sweeping into towns every few years promising to keep factories open and restore lost trades. What they do ask is how they can help to make the place you live in better. In Birkenhead, Wirral, where shipbuilding employed 16,000 in the 1950s, and whose last remaining shipyard, Cammell Laird, has just announced more than 140 redundancies, the Greens won three seats that had predominantly been Labour. Though Birkenhead stayed loyal to Labour in 2019, the area may seem ripe to go the same way as former Labour heartland seats captured by the Conservatives in the last general election. It is largely working class and ex-industrial, with an older, whiter population than the national average. But Wirral's new councillors, Harry Gorman, Emily Gleaves and Jason Peter Walsh, won their seats on a massive green-ward, not rightward, swing from Labour. The Greens are changing tack at a council level, seeking to campaign less on the wider issue of climate emergency and instead focusing heavily on people's local environments and day-to-day needs around housing,

transport and community spaces. In the past 10 years, the party has targeted and won council seats in poorer areas, often on peripheral estates where the epithet "left behind" can easily be replaced by "segregated by class". Chelmsley Wood, the large outer Birmingham estate where I grew up and went to school, went from having one BNP and two Labour members on Solihull council in 2006 to three Green councillors in less than a decade. The election of a BNP councillor on a very low turnout back then should have been the cause of great angst for its remaining Labour representatives, says Chris Williams, a former Solihull councillor who has just become the Green party's national head of elections. "It's like with Hartlepool," he told me this week. "You thought, would it be the piercing pain that forced [Labour to] change? The Greens in Solihull, rather than wait

Lynsey Hanley

for Labour to jump into action against the BNP after 2006, started door-knocking intensively, asking people what they needed help with and how they would like to see the estate improve. In a borough cleaved sharply by class and income, housing quickly became central to their efforts. About 60% of social housing tenants in Solihull live in the north of the borough, with a high proportion of the remainder either right-to-buy leaseholders or people privately renting ex-council homes. Not only was the BNP councillor ejected after one term, the Greens now hold nearly all the council seats in north Solihull:



having gained one seat last week, it is the second largest party on the council behind the Tories. Labour, meanwhile, languishes in fourth place with just two seats. "The feeling on the ground was that over the past two or three decades, people were having things done to them," says Williams. "They kept being told [by Labour]: 'We know what's good for you,' rather than listening and engaging. The whole 'take back control' slogan of the leave campaign was exactly what people wanted to hear." Indeed: 72.4% of voters in Williams's Chelmsley Wood ward voted to leave the EU in 2016. While lack of affordable housing is by far the most pressing problem for constituents, other salient issues include bus routes - 43% of people in the Chelmsley Wood ward have no access to a car, compared to 6% in Blythe, on the richer side of Solihull - traffic congestion, noise and air pollution from off-road bikes, fly-tipping and the protection of green spaces. At the risk of stating the obvious, all of these are local issues with a much wider environmental, economic and social resonance. The cost of leaving them unaddressed, or batted away as if the environment is something you have done to you rather than live in and with, is the pollution of democracy itself. By 2010, Chelmsley Wood had voted out the BNP. But the question remains: had the Solihull Greens not bothered to campaign on the estate, would the BNP's win have been followed by Ukip and then - once unthinkable - the Tories? The BNP made use of revanchist and resentful emotions in the mid-2000s when it identified that cynicism, for a small but growing group of people, was a vote-winner. The Tories, more recently, have given a gloss of respectability to that formula, in a way only they can manage. Give Starmer a union flag and he looks like a parody. Give Priti Patel one and she seems to some like a defender of the realm.

My pandemic comfort? Google reviews. They can be as compelling as any TV drama

Human connection can often be found where you least expect it. Google Maps, started as a straightforward navigation tool, has become in recent years an unlikely treasure trove of humour and intrigue. With many businesses in my area closed for much of the pandemic, I took to exploring them through the reviews that others had left online. I have traversed foreign cities from my sofa, idly dreaming of future holidays via a one-line description of the perfect snack bar. From reviews of a local bistro to the dry cleaner, I have stumbled on snatches of city life that seem as compelling as any sitcom. Entire sagas are played out in a few sentences, and I have read elaborate tales of love, fights, breakups and makeups. "The owners created a drama around them, and chose us to express all their violence," begins one particularly ominous review of a bar, which ends with: "We spent the night in hospital and my friend had to get surgery to fix his nose." Some reviewers hold businesses to impossible standards. Common complaints include not being allowed in without a reservation on a busy night, brisk service from overworked staff, and even not being able to find the venue. Luckily, it's not just the patrons who get the chance to express themselves. Proprietors can respond with their side of the story, too. One employee is unapologetic in a succinct reply to an unfavourable assessment

flection on the community spirit of the neighbourhood, with particular reference to another former regular of the shop - my mum, whose funeral he presided over four years ago. It was an unexpected connection that brought me close to tears. Since then I have written reviews for several of my favourite spots both near and far, short treatises that are as casually hyperbolic as they are genuinely emotional. I hope that these offer some small support to the businesses that have suffered most during the pandemic, when the precarious nature of our relationship with them has never been clearer. It is now rare to find a business that is not listed on Google Maps, a darker sign of just how entangled the US company has become with every step we take out in the real world. The reputations of small, family-run businesses are on the line, while their numerous critics are largely invisible and unaccountable. Google has often portrayed itself as a friend to small businesses, offering them the tools to reach new patrons, but the balance of power is starkly tipped only one way. An article in style magazine the Cut last month described how New Yorkers have been championing their own neighbourhood joints by buying and wearing branded souvenirs and merchandise from diners and bodegas (the city's equivalent of corner shops) alike. Since the pandemic began, the writer argues, these items have gone

Louise Benson



of their service: "I'm like a mirror, you get what you give." Another states: "You have one review on your account; my conclusion is you are a stingy git", along with the advice to "get your tastebuds tested". Owners often give lengthy explanations in their own defence or profusely thank those who have left positive feedback, a reminder of the power that these reviews can have. In the last year I have chatted with the three brothers who run my local corner shop in Hoxton Street, east London, more regularly than I have any family member or friend. Their shop was the first business that I took the step of reviewing myself on Google Maps, a glowing assessment of both their tinned goods and welcoming manner. More recently I returned to my review and discovered that the local vicar had responded with a poignant re-

from fashion statement to something more political - "wearing the shirt may mean saving that bar". I feel similarly about Google Maps reviews, which perform a function that is both practical and symbolic. I know there are others like me out there. I can see them in the hundreds of reviews posted each day. There is something vaguely embarrassing about the online versions of ourselves not intended for those who know us, away from the curated feeds of social media. Like eBay seller listings, Gumtree ads or posts on Nextdoor, I write my reviews with the freedom that comes with relative anonymity. I enjoy the fact that even the owner of a business with whom I exchange pleasantries on a daily basis will probably never know it was me. More than a transaction, these reviews speak of the chance encounters and fleeting intimacies of our daily lives.

Dua Lipa reminds fans of the thrills of live music

Usually, I find the Brit awards to be as dry as a mouthful of oatcakes, but this year's postponed ceremony seemed fresher than in recent years, working within the disruptions caused by the pandemic to put on a more creative, exuberant evening. Following a couple of closely monitored trials, it was one of the first landmark music events to have welcomed back an audience, of 4,000 people, mostly key workers, all extremely up for it. There was a split second when the excitement of a crowd simply being there gave me goosebumps. Some of the performances were videos broadcast into the O2 Arena - the Weeknd sang in a stormy box, while Coldplay appeared with holographic backing dancers on a pontoon on the Thames, just outside - and I thought reigning queen Dua Lipa might be performing via video, too. She started a medley of hits from this year's certified best album, Future Nostalgia, with a prerecorded clip of her singing on the tube (I moved away from London almost a year ago, but I know its spirit will never leave me, because my first reaction was an instinctive irritation that it might delay the service). As the doors opened, she burst on to the stage, into a skeleton of a tube carriage, in person, right there. The performance was astonishing and left no one in doubt as to why Dua Lipa has so dominated pop music over the past 18 months. It was the moment she first appeared, in her union jack skirt and jacket, that got me, because of the roar of the crowd. It was communal, thrilling and it made me pine to be watching live music again. The tentative possibility of going to a local venue to see a show is moving closer, but the

nerves of the live music industry are jangling and the government is doing little to soothe them. The Association of Independent Festivals has issued a red alert, warning that 76% of festivals scheduled to take place in July and August this year - and that is just the festivals still hoping to go ahead, after many said they couldn't risk it - could be cancelled without urgent intervention. They need a safety net of insurance, in case of unexpected Covid-related issues. But last week, the culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, said that any government-backed insurance scheme would only be

Rebecca Nicholson

considered after 21 June, which is a bit like opening the bar after everyone has gone home. The British entertainment industry is lucrative, but once again, despite the vast number of jobs and huge income it generates, music is being ghosted. Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck have been photographed together on what was reported to be a "romantic skiing holiday" (an oxymoron: I have never been skiing, but I doubt that anything involving an item of clothing called salopettes encourages sexual frisson), while one of the most awaited television events of recent years is a new episode of Friends.

We just need to bring back jeans the width of a house and Body Shop Ananya lotion and it will be as if the last 20 years never happened. A longing for more simple times may be why the Friends obsession has endured. Last week saw the release of a teaser clip for The One Where They Get Back Together, a reunion special this month, with the actors appearing as themselves and featuring other actors who played characters on the show, also as themselves and, oddly, Malala Yousafzai and David Beckham, set to a slowed-down, melancholy version of I'll Be There For You, which makes it look a bit like the in memoriam segment at an awards ceremony. "Could we BE any more excited?!" asked Jennifer Aniston, posting the clip, to which the obvious response is, well, probably a bit more, yes. Ellen DeGeneres's talkshow will end after its 19th season, but emphatically not, she says, because of the BuzzFeed exposé about the production having a "toxic workplace culture", tumbling ratings or that many celebrities seem about as keen to appear as they would be to make a sequel to Gal Gadot and pals' cover of Imagine. "When you're a creative person, you constantly need to be challenged, and as great as this show is, and, as fun as it is, it's just not a challenge any more," DeGeneres told the Hollywood Reporter. At first, that sounds like "it's not you, it's me", but it is also suspiciously close to "it's not me, it's you". DeGeneres's brand was built, famously, on her "be kind" slogan, which, as many have noted, seems at odds with her penchant for practical jokes that involve scaring the life out of people or the hidden camera tests to see if people could behave decently.



Cyclone Tauktae : States brace for very severe cyclonic storm

Kochi, May 16: Cyclone Tauktae has intensified into a very severe cyclonic storm on Sunday, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. The weather office also warned that Tauktae is "very likely to intensify further" during the next 12

hours and may cross Gujarat coast between Porbandar and Mahuva in Bhavnagar district on Tuesday morning. Though the cyclonic storm is heading towards the coast of Gujarat, it is causing continuous downpour and gusty winds in Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra. An orange alert has been sounded in three districts of Kerala—Malappuram, Ernakulam and Idukki and a yellow alert in all other



districts. IMD has said that the state will receive isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall even as Tauktae moves further north in the Arabian Sea. It has also warned of rough seas and thunderstorms in the state in coming hours and urged the public to

exercise caution. The Kerala State Disaster Management Authority has instructed fisherfolk not to venture into sea till further notice. IMD has also informed that the effects of Tauktae will be felt in Kerala for next 24 hours. Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan took to Twitter and said, "According to @Indiametdept #Tauktae's effects will be felt in Kerala for another 24 hours. Average rainfall over the last 2 days is

145.5mm. 200mm+ rain in Kochi, Peermade stations. Those on river banks should be cautious, especially along Manimala and Achankovil". He also asked those being moved to relief camps to carry masks, sanitizer, medicines, prescriptions, certificates and important documents. Torrential rains along with fierce winds and high tidal waves wreaked havoc in the state for the past few days. All districts experienced very heavy rainfall. Many low-lying areas and roads were inundated. Several houses were partially or fully damaged and many trees were uprooted. Power lines were found snapped in various parts. Relief camps were set up across the state. In Karnataka, four people were killed and 73 villages in six districts — three coastal and three in hilly regions of the Western Ghats — were destroyed due to Cyclone Tauktae. Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa stated the situation is being closely monitored and rescue and relief operations are ensured. Maharashtra is another state that has been affected by Cyclone Tauktae. Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray is meeting Union Home Minister Amit Shah to discuss the state's preparedness for the cyclone. The state is expected to witness heavy rainfall later in the

day. Mumbai civic body has decided to shift as many as 580 patients from three Covid care facilities as a precautionary measure. The cyclonic storm also hit the coastal areas of Goa on Sunday morning. Heavy wind and rain have caused severe damage in Panaji. Roads have been blocked due to uprooting of trees. Compound walls and several vehicles were damaged after trees fell on them. Goa is likely to witness heavy downpour for the rest of the day. Cyclone Tauktae is expected to make a landfall over the Gujarat coast in the early hours of Tuesday. It will cross between Porbandar and Mahuva in the Bhavnagar district. According to IMD, after landfall, Cyclone Tauktae will weaken rapidly and travel inland north-eastwards. However, along the course, substantial rainfall will be experienced across north India. The remnants of the storm will cause rains in Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana and Uttarakhand until Thursday. In the wake of the cyclonic storm, Indian Railways has cancelled or short terminated some trains. Fishing operations have been totally suspended over east central and adjoining southeast Arabian Sea and along and off Kerala-Karnataka-Goa-Maharashtra coasts.

Woman gang-raped by 25 men after being lured into forest by Facebook friend

Gurugram, May 16: A woman from Delhi was allegedly lured into a forest by her Facebook friend and was gang-raped by 25 men

named Sagar on Facebook in January this year and the two exchanged phone numbers. The woman started speaking to Sagar

on her and took turns to rape her. The next day, the woman was taken to a scrap dealer named Akash. At this spot, the woman was



through the night and morning on May 3. The woman approached the cops 9 days after the incident took place when she eventually gathered the strength to narrate her ordeal. The woman, who works as a domestic staffer in Delhi, started living in the capital around four years ago. The woman met a man

on the phone and the two struck a friendship. After some time, Sagar allegedly proposed marriage to the woman and offered to introduce her to his parents. The 23-year-old man then asked the woman to come to Hodal where she could meet his parents directly. On May 3, the woman travelled to Hodal and met the 23-year-old man. Instead of taking the woman to meet his parents, Sagar took her to a forest in Ramgarh village. Sagar's brother and a group of his friends were consuming liquor near a tubewell in the forest. The Times of India reported. When the woman reached the spot, the accused allegedly pounced

allegedly raped by five men. When the woman's condition deteriorated after repeated sexual assault, the five accused dumped her near the Badarpur border and escaped. On May 12, the woman went to the Hassanpur police station and lodged a complaint against the accused. The woman told the police that there was a delay in filing a complaint as the woman was sick. SHO Rajesh said that they arrested Sagar on Friday and efforts are underway to nab the others. A case was registered against the accused under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

Liz Cheney regrets vote for Trump but won't say she'll leave Republican party

London, May 16: Liz Cheney has become the figurehead of the Never Trumpers, Republicans seeking to loosen the former president's grip on their party, but the Wyoming congresswoman was for him in the last election. Newly removed from Republican House leadership, Cheney spoke to ABC's This Week in an interview to be broadcast in full on Sunday. Asked if she regretted it, she said: "I was never going to support Joe Biden and I do regret the vote. I think that it was based on policy, based on sort of substance and what I know in terms of the kinds of policies [Trump] put forward that were good for the country. But that I think it is fair to say I regret the vote." Cheney came out against Trump after the deadly attack on the US Capitol on 6 January, by supporters he told to "fight like hell" in service of his lie that his conclusive defeat by Joe Biden was the result of mass electoral fraud. Most of the congressional GOP has stayed behind Trump but Cheney was one of 10 Republicans in the House to vote for his impeachment, on a charge of inciting an

Utah senator and 2012 nominee Mitt Romney; or simply acquiescent. Trump remains excluded from social media over his role in the Capitol riot but on Saturday he issued statements replete with rants about supposed electoral fraud and "crooked, disgusting, and very dishonest media outlets". In one, he called McConnell a "weak and pathetic leader". On ABC, interviewer Jonathan Karl also asked if Cheney would stay in her party should Trump decide to run for president again — as he has hinted he might — and then win the nomination in 2024. "I will do everything that I can to make sure he's not the nominee," Cheney said. "And, you know everything necessary to make sure that he never gets anywhere close to the Oval Office again." But, Karl repeated, would she remain in the party if Trump were the nominee? "I will not support him," said Cheney. "And we'll do everything I can to make sure that doesn't happen." Some Republicans outside Congress have mooted the formation of a new conservative party. Most observers think such a move unlikely to succeed. Nonetheless the brewing



insurrection. Trump was acquitted at trial after only seven Republican senators could be persuaded to follow suit. Cheney also told ABC that Kevin McCarthy, the House minority leader, should either voluntarily testify before any 6 January commission about his conversation with Trump as the attack happened, or be compelled to do so. Cheney is a staunch conservative and a daughter of Dick Cheney, a former congressman, secretary of defense and vice-president. As such she is a member of a party establishment either beaten into near-silence by Trump's harangues, like Senate minority leader Mitch McConnell; vilified by Trump's supporters, like

civil war in Republican ranks was set to dominate the US political talk shows on Sunday. Cheney was also due to be interviewed on Fox News Sunday. Another anti-Trump House Republican, Adam Kinzinger of Illinois, was booked by NBC's Meet the Press. NBC also booked the Texas representative Dan Crenshaw, a Trump loyalist. CBS's Face the Nation was due to feature Joni Ernst of Iowa, the only woman in Republican Senate leadership, who this week criticised the House GOP for "cancelling" Cheney. CNN's State of the Union booked Fred Upton, a Michigan representative and moderate who has been close to Biden.

Israel's Netanyahu says Gaza attacks will go on 'as long as necessary'

Gaza, May 16: Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has said attacks on Gaza will continue "as long as necessary", amid continuing hostilities that have so far killed 148 Palestinians and 10 people in Israel. At least three Palestinians were killed in early morning airstrikes, health officials said, and many were injured. The sounds of heavy bombardment were heard through the night. According to photographs

been killed in Gaza — nearly 30% of the death toll — according to officials. On Saturday, Israeli airstrikes on Gaza killed eight young cousins who had gathered to celebrate Eid with their mothers. Hamas and the Islamic Jihad militant group have acknowledged that 20 of their members have been killed since the fighting broke out. Israeli deaths from militants firing close to 3,000 rockets during the same period include



circulated by residents and journalists, the airstrikes created a crater that blocked one of the main roads leading to Shifa, the largest hospital in the Strip. Reported efforts to agree on a temporary ceasefire to allow medics in Gaza to recover people, alive and dead, from under collapsed buildings appeared in doubt. The UN security council was due to hold an emergency meeting later on Sunday to discuss the worst outbreak of violence in years. Diplomacy has so far failed to halt the bloodshed. Hours after Israel bombed a 12-storey building on Saturday that had housed the US news agency Associated Press, Netanyahu said the US president, Joe Biden, had offered his "clear and unequivocal support" during a phone call. The White House said Biden had "reaffirmed his strong support for Israel" to defend itself and also "raised concerns about the safety and security of journalists". Since the violence began on Monday, at least 41 children have

two children. Air defences have intercepted roughly a third of the rockets, Israeli forces have said. Overnight, sirens warning of incoming rocket fire went off in Tel Aviv and its suburbs and in southern Israel. About 10 people were injured while running for shelters, medics said. The country's military said the al-Jala building that it bombed on Saturday, which housed Associated Press and Qatar-based Al Jazeera media operations, was a legitimate target. It said the high-rise contained Hamas military offices, and that it had given warnings to civilians to leave before the attack. Associated Press condemned the attack, and asked Israel to put forward evidence. "We have had no indication Hamas was in the building or active in the building," the news organisation said in a statement. A Palestinian man looks on in disbelief as firefighters search urgently for survivors and bodies under rubble in Gaza City early on Sunday. Late on Saturday, Netanyahu said Israel was

"still in the midst of this operation, it is still not over and this operation will continue as long as necessary". In a burst of airstrikes early on Sunday, Israel targeted the home of Yehya al-Sinwar, Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip, who since 2017 has headed the group's political and military wings in Gaza, Hamas's TV station said. Envoys from the US, UN and Egypt were working to restore calm but had yet to show any signs of progress. The UN secretary general, Antonio Guterres, reminded "all sides that any indiscriminate targeting of civilian and media structures violates international law and must be avoided at all costs". UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Saturday. Hamas began its rocket assault on Monday after weeks of tensions over a court case to evict several Palestinian families in East Jerusalem, and in retaliation for Israeli police clashes with Palestinians near the city's al-Aqsa mosque, Islam's third holiest site, during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Speaking to crowds of protesters in the Qatari capital of Doha, Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh said late on Saturday that the underlying cause of the hostilities was Jerusalem. "The Zionists thought ... they could demolish al-Aqsa mosque. They thought they could displace our people in Sheikh Jarrah," said Haniyeh. "I say to Netanyahu: do not play with fire," he continued, amid cheers from the crowd. "The title of this battle today, the title of the war, and the title of the intifada, is Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Jerusalem." Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other militant groups had fired about 2,300 rockets from Gaza since Monday, the Israeli military said on Saturday. Israel has launched more than 1,000 air and artillery strikes into the densely populated coastal strip, saying they were aimed at Hamas and other militant targets. There has been a flurry of US diplomacy in recent days to try to quell the violence. Biden also spoke with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, late on Saturday and the US envoy Hady Amr was in Israel for talks.

Afghanistan: fighting resumes in south after three-day ceasefire for Eid

Kabul, May 16: Fighting between the Taliban and Afghan government forces has resumed in the southern province of Helmand, officials said, ending a three-day ceasefire agreed by the warring sides to mark the Eid al-Fitr holiday. There were clashes on Sunday on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand, which has seen intense fighting since the United States began its final troop withdrawal from Afghanistan on 1 May, an Afghan military spokesperson and a local official said. "The fighting started early today

morning and is still ongoing," Attaullah Afghan, head of the Helmand provincial council, told . He said Taliban fighters attacked security checkpoints on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah and other districts. An Afghan army spokesperson in the south confirmed fighting had resumed. The three-day truce initiated by the Taliban and swiftly agreed to by the Afghan government had largely held during the Eid holidays that ended last night. Taliban political spokesperson Suhail Shaheen said the negotiating teams of the

government and the Islamic Emirate, as the Taliban refer to their ousted regime, met briefly Saturday in Qatar. They renewed



their commitment to finding a peaceful end to the war and called

for an early start to talks that have been stalled, he said. Despite the ceasefire, at least 12 people were

killed at a mosque outside Kabul on Friday by a bomb blast claimed by the jihadist Islamic State group. ISIS said its fighters had placed an explosive device inside the mosque and detonated it after worshippers arrived to offer prayers on the second day of Eid al-Fitr, the US monitor of jihadist groups,

Site, said late Saturday. The bombing killed the imam of the mosque, who was leading the prayers. ISIS also claimed it blew up several electrical grid stations over the weekend. Before the ceasefire, violence had surged in several provinces of Afghanistan — including former insurgent bastions Helmand and Kandahar. A series of blasts outside a girls' school in Kabul last week killed more than 50 people and wounded scores, most of them female students. The government blamed the Taliban, but the group denied the attack.

THE ASSAM RISING

VOL. NO. VI, ISSUE NO. 91 MONDAY, MAY 17, 2021

The Indian Covid variant

The new variant of the Covid-19 virus first detected in India comes in three forms: B.1.617.1 (abbreviated as variant 1), B.1.617.2 (variant 2) and B.1.617.3 (variant 3). Each of these has a slightly different genetic makeup. The one that is surging in England is variant 2. There is some good news and bad news about this variant, based on the limited data we have available. The good news is that we think it does not contain the 484K/Q mutation that has been linked to some degree of vaccine resistance. So the current AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines should work relatively well against it, and at least protect most of us from severe Covid-19 disease and death. We do not have any evidence of this variant causing more severe disease, either - at the moment. The bad news is that we think all the "Indian variants" contain the L452R mutation, which is also found in the "Californian variant", and which seems to confer some vaccine resistance and possibly more transmissibility. Variant 2 does seem to be spreading quickly in the English population - possibly more quickly than even the existing B.1.1.7 "Kent variant". It also contains a new mutation, and we are not sure what this does yet - it may also be enhancing transmissibility. What does this all mean, as England plans to open up further on 17 May and then 21 June? More data is required from laboratory and real-world population studies but in the meantime, you could think of it like this. Some virologists are fond of using the metaphor of an immunological landscape. Picture a savannah, with grassland, some hills and a mountain in the distance. We are the prey - say, antelopes - while the virus takes the form of predators, like hyenas or lions. If we are non-immune, you could see us as feeding on low-level grasslands. If the virus comes in a more rapidly spreading form (like the Kent or Indian variant), we could imagine this as a faster-moving predator chasing us down. If we are vaccinated with at least one vaccine dose of a fairly effective vaccine (for instance, AstraZeneca or Pfizer) or have natural immunity, we might be standing on hills of different heights, depending on the effectiveness of our protective immune responses (and not everyone will respond to the vaccine). This makes it more difficult, though not impossible, for predators to catch us. This analogy is not exact but may be quite useful at this time, in that not all antelopes chased by these predators will die; in fact, most of the time, the antelopes escape. Most non-immune people in the UK will not be exposed to the virus at this time of low virus prevalence. And where such non-immune cases do get infected, most will only get mild Covid-19 disease (the equivalent of a few scratches and bites). All the Covid-19 vaccines are likely to prevent severe disease and death, though they may not protect you against mild or moderate disease. However, new variants can always appear that may be able to bypass the vaccine or natural immunity barriers - unless we keep readjusting our Covid-19 vaccines (climbing higher hills) to keep out of their reach. How can this analogy help us understand what may happen when we open up further on 17 May, as the Indian variant is surging across some areas of England - and when most under-40s and some over-50s are not yet vaccinated? If the Indian variant really is acting with enhanced transmissibility, then after 17 May we will have cheetahs chasing larger herds of antelopes across the grasslands (that is, non-immune under-40s) as we open up to indoor dining and other activities. Most of these antelopes will escape being eaten, though many will have some scratches and bites as they try to escape (equivalent to mostly self-limiting mild to moderate disease). This may take the form of long Covid, which is a risk unvaccinated young people will need to seriously consider in the coming weeks. Some of these variant 2 cheetahs may have some hill-climbing capability (due to partial vaccine resistance with the L452R mutation), though again, most of the antelopes that are chased on the hills will still escape death, and just sustain some scratches and bites during their escape. At the moment, it is too early to say if any mix-and-match vaccine combinations are so protective that they can put us up on the mountain top - out of reach of most of the current circulating vaccine variants. But clinical trials are continuing, and we may find an optimum combination, at least for a while - until the next variant comes along. What does this mean, practically? Try to accelerate the vaccine programme to give at least one dose of the vaccine to all those who have not yet been vaccinated in the 18- to 50-year age group. Surge testing is unlikely to control this variant 2 virus, so masking and social distancing will need to be continued to reduce the spread of the virus as we improve first-dose vaccine coverage. We know that with any rapidly spreading variant, there will be some more severe cases requiring hospitalisation, so we need to brace NHS teams for this - particularly as they are trying to catch up with all the non-Covid medical backlogs. If we really are following a "data, not dates" approach, unfortunately, we may have to consider delaying the proposed 17 May and 21 June relaxation dates - if the numbers of those requiring hospitalisation for more severe Covid-19 starts to rise too much.

Indian Americans on high alert for news from families about Covid. And then our call came

Attending a cremation on a WhatsApp video call was not a use of the chat service I had ever imagined. I was used to examining technology for its policy, legal and economic aspects, not to mourn someone's death. A move to the United States had meant several things for us, but never had we thought it would include a desperate son watching his PPE-covered mother and sister lighting the pyre of his father back in India. Zoom fatigue of 2020 had been real, but sitting through a havan, a fire ritual, performed 7,000 miles away to pay respects to the soul of my husband's father taught me about a new use of the ubiquitous app. In May, I lost my father-in-law officially to Covid-19, but in reality because of a callous government, malpractice by overworked doctors, and swindlers taking advantage of the pandemic. Crises are clarifying. If this one has taught me anything, it was that you should never be overconfident in your blessings. I had lived through the pandemic in New York City with all the fear, unpredictability, and the sirens of ambulances blaring. I had joined everyone in letting out a collective sigh of relief when the US' vaccine rollout had seen success after success. Enthused by our second shots of the Moderna vaccine, my husband and I spent Wednesday, 29 April, looking at tickets online for that long overdue visit to see our families in India. My father-in-law was eagerly looking forward to this trip with child-like excitement. We were going to have a 75th birthday celebration for him. We, in the Indian-American community, live with the constant fear of that dreaded phone call about the news of a loved one getting infected by or succumbing to Covid-19, worrying whether we will reach in time to say our goodbyes. All of us unwillingly plan for that rushed trip to the airport in our heads. At 1 am EST, that phone call told us that my father-in-law who had been having mild symptoms of Covid-19, after having received one dosage of the Covishield vaccine, had taken a turn for the worse. What followed that call seems like a distant nightmare now. For four days, my husband and I in New York, his brother-in-law in Mumbai, and his sister on ground in Delhi, ran a control room with at least 200 hundred people in our network scrambling for home ICUs, nurses, insulin, oxygen cylinders, concentrators, remdesivir, etc. Once we got these, we moved onto looking for a regular bed in a hospital, then an O2 bed, and then an ICU bed, across Delhi NCR. There was no WhatsApp group, personal or professional network, family or friends that we didn't appeal to. We faced malpractice from doctors who didn't bother to ask about co-morbidities before administering steroids, misinformation, callousness, profiteering, fake medicines, empty cylinders, and red tape at almost every step. We called up every single number forwarded to us as we were left to arrange for everything. The medical infrastructure of India's capital city was overwhelmed. Most relatives or friends could not come to help either out of fear of the disease if they were not already sick, or because the Delhi government had imposed curfew. But we also met our share of good samaritans. Strangers dropping off cylinders, leads being offered for oxygen concentrators, doctors ready to give us a crash course to supervise my father-in-law, and medi-

cines that appeared magically from our network. Thankfully, there was no time to pay attention to our emotions or anxiety. No dystopian novels, Kafka-esque books, historical readings about wars had prepared me for this. The best and the worst of humanity emerged contemporaneously. When a friend helped us get an ICU bed at Medanta - one of the finest hospitals in the country - we all savoured a brief moment of victory as if getting a bed meant we had won the battle of his life. I **Mishi Choudhary** our bit to help, but went to fetch some water and call up my mother-in-law to reassure her of a positive outcome for her husband. I am a good liar, I told myself. I didn't have time to ponder over this statement as my husband, who had been coordinating the hospital admission with his sister, emerged in the bedroom gesturing that he was gone and they were administering CPR. One does not drop things dramatically like in the movies, but one just freezes, momentarily. The moment seems to last forever before the realisation that luxury of freezing isn't available to those who have to figure out death certificates, cremation process, and the ever-important Aadhaar number of that person who is now a 'body'. Hindu custom requires the cremation of the body within 24 hours of death. I have often wondered why can't they embalm the bodies like some Christians do, so as not to deprive loved ones of that last goodbye. Much to the chagrin of my mother, my father and I have often joked about our preferred ways to die, rituals we don't want followed, our favourite water bodies around exotic locations in the world where we want our ashes to be strewn. This is our way of teetering around the difficult conversation about death and normalising it, because we both know in our hearts what such a loss will do to each of us. I don't know what my husband and his father had talked about. But now I was privy to calls in helping figure out gentle ways of breaking the news to his mother, who was herself recovering from Covid-19. Do we know anyone who can help with the cremation process? Will they release his body to the family? What's his grandmother's middle name (for the death certificate)? Can the pandits carry out rituals online? These are the questions we were immediately inundated with. I was angry at the artificial calamity created by the government, but an unusual calm engulfed my husband. He immediately sprung into channeling his energies towards finding families who needed assistance. Currently, there is no dearth of such people. Within an hour of his father's death, he had posted messages about the unused oxygen cylinders we had gathered before he gasped for his last breath, the four out of six remdesivir vials that remained, and the oxygen concentrator that was used but no longer needed. His son wanted to do something, anything. So, he did what his father would have liked - paid his respects by helping save another life. He calmly juggled this while being warned by a grieving mother to not even attempt coming home to a country that had turned into a war zone. Her perspicacity stunned me, her ferocious maternal instinct moved me. He started fielding even more calls of distress and help. You see, now we are experts on how to verify sources for basic medical supplies, we can precisely ask

the right questions before administering dangerous cocktails of steroids to patients with co-morbidities, we have become a repository of valuable information on how to deal with hospital administrators who will take our calls. My husband is not innovating and making new products for his company, but thinking of creative ways to connect doctors in the US with Indian patients. I am not lawyering, but stewing in anger while coordinating things with the family. We do keeps coming. A 34-year-old here, a 55-year-old there, nine-month-old twins who have recovered, and a three-year-old who has not. For months, everyone told my sceptic self to take it easy and not be so cynical about the situation in India. I had been told the country had won the war on the pandemic. My favourite science writer wondered in The New Yorker: "Why does the pandemic seem to be hitting some countries harder than others?". The macho, marketing messiah

helpless. "What is happening in India now is quite similar to what the United States experienced in its coronavirus surges," wrote Nobel prize-winning economists Esther Duflo and Abhijit Banerjee in The New York Times. I want to scream at how wrong they are. New York was a war, but against a virus not against a negligent government that has turned against its own citizens by prioritising electoral victory over people's lives. Excitement used to be my general state of mind, now anger is. When politicians want to tell me there is no shortage of beds, I want to show them my phone that never quietens. When ministers want to counter 'one-sided' narrative in global media about the Indian government's Covid incompetence, I want to bawl and highlight the truth of those who have lost lives, and the dead bodies floating in the rivers. When courts don't grant bail to political prisoners to see their dying fathers, I question my law licence and the defence of the constitutional



who occupies the seat of the Prime Minister of India had boasted about our vaccine diplomacy at Davos, while my parents complained about unavailability of vaccines for their second jab. 'Think positive', most of my Indian friends and family told me. But for me, the crisis was no 'whodunnit'. If you have worked on data, its gathering and verification, like my organisation in India does, it's hard to fully trust what the Indian government's narrative wants you to believe. The Right to Information (RTI) petitions my team was filing, and the information that was being denied, portended a new wave of the pandemic. Visuals of India's assembly election rallies, religious mass gatherings, supported and encouraged by the current leaders, all spoke of super-spreader events. The calls for help for hospital contacts, beds, oxygen that had started in April were turning into an avalanche. The conversations with friends about policy failures conversations had stopped, most were too overwhelmed with grief. I could barely keep my cool, and lost it in an interview about technology companies and their role in the pandemic, while coaxing my family to vaccinate themselves. I have never been in a war, but it feels like several of those I love and care for are in the middle of one while I sit here, fully vaccinated and

and moral values of my country. When profiteers, hoarders, swindlers want to get rich on essential medical supplies, I fight to suppress the criminal thoughts that cross my mind. When the official death count stops at 3,000, I want to show them the grainy video of my father-in-law's cremation ground that looks like a forest fire. When most of India preaches about morality, religious values, my mind can no longer suffer that hypocrisy. Which part of the Hindu religion teaches us that it's okay to callously watch your own people die? When the pharmaceutical companies assisted by economies of the global north tell us it's not about patents, and ask "Who will make these vaccines next time", I want to wait and tell them if we don't stop this, there will be no next time. But my anger, unless channelled towards real change, is of no use to anybody, says my father. The failure that created this apocalypse is not over. The waterfall effect of this crisis still continues, with nearly 4,00,000 officially reported new cases every day. Every death, every theft, every mistake all point towards a warning for the human race - unless all of us are safe, no one is. Last year it was China, then Italy, then New York. Today it is India, Brazil, and if we all don't channel our anger towards some real action, it will be everyone.

Covid-positive and pregnant? The risk to your child is low

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been great concern about how to protect the most vulnerable - particularly newborns. In past pandemics, newborn babies and young people have been at an increased risk of disease and death. This has probably influenced COVID-19 guidelines in hospitals and healthcare systems. A recently published global survey found that newborns were being separated from their mothers in half the world's countries last year as a precautionary measure if the mother had tested positive for COVID-19. Separating a baby from its mother at birth can have negative consequences for the health of both the mother and baby. This must be weighed against the possible benefits of keeping them apart. Yet more than a year into the pandemic, the outcomes for babies born to mothers who have had COVID-19 remain largely unknown and unreported, putting great stress on families and healthcare providers. With this in mind, my colleagues and I - working with the Public Health Agency of Sweden - tried to gain a better understanding of the

potential risks to babies whose mothers tested positive for coronavirus during pregnancy or childbirth. We

were able to do this because, during the pandemic in Sweden, the separation of mothers and infants at birth

has only been practised if either was unwell, with breastfeeding allowed if following strict hygiene procedures. Our study looked at daily reports made to three Swedish registries: the National Quality Register for Pregnancy, the National Quality Register

Mikael Norman

for Neonatal Care, and the Communicable Diseases Register. By cross-referencing these, it was possible to monitor and report outcomes for babies during both the first and second waves of COVID-19. Altogether, we captured the outcomes of 92% of all babies born in Sweden between March 11 2020 and January 31 2021. This accounted for almost 90,000 births, making this one of the largest datasets on this subject to date. We found that 2,323 babies were born during this period to mothers who had tested positive for COVID-19 during pregnancy, with 642 mothers (28%) testing positive at the time of delivery. All babies born to mothers who had tested positive were themselves tested between 12 and 24 hours

after birth. For babies admitted to a neonatal unit, COVID-19 tests were repeated at 48 and 96 hours after birth. Only 21 babies (0.9%) tested positive for COVID-19, most of them without displaying any symptoms. A few babies were treated for reasons other than COVID-19. However, babies born to mothers who had had COVID-19 were more likely to be admitted to neonatal care and to experience respiratory problems. This, though, can be explained by the higher number of preterm births in the COVID-19 group than in the comparison group. We found no direct link between maternal infection and neonatal respiratory infection or pneumonia. That said, our study adds to the evidence that women testing positive for COVID-19 are at increased risk of preterm birth. In our study, 8.8% of women who were COVID-19 positive during pregnancy delivered preterm, compared with 5.5% of those who were COVID-19 negative. We also found that COVID-19 in the mother was not associated with the death of the child. Seven infants born to mothers who had had COVID-19 died, all from causes unre-

lated to COVID-19, with none of these infants testing positive for the disease. There was also no difference in the mortality rate of those babies born to mothers who were COVID-19 positive and COVID-19 negative during pregnancy. Our study, therefore, supports a recommendation that babies born to women who have tested positive for COVID-19 while pregnant or during delivery do not need to be routinely separated from their mothers at birth. Babies are very unlikely to be infected or to suffer ill health as a result of their mother having or having had COVID-19. Our research also showed that breastfeeding seems to be safe: 94% of women in the COVID-19 group were breastfeeding their babies at hospital discharge, with 99% of their infants testing negative. The small number of infants that were infected showed no signs of infection. Although not all countries are like Sweden - there are population differences as well as country-specific differences in healthcare and COVID-19 levels - our work should reassure pregnant women in other countries (and their families) that a coronavirus infection during pregnancy poses a low risk.



Pandemics and their impact on socio-political life and healthcare

Mumbai, May 16: From the Athenian plague (430 BCE), the Antonine 165-180 CE and Justinian plagues (541-542 CE), the bubonic plague of the 14th century, to the Spanish flu outbreak in 1918, the effects and repercussions of pandemics on the various societies have been lasting, sometimes initiating changes in the ways how societies functioned at that time. While significant portions of the population die in pandemics; overall societies don't die; they sur-



live by modifying the existing social norms that help them to cope with the pandemic stress and fight back. The likelihood of pandemics has increased over the last 100 years owing to increased global integration and travel, rapid urbanization, and increased exploitation of the natural environment. Covid-19: As Punjab faces vaccine shortage, state hopes to join Covax facility; Check details Covid-19 Lockdown Kolkata Coronavirus in India Live News: Delhi gov extends Covid-19 lockdown for one more week; PM Modi speaks to CMs of 4 hotspot states Besides the gradual shifts in socio-political narratives, what many nations have experienced during pandemics is the sudden increase in religiousness of a society as a whole, or a gradual switchover from one faith to another. This is primarily because people while trying to understand the unexplainable turn to religion to de-stress in situations that they cannot control or fathom. The change in religions, as

was seen after the Antonine and Justinian plagues, has also occurred because spiritual heads of the new faith have used the weak morale of common people at the time of pandemics as an opportunity to spread their faith. However, these effects are gradual and the changes are often spread over centuries. The almost immediate effect of pandemics is a back-breaking stress on the health systems, while also stressing many other aspects of a

routine care (health workers being diverted to tackle Ebola patients) many patients suffering from malaria, tuberculosis, and AIDS died; adding almost 11000 deaths in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. These additional deaths, indirectly related to the overburdened health care system caused by Ebola, nearly equaled the 11,300 deaths which were caused directly by the Ebola virus in the three aforementioned countries. In the 2009 influenza pandemic, an increasing admission for pneumonia and influenza patients was seen somehow statistically related to a greater number of deaths owing to heart attacks and strokes. While such statistical relations can be made, during an ongoing pandemic it is almost impossible to differentiate between the deaths that are occurring directly due to the pandemic disease and the ones that are indirect casualties of the stressed out healthcare system. Besides the stress of overworked medical staff, another major impact on the health system during a pandemic is the inevitable problem of understaffing and the unavailability of health workers

due to illness and deaths among these people. Being the front line workers providing care to the pandemic victims they face constant exposure to the disease, and for this reason often the fatality rates are high among such health workers. As for example, during the West Africa Ebola outbreak in 2014, Liberia saw the deaths of 8% of their health service providers (doctors and nurses) from Ebola. A study of the history of epidemics and pandemics show that these disease outbreaks have the potential of disturbing the functioning socio-political orders, leading to clashes between citizens and states, disintegration of state capacity, and large-scale population migration and displacement. All of these were seen during the bubonic plague of 1896 that had disastrous effects on the Bombay Presidency. The Assistant Commissioner of Pune, W C Rand, who was at that time tasked with implementing the Epidemic Disease Act of 1897, ini-

tially made genuine efforts to provide relief by setting up quarantine camps and hospitals, while disinfecting plague-affected areas. However, as the situation worsened, he adopted brutal measures, which stripped Indians of their dignity. Rand and his men (young doctors backed by the army and police), would publicly strip men, women and children in order to inspect sensitive body parts like their groins and armpits for signs of the bubonic plague. Infected individuals would be forcibly quarantined or shifted to hospitals. Often buildings, food, clothes and other properties of the affected individuals were ruthlessly burnt and destroyed, without their permission, during the process of disinfection. Additionally many citizens in Bombay refused to believe that they were infected and refused to go to hospitals and quarantine camps. Sometimes, their protestations would cause large-scale chaos. The brutal steps taken by the British administration and the indignities they heaped on the local people led to a build-up of outrage, which soon turned explosive with the added fear of the unknown disease. Once the reality of the plague began to sink in, panic ensued, and thousands fled from Bombay, taking the plague with them. As public outrage grew with each passing day about the indignities, it had far reaching consequences, and in June 1897 Walter Charles Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst (Rand's military escort) were assassinated. In the pre-modern world, pandemics led to powerful socio-political upheavals, which were caused by large number of deaths that resulted in sudden demographic changes. As for example, in America many indigenous tribes and communities were completely wiped out by the introduction of smallpox and other diseases, which led to a complete collapse of the existing indigenous socio-political orders, making them fall easily to the brutal European conquest. When Black Death gripped Europe in 1347, it wiped out almost 50% of the total European population of that time. By the time

the pandemic turned less lethal by the early 1350s, the European socio-political world had changed dramatically. Before the Black Death's arrival Western Europe was an overpopulated feudal society, with cheap labor, serfs who had no freedom and no motivation for improving life qualities or productivity, and a lack of social mobility. However, with large number of deaths, there ensued labour shortages, which made the farmers free from their feudal lords with more power to bargain. The acute labour shortage also led to invention of new technologies among agricultural communities, which helped in increasing productivity to a large extent. Many labor-saving devices were also invented at this time, such as, water pumps, weapons with gunpowder, and the printing press. At this time many farmers moved to towns for better earnings, and entered the trade and commerce world. As they succeeded and became wealthy, a new social class was created, which is now termed as the "middle class." The newly rich middle class in turn became patronages of art, culture, literature, and science, which led to a boom in creativity - an era that is now known in history as the Renaissance. While none of the presented impacts is to prove that the current COVID-19 pandemic will create seismic outcomes, certain lifestyle changes such as social distancing is definitely showing some effects on the existing social norms of human exchanges. Globalisation too is taking a pause, as nations were forced to shut down borders for fear of transmission, and the fear still remains as the second phase is yet to recede. COVID-19 is also breaking down the old established practices of work from offices, which could affect the concept of big cities built around work hubs, large office spaces, public transport systems, etc., in the future. These coupled with the developments on the economic front can perhaps bring about significant changes similar to the ones that transformed the European social picture during the Black Death.

per cent haven't opened fully since the first lockdown. The remaining 50 per cent continue to run in losses and revenues are below 30 per cent of the pre-Covid levels.

Hospitality body FHRAI pleads PM Narendra Modi, others for fiscal measures to avoid 'complete crumble'

Mumbai, May 16: As per the RBI data on the deployment of gross bank credit to the hospitality sector, the outstanding amount for tourism, hotels, and restaurants as of February 26, 2021, stood at Rs 48,102 crore. Maharashtra curbs, maharashtra weekend lockdown, maharashtra night curfew, hotels nad restaurants

including aviation, realty, retail, etc., that have taken severe Covid beating. As per industry estimates, a majority of the hospitality sector, which comprises micro and small-sized hotels and restaurants, has witnessed revenues plunging with multiple outlets and properties either shut or on the brink of closure amid

FHRAI, the hotel industry's total revenue in FY20 was Rs 1.82 lakh crore while around 75 per cent (over Rs 1.30 lakh crore) of FY21 revenue is estimated to be wiped off. As per the data, on the deploy-

ment of gross bank credit to the hospitality sector, from the Reserve Bank of India's April bulletin, the outstanding amount for tourism, hotels, and restaurants as of February 26, 2021, stood at

Rs 48,102 crore, up from Rs 45,184 crore as of February 28, 2020. "Due to financial losses, 30 per cent of hotels and restaurants in the country have shut down permanently and about 20

per cent haven't opened fully since the first lockdown. The remaining 50 per cent continue to run in losses and revenues are below 30 per cent of the pre-Covid levels.



association, joint secretary pradep shetty, losses of restaurant owners, closing of dining facilities at restaurants, Hotels and restaurants body Federation of Hotel & Restaurant Associations of India (FHRAI) in a representation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi has pleaded for special fiscal measures to rescue the hospitality industry from severe Covid impact. In the representation, which was also submitted to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, MSME Minister Nitin Gadkari, and Tourism Minister Prahlad Singh Patel, the federation requested for a three-year moratorium extension on all loans, complete waiver on the interest of loans from March 2020 till the time businesses are normalized, and a stimulus package for the industry's working capital requirements. Hospitality has been among the sectors

the second wave of the pandemic. "Since March 2020, the industry has been struggling to manage its statutory and capital expenditure obligations. Without a moratorium on EMIs and interest payments, the sector will completely crumble... Our right to conduct business was taken away but the right to recover loans from us is being allowed. This is discrimination against our industry," said Gurbaxish Singh Kohli, Vice President, FHRAI. Pre-packaged insolvency resolution, MSME, IBC Pre-packaged insolvency resolution under IBC for MSMEs: Challenges that may arise in implementation Mayank Kumar, co-founder, upGrad According to the industry figures highlighted by

Mumbai, May 16: The assets identified range from Air India's planes to vessels belonging to the Shipping Corporation of India, and properties owned by state-owned banks to oil and gas cargoes of PSUs, three people familiar with the matter said. Cairn, seizing to recover amount, Air India's planes, Shipping Corporation of India, oil and gas cargoes of PSUs, US to Singapore for seizure of the assets. These assets are across several jurisdictions, they said without giving further details. UK's Cairn Energy has identified USD 70 billion of Indian assets overseas for potential seizure to collect USD 1.72 billion due from the government — a move if successful will put India in league with Pakistan and Venezuela which faced similar enforcement action over failure to pay arbitration awards. The assets identified range from Air India's planes to vessels belonging to the Shipping Corporation of India, and properties owned by state-owned banks to oil and gas cargoes of PSUs, three people familiar with the matter said. These assets are across several jurisdictions, they said without giving further details. sale of ACs, peak season of April and Ma, localised lockdowns, surging Covid cases, pandemic situation, Voltas, Daikin, Blue Star, Panasonic, recalibration of targets. Sales of AC, other cooling products again hit by pandemic in

peak season; cos now pin hopes on extended summer. Start-up firm StanPlus, ambulances, covid treatment, StanPlus co-founder and CEO Prabhdeep Sing, 3000 ambulances with ventilators, 100 new ALS ambulances. StanPlus plans to add 3,000 ambulances with ventilators across India in 3 years. Cairn plans to move courts in the US to Singapore for seizure of the assets

finds that India had failed to honour its obligation," a source said. Cairn has got an international arbitration award — which overturned levy of retrospective taxes and ordered New Delhi to return the value of shares it had sold, dividends seized and tax refunds withheld to recover such taxes — registered in the US, UK, France, the Netherlands, Singapore, Mauritius, Canada's

ally responsible for India's debts, including from any judgment resulting from recognition of the award. "Once a court recognises Air India as the alter ego of the Indian government, Cairn can seek attachment or seizure of its assets in the US such as airplanes, immovable assets and bank accounts to recover the amount it was awarded by the arbitration tribunal. The move is similar to a court in the British Virgin Islands ordering in December last year that hotels in New York and Paris owned by Pakistan International Airlines would be used to settle a claim against Pakistan's government by a Canadian-Chilean copper company. Crystallex International Corp had brought a similar lawsuit to attach property of Petroleos de Venezuela, S.A (PDVSA), the state-owned oil company of Venezuela, in Delaware couple of years back after the Latin American country failed to pay the firm USD 1.2 billion that an arbitration tribunal had ordered to pay in lieu of the 2011 seizing gold deposits held and developed by the firm. In 2012, Elliott Management, a buccaneering American hedge fund which held distressed Argentine bonds, seized a handsome tall ship belonging to Argentina's navy. Recently, French courts ruled that a stifled creditor could seize a business jet belonging to the government of Congo-Brazzaville while it was being serviced at a French air-

port, as well as USD 30 million from a bank account of the country's state oil company. While the finance ministry has so far not commented on the Cairn move, sources said India will take all necessary steps to defend against any such "illegal enforcement action". India, they said, will contest the move on grounds that the government has challenged the arbitration award in the appropriate court in The Hague and it is confident that the award will be set aside. Sources said the government has also engaged a counsel team which is ready to defend against any enforcement action. While they maintained that neither the government nor any PSU has received any such notice, people aware of the Cairn lawsuit said the case has been brought only on Friday and notices in due course will come to the concerned authorities. The sources said as and when any such notice is received, the government/ concerned organisation shall take all necessary steps to defend against "any such illegal enforcement action". "Cairn is taking the necessary legal steps to protect shareholders' interest in the absence of a resolution of the arbitral award," a company spokesperson said commenting on the issue. "Cairn remains open to continuing constructive dialogue with the Government of India to arrive at a satisfactory outcome to this long-running issue.



'Dogefather' Elon Musk tells when he would create his own cryptocurrency

Mumbai, May 16: Tesla's Elon Musk had earlier this week decried the "insane" amount of energy required for producing Bitcoin following his decision to suspend the use of Bitcoin to sell his electric cars. He had also reiterated his call for a "Carbon tax" (a fee imposed on the burning of coal, gas, and other carbon-based fuels) amid concerns around "rapidly increasing use of fossil fuels for Bitcoin mining and transactions, especially coal, which has the worst emissions of any fuel," as per a statement tweeted by Musk on Thursday. While he might not use Bitcoin for transactions unless its mining moves to more sustainable energy, it is the Dogecoin that is increasingly being backed



by Musk. Reasons why Dogecoin "wins hands down" when compared to Bitcoin, according to Musk, included: Doge speeds up block time 10X, increases block size 10X & drops fee 100X, he tweeted on Sunday. For Musk, he is "the Dogefather" and "Dogecoin is the people's crypto". It is also less harsh on the environment than Bitcoin and is more affordable due to its high supply than the crypto king. But does that make it perfect crypto that Musk would want to stick to forever? Probably no and perhaps nobody can then tell which crypto would be better than Dogecoin for Musk. If it is not Dogecoin then Musk might go ahead and launch new crypto altogether. m-cap companies, top-10 most valued companies, TCS, Infosys, HDFC bank, HUL, ICICI bank, Reliance Industries, State Bank of India. m-cap of eight most valued companies plummeted over Rs 1.13 lakh crore. Petrol prices, diesel prices, petrol diesel prices in Mumbai, price hike, highest value-added tax, incidences of local taxes, petrol prices crossing Rs 100 mark. Petrol, diesel price hiked again; petrol price nears Rs 99 in Mumbai. "Only if Doge can't do it. Big pain in the neck to create another one," Musk tweeted on Sunday. His tweet was in response to a suggestion for launching a crypto that does everything he wants technically. "Why not just make a crypto from scratch that does everything you want technically and has a lot of dev support and doesn't have high concentration of ownership at least initially?" a user with a Twitter handle @lon_elon had said. Importantly, Musk had on Friday said that he is working on Dogecoin development to "improve system transaction efficiency." However, it wasn't clear if he was referring to better speed, energy usage, or its usability, and more. Dogecoin's price had declined nearly 22 per cent during the early US hours on Sunday after Musk called Dogecoin a "hustle" on the American late-night comedy sketch show Saturday Night Live's (SNL) satirical news programme Weekend Update. The "joke" Dogecoin was trading at 52 Cents after peaking at 72 Cents on last week's Saturday, as per CoinDesk.

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CM Sarma reviews prevailing COVID situation with DCs, SPs

transportation of COVID positive patients from their home to COVID care centres. He also asked them to declare more micro containment zones in their respective territories if the number of positive cases increase in their areas. He also asked the DCs to provide essential commodities worth Rs. 2 thousand to the poor people living in containment zones. Stating that acting against the COVID is the primary task of the government of Assam, Sarma said that the DCs, SPs, Joint Directors of Health and other stake holders should work as a team in their respective districts to give people succor from the pandemic. Sarma also asked the civil and police administration to remain vigilant for the third wave and put up a brave front against wave. Health and Family Welfare Minister Keshab Mahanta, Political Secretary to the Chief Minister Jayanta Malla Baruah, DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Samir Kumar Sinha, Principal Secretary Health and Family Welfare Anurag Goyal, Principal Secretary to Revenue and Disaster Management Avinash Joshi, Principal Secretary to Home and Political Neeraj Verma, Mission Director National Health Mission Laxmanan S and other senior officers were present during the conference.

Chief Minister Sarma visits GMCH at 2.30 am to oversee

the arrangements put in place to meet the emergency needs of the COVID patients. He also expressed his gratitude to doctors, nursing staff and other paramedical staff for their dedicated services round the clock. Chief Minister Sarma also visited the oxygen plant at the GMCH premises. Later talking to media, Chief Minister Sarma said that it has been one of the priorities of the State government to step up the midnight critical care services at all the medical colleges in the state. He also said that it is heartening that emergency services in the medical colleges at odd hours have been streamlined. He said that steps have been taken for the senior doctors to be on duty during the odd hours so that patients get the same level of treatment at all hours during the day. Talking on the COVID situation, Chief Minister Sarma said that though the number of COVID patients in several parts of the city are reportedly coming down marginally, the government under no circumstance would lower its guard against the pandemic. Works are going on to ramp up the infrastructure as the COVID hospital at Sarusajai would be made 300 bedded, Sarma added.

Containment Zones Withdrawn In Wards 8, 16, 28 in Guwahati

2 from Dhubolia, Itabola junction to AK Road to Ambari Temple. WARD 08

On the northern side, the central line of Brahmaputra to the back of Sonaram field up to Kedar road. On the eastern side, Kedar road to AT road up to Chabipool and Satijyomoti road. On the southern side, east of Netaji Subhas Road upto Fatasil Bridge upto GS Colony road. On the western side, River Bharalu to AT Road to Sonaram field. Earlier on May 5, the said three wards were declared containment zones after more than 400 COVID cases were detected in each of the wards. Kamrup Metro District Administration had set a benchmark of 400 active Covid cases to declare a ward as containment zone. Under Gauhati Municipal Corporation, there are 31 wards, and ward number 28 has registered 743 active Covid case, ward 16 has recorded 509 cases, and 415 cases were detected in ward 08. The closure of all shops and commercial establishments by 11 am on all days and restriction of movement or curfew from 12 noon to 5 am will commence from Sunday until further notice by Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA). Earlier, the curfew time period was 1 pm to 5 am. The ASDMA on Saturday ordered the closure of all shops and commercial establishments by 11 AM on all days. The decision was taken due to worsening COVID-19 situation in the state. The order also read that all vehicles will be allowed to operate with an odd-even formula between 5 AM to 12 PM. Government vehicles and essential service vehicles however will be allowed to function during the curfew period as well. Other guidelines remain the same except for modification of timings: All shops and commercial establishments shall shut down at 11 AM on all days. Weekly haats/bazaar shall not be allowed for 15 days. Restaurants, Dhabas and other eateries can entertain dine-in guest only up to 11 AM after which only home delivery of food will be allowed. Restaurants operating within a Hotel or Resort can allow outside guests up to 11 AM only after which only in-house guests of the Hotel/Resort may be given room service. Delivery of essential goods through e-Commerce may continue with observance of COVID appropriate behavior. Cold storages and warehouses may continue after 11 AM. However, sale counters, showrooms etc attached to these warehouses or cold storages shall not operate after 11 AM. Pharmacies, Hospitals, Animal Care Centres and Veterinary clinics may operate without restrictions being providers of essential and emergency services. All Educational Institutions including Schools/Colleges/Universities must provide quality virtual options. No physical classes shall be allowed for 15 days. All offices both Government and Non-Government shall shut down for 15 days. Government/semi-government officers in the rank of Deputy Secretary and above and senior executives in the Non-Government sector along with their key support staff will be allowed to attend office up to 11 AM for emergency and essential works. However, 9 and 10 above will not be applicable for organizations rendering Essential/Emergency Services. Law Enforcement Services and Elections work. In case the test positivity of COVID-19 in any area reaches 5% or more in the last one week, District Magistrate will notify such areas as containment zone and ensure necessary containment measures for COVID-19 as envisaged in MoHFW, Gol advisory dates 25th April, 2021 annexed with MHA order dated 29th April, 2021. 12 Marriages and religious functions will be only private affairs and be allowed with the presence of maximum of 10 (ten) persons. No reception parties will be allowed post or pre marriage. Funeral/last rites related gatherings shall not be more than 10 persons. All religious places shall remain closed for 15 days. However, the religious head of a religious place or his representative may perform minimal religious rituals/prayers. All public transport will be allowed to operate only upto 30% of seating capacity. Auto Rickshaws, cycle rickshaws, and taxis shall operate with one driver and two passengers. Pillion riding will be totally prohibited in two-wheelers, except with women and children. All vehicles other than government vehicles will be allowed to ply in accordance with an odd-even formula to be decided by the jurisdictional District Disaster Management Authority between 5 AM to 2 PM. However, this restriction shall not apply to personal vehicles used for medical emergencies. There shall be a total ban on the movement of individuals from 12 Noon to 5 AM daily except for exemptions specified in the order dated May 4, 2021.

'Arrest Me Too': Rahul Gandhi challenges over arrests on posters

his Twitter profile picture to that of the poster questioning the Prime Minister's policy decision on COVID-19 vaccine distribution. Several other leaders too condemned Centre's action for curtailing the freedom of speech. The posters were put up in Delhi and at least 17 people have been arrested by the Delhi police. "Modiji humare bachon ki vaccine videsh kyu bhej diya (Modiji why did you send vaccines of our children to foreign countries?)" the posters read. As many as 25 FIRs under Sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code and other relevant sections, including Section 3 of the Prevention of Defacement of Property Act was registered for putting up the posters. The backlash for the Centre comes as India struggles against a devastating second wave of the COVID-19 that has overwhelmed the healthcare infrastructure of the country. Meanwhile, there were 3,11,170 new COVID-19 cases and 4,077 deaths in the last 24 hours. India has recorded a total of 2,46,84,077 coronavirus infections, of which, 2,07,95,335 people have recovered, while 2,70,284 have died of the fatal virus. There are still 36,18,458 active cases in the country.

Covishield second dose appointment booked already won't be

picked the second dose of vaccine even if the period for him/her is less than 84 days, COWIN system will allow vaccination of such beneficiaries, the notification stated. Three Bengal BJP legislators detained, traders held for flouting lockdown. The facility, on May 13, began producing medical oxygen to meet the demand for the life-saving gas following a surge in Covid cases in the state. ISRO team at Sterilite Copper plant to help fix snag affecting oxygen production. Earlier this week on May 13, the Centre had extended the gap between the first and second doses of Covishield vaccine to 12-16 weeks based on the recommendations by the Covid Working Group chaired by N K Arora. "The Government of India has communicated this change to states and UTs. The Co-WIN digital portal has also been reconfigured to reflect this extension of interval for two doses of Covishield, manufactured by Serum Institute of India (SII) to 12-16 weeks," the ministry said. "However, there have been reports in a section of the media suggesting that people who had pre-booked their appointments for the second dose in less than 84 days on Co-WIN are being turned back from vaccination centres without getting the second dose of Covishield," it said. "Additionally, already booked online appointments for the second dose of Covishield will remain valid and are not being cancelled by Co-WIN. Further, the beneficiaries are advised to reschedule their appointments for a later date beyond the 84th day from the date of the first dose of vaccination," the ministry added. Also read | Delhi extends lockdown by a week even as cases dip to 6K. Kejriwal explains why. The Union government has reiterated to the states/UTs that online appointments booked for second dose of Covishield prior to this change of the interval between the two doses of Covishield, must be honoured. It advised the states/UTs that the field staff may be instructed that, if such beneficiaries do come for vaccination, "the second Covishield dose must be administered and they must not be turned away". They have also been asked to undertake awareness activities to inform the beneficiaries about this change.

Cyclone Tauktae to bring light thunderstorms, rain over coastal

Rescue and relief teams of the Army, Navy and Coast Guard, along with ships and aircraft have also been deployed. The incoming cyclone has intensified into a "very severe cyclonic storm" over the east-central Arabian Sea and is very likely to intensify further during the next 12 hours, said the IMD on Sunday morning. At least four people have lost their lives and 73 villages across six districts in Karnataka have been affected due to the severe intensification of Cyclone Tauktae. Severe cyclonic storm Tauktae intensified overnight into a "very severe cyclonic storm" over east-central Arabian Sea, the weather office said. 100 rescue teams are deployed for six states - Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Goa. Over six districts including three coastal districts and three Malnad districts of Karnataka have received heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in the past 24 hours due to the effect of Cyclone Tauktae. Karnataka Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa is closely monitoring the cyclone situation in coastal areas and is in contact with district in-charges and ministers to ensure rescue and relief operations in the affected districts. "We are closely monitoring the cyclone situation in coastal areas, I am in contact with district in-charges and ministers and DCs of the affected districts to ensure rescue and relief operations," Yediyurappa tweeted. "Due to cyclone Tauktae, heavy to extremely heavy rainfall was observed over 6 districts, 3 coastal districts and 3 Malnad districts in the past 24 hours. The rainfall is accompanied by gale winds speed reach 70 to 80 km/hour, gusting at times upto 90 km/hour along and off Karnataka Coast. So far, 4 people have lost their lives, 73 villages affected," said the Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority in an official statement issued today.

MP Rajeev Satav Dies of Covid Related Complications

Gujarat. All India Congress Committee general secretary K C Venugopal said the Congress has lost its frontline warrior. Congress chief spokesperson Randeep Surjewala said he has been rendered speechless due to the loss. "Today I lost a fellow who took the first step of public life with me in the Youth Congress and walked along till today... We will always remember Rajeev Satav's simplicity, ever smiling, connected to the grassroots, loyalty and friendship. Good bye my friend. Keep shining, wherever you are," he tweeted. Meanwhile Financial Express's managing editor Sunil Jain passed away in New Delhi on Saturday due to post-Covid-19 complications. Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma condoled the senior Indian journalist's unfortunate demise. Jain was fighting for his life in All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS). Dr. Sarma tweeted: One of the most erudite business journalists, Sunil Jain will be remembered as a shining light of Indian journalism. I am deeply pained to learn of his demise. I send my prayers and condolences to the family. Om Shanti. Jain's sister Sandhya broke the news on Twitter, "We lost my brother Sunil Jain this evening to Covid+ its complications. Doctors, staff at AIIMS battled heroically, but the demon was too powerful. May Tirthankaras guide his onward journey; deep gratitude to all who stood by us in these darkest days," she tweeted. As per reports, over the last 24 hours, Jain suffered multiple organ failure, said doctors at AIIMS, where he was admitted on May 3 with his oxygen levels dropping. He had a cardiac arrest earlier today, was revived, but passed away after a second cardiac arrest around 8.30 p.m. On May 3, Jain wrote his last tweet and informed Tweeples "Thank you everyone for all the help I don't even know whom all to thank Am in AIIMS emergency now So I'm safe hands" paying condolences, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "You left us too soon, Sunil Jain. I will miss reading your columns and hearing your frank as well as insightful views on diverse matters. You leave behind an inspiring range of work. Journalism is poorer today, with your sad demise. Condolences to family and friends. Om Shant. Anant Goenka, executive director of the Indian Express group, which owns the Financial Express, described Jain as a friend who was of unquestionable integrity and inspired with his professional commitment. Jain was 58 and survived by his wife Namita and son Abhinav. Jain's wife wrote the weekly column, Rational Expectations, that focused on macro-economic issues and on sectoral areas like infrastructure. He started his journalistic career as a reporter in India Today in 1991, and then moved to work for The Indian Express, Business Standard, and finally the Financial Express.

Non-Bailable Warrant Against Wrestler Sushil Kumar, 6 Others

in the Delhi-NCR region and neighbouring states to nab him. The victims alleged that Kumar was present at the spot when the clash took place, he had said. The wrestler who died was 23 years old. He and two of his friends were brutally assaulted allegedly by other wrestlers inside the Chhatrasal Stadium in the northern part of the city last Tuesday night. According to the police, the brawl involved Kumar, Ajay, Prince Dalal, Sonu, Sagar, Amit and others. A case was registered under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Arms Act at the Model Town Police Station. Dalal (24), a resident of Jhajjar in Haryana, was held in the case, police had said.

Three more firms get the nod to produce Covaxin

Covid Suraksha scheme, has given a grant of ₹65 crore to Mumbai-based Haffkine Biopharma ceuticals, ₹60 crore to Indian Immunologicals Limited of National Dairy Development Board, and ₹30 crore to Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Limited (BIBCOL), a DBT facility at Bulandshahr in Uttar Pradesh. While Haffkine will help produce an additional 20 million doses per month when the facility is ready, BIBCOL can produce 10-15 million doses a month, the statement said.

Centre issues new COVID-19 guidelines to curb coronavirus spread in peri-urban, rural and tribal areas

New Delhi, May 16 : The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Sunday issued a new set of guidelines to check the spread of the deadly novel coronavirus in peri-urban, rural and tribal areas of the country. The rules also suggests surveillance, screening, home and community based isolation and planning for health infrastructure for managing the COVID-19 infection at the rural level. Taking to Twitter, the health ministry informed about the issuance of the SOPs for COVID-19 management in peri-urban, rural and tribal areas. Health Ministry has issued an SOP on #COVID19 Containment & Management in Peri-urban, Rural & Tribal areas. The health ministry guidelines said that in every village, active surveillance should be done for influenza-like illness/severe acute respiratory infections (ILI/SARI) periodically by ASHA with help of Village Health Sanitation and Nutrition Committee (VHSNC). The ministry also says that identified suspected COVID cases should link for testing to the health facilities either through rapid antigen testing or by referral of samples to nearest testing laboratory, in accordance with ICMR guidelines. The guidelines states that COVID patients should also be counselled to isolate themselves till test results are available. "Those asymptomatic but having history of high-risk exposure to COVID patients (exposure of more than 15 mins without a mask within 6 feet distance) should be advised quarantine and tested as per ICMR protocol," the report says. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting on the COVID-19 situation and directed government officials to make a distribution plan for supply of oxygen to rural areas and scale up health infrastructure. The second wave of COVID-19 has taken the rural areas in its grip. With reports suggesting that cases of infections in rural areas are much higher as most of the patients are not even reaching hospital due to various concerns.

PM Narendra Modi speaks to CM of 3 states to take stock of COVID-19 situation

New Delhi, May 16 : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday (May 16) spoke to chief ministers of three states and one union territory including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Puducherry to discuss the COVID-19 situation there. The Uttar Pradesh CMO informed that PM Modi held a detailed review on various issues including oxygen supply, free vaccination to every person and vaccine wastage. "During the discussion, received guidance from the PM on issues including oxygen supply, free vaccination to every person and on how to stop vaccine wastage in the State," the UP CMO tweeted. In his discussion with Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel, the latter said that coronavirus testing has been increased in the state. "The positivity rate is steadily declining, attention is being paid to rural areas of the State," Baghel was quoted as saying by ANI. He added that additional teams have been deployed in the areas where the infections are still on the rise. Baghel also urged the PM to ensure an adequate amount of coronavirus vaccines to the state. Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan are among the ten states that reported 74.7 per cent of the new cases in the last 24 hours, as per the Union Health Ministry. While Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh are among the ten states that cumulatively account for 74.69 per cent of India's total active cases. UP and Rajasthan are among the ten states that account for 75.55 per cent of the new COVID deaths in the last 24 hours, the health ministry stated. On May 8, PM Modi had dialled Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Himachal Pradesh CM Jai Ram Thakur and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin to take stock of the COVID-19 situation in the states.

"Delhi Has Seen Recovery But...": Lockdown Extended By Another Week

New Delhi, May 16 : Lockdown has been extended in Delhi for another week, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has said, pointing to the Covid numbers which while on decline, are yet to reach below 5 per cent positivity rate. All the current restrictions will remain in place, including the metro service which was shut last week. "We have been witnessing good recovery following the lockdown. Coronavirus cases have been on a decline," Mr Kejriwal told reporters today. "We don't want to lose the gain that we have made in the last few days. We are extending the lockdown for one more week. Instead of tomorrow, lockdown is extended till next Monday, 5 am in Delhi," he added. While the positivity rate, which stood at 35 per cent in mid-April, has dropped to nearly 10 per cent, doctors say this needs to be pulled down below five per cent. Delhi had recorded 6,430 coronavirus cases on Saturday morning over a period of 24 hours -- the lowest since April 7. There were 337 deaths in the same period. Medical experts have attributed the drop to the lockdown. "In the last 24 hours, Delhi saw 6,000 cases. Positivity rate has dropped to 10 per cent. Gradually, Delhi is coming back on track. I hope the recovery will be better next week. Restrictions will be the same as before," the Chief Minister said today. This would be the fifth week of the lockdown imposed on the national capital as Covid numbers skyrocketed in April, bringing the healthcare system on its knees. Hospitals had to struggle without oxygen, beds and drugs and social media was flooded with distress messages from families of patients. The overall numbers in the country has undergone a drop as well, with a number of other states issuing restrictions. With 3.11 lakh fresh coronavirus infections, India saw the lowest rise in daily COVID-19 cases after a gap of 25 days. The number of fatalities rose to 2,70,284 with 4,077 new deaths according to the health ministry data this morning.

Delhi govt sets up oxygen concentrator banks in every district to fight COVID-19

New Delhi, May 16 : Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a press briefing, on Saturday (May 15, 2021), announced that the city has reported 6,500 COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours and the positivity rate has dipped to 11 per cent now. "In the last 24 hours, 6500 cases have been reported in Delhi, the positivity rate has further gone down to 11%. So Corona's impact is going down in Delhi. 1000 ICU beds have been set up within 15 days, our doctors and engineers have set an example. I thank them," said Delhi Chief Minister. Delhi Chief Minister also stated that the government has set up oxygen concentrator banks in every district and promised doorstep delivery of oxygen to COVID-19 patients, in order to fight the oxygen crisis in the city. "From today, we are starting a very important service- we're starting oxygen concentrator banks. Essential to provide oxygen to COVID patients, on time. We've started this for such patients," said Arvind Kejriwal. "200 such banks are set up in every district. Our team will provide the concentrator at the doorstep of patients in home isolation, if needed," Kejriwal added. After recovery of patients, the oxygen concentrators will be taken back from them and will be sanitised properly before allotting it to the next patients. "Patients who have COVID-19, but are not a part of our home isolation group, can call on the number 1031 and become a part of it.

Leicester City win first FA Cup after Yuri Tielemans screamer sinks Chelsea

London, May 16: Doing a Leicester to achieve the seemingly impossible, to make light of ridiculous odds. Things have changed somewhat since 2016 and the most outlandish title triumph of all time, with Leicester having levelled the playing field through astute recruitment and the excellent coaching of Brendan Rodgers. But doing a Leicester continues to represent the challenging and toppling of the elite. Rodgers and his players pulled it off here. They did it for themselves and

an extremely cagey game but the midfielder blew the doors off after seeing a Reece James clearance hit Ayoze Pérez - possibly on the arm - and Luke Thomas roll the ball into him. Tielemans put everything into the shot. He had scored 16 times for Leicester previously but this one will live forever. The connection was perfect and it flew into the top corner beyond Kepa Arrizabalaga, Chelsea's cup goalkeeper, who stretched for the ball with his wrong hand. At last, the gloves were off and

across goal and it was then fate intervened. Calgar Soyuncu swiped at the clearance and sent the ball straight at Wes Morgan, the Leicester stalwart who had just entered as a substitute for his first action since last December. It hit Morgan and went in. And yet VAR was not happy. The technology flagged up an offside against Chilwell and Leicester, after five nerve-shredding minutes of stoppage time, could celebrate wildly. For Schmeichel, who grew up watching his father, Peter, win this competition with Manchester United and who lifted the trophy together with Morgan, it was a dream fulfilled. But the same could be said of all of Leicester's heroes, from Thomas, so composed at 19 years old, to Jamie Vardy, who never stopped running at 34. Wesley Fofana was a rock in central defence. For Rodgers, it was a first trophy in English football after seven in Scotland with Celtic and the records show that he has won each of his seven finals as a manager, including the Championship play-off with Swansea in 2011. His players threw him into the air during the delirious post-match scenes and he will now want to close out a stunning season with a Champions League finish. Next up for his team is Chelsea at Stamford Bridge on Tuesday - another seismic game. Chelsea knew only misery. When they were soundly beaten by Leicester at the King Power Stadium in January, it was the prompt for them to replace Frank Lampard with Thomas Tuchel. Pretty much everything has gone perfectly for the new broom, although last Wednesday's home defeat to Arsenal was a blip. This was a first major setback and the hope from Tuchel's side has to be that his

team can recover in the rematch against Leicester to ensure they finish in the Premier League's top four. The margins for error are zero. Beyond that, of course, is the Champions League final against Manchester City. The success or failure of the season rests on a knife-edge. The atmosphere pulsed throughout with this the biggest spectator event in the United Kingdom for 14 long months, although it was jarring in the extreme to hear boos mixing with cheers when the players took a pre-match knee to support the fight against racism. For long spells, the fear of making an error weighed heavily and how the spectacle suffered. There was not much of an appetite for taking on an opponent or risking the ball. Tuchel played James on the right of his defensive three, with César Azpilicueta outside of him, mainly because he needed the youngster's pace against Vardy. The game's first chance followed a Tielemans pass and a Timothy Castagne cross which Vardy met with a first-time shot, having held his run superbly. James blocked. Mount flickered in the first half, sparking the best of a limited crop of chances for Chelsea with a cross on the half hour that led to Silva dinking back towards the far post. Timo Werner stretched for the header and made the faintest of connections only to take the ball away from Azpilicueta, who was better placed behind him. It was another one of those days for Werner in front of goal. Tielemans would show him how and, as Leicester cavorted about at the end, the Chelsea players stared blankly into the distance. They must use the pain as a spur.



for their supporters but also, perhaps, for every club that dreams of gate-crashing the establishment, the ones with all the money, who would break away to form a closed-shop cartel given a fair wind under the cover of a global health crisis. In their 137-year history, Leicester had never previously won the FA Cup. They had reached four finals and lost them all. But everything changed on an occasion that built to a dramatic crescendo, when destiny seemed to drag Leicester over the line. Their goal was a firecracker and it was supplied on 63 minutes by Yuri Tielemans. Up until then, it had been

we had a final. The pantomime villain of the piece was Ben Chilwell, the one-time Leicester full-back, who Chelsea brought on as a 67th minute substitute. The Leicester fans, who formed a noisy part of a 21,000 crowd, jeered his every touch. Chilwell thought he had forced an equaliser not once but twice. First, he rose to head towards the bottom corner only for Kasper Schmeichel to throw out a hand and claw the ball to safety. And, after Schmeichel had brilliantly repelled a Mason Mount half-volley, we had the heart-stopping late controversy. Chilwell burst up the left to meet a Thiago Silva pass and prod

Jofra Archer an England doubt after injury recurrence: county cricket - as it happened

London, May 16: On a very rain-delayed day at Hove there were concerns over the fitness of Jofra Archer, playing in his first Championship game of the year. Archer suffered a recurrence of the elbow problems which meant he

confirmed that he would not bowl again in the match, which would seem to make him a long shot for the Test squad against New Zealand, named on Tuesday. "I think there was some confusion about the state of Jofra's [right]



flew home before the one-day series in India and missed the IPL. To the seeming surprise of Ben Brown, the Sussex captain, Archer did not open the bowling from the Sea End and in fact didn't bowl at all on day three, having sent down just five overs on day two. Sussex

elbow," Ian Salisbury, the Sussex coach, said afterwards. "Ben thought he was going to bowl but his elbow was sore. Any time that Jofra can't bowl you're going to be frustrated as a leader, or as a team. But it happens. In sport people get injured. That's life. That's sport. He's

still willing to be out there because he wants Sussex to win." Zak Crawley danced to 85 as Kent made a better fist of their second innings. Joe Root was bowled for 99 after resurrecting Yorkshire's innings alongside his captain Steven Patterson. Root, wearing a huge short-sleeved jumper, played the difficult pitch with touch-perfection. But, after being somewhat marooned in the 90s, he got an inside edge to a ball from Dan Douthwaite, which squirted on to his stumps. The No 11 Ben Coad lasted two balls, leaving Patterson unbeaten on 47 and Yorkshire with an invaluable first-innings lead of 81. Glamorgan's second innings stuttered, with Marnus Labuschagne, yet to find his mojo, out for a three-ball duck, stumps splattered. Kiran Carlson and David Lloyd then applied a steady hand as the shadows grew. Sussex's Simon Harmer took a career-best nine for 80 as Derbyshire limped to 146 all out. Bowling with variation and a bounce in his step after a couple of skimpy matches, Derbyshire's batsmen tumbled like dominoes on a slope, losing six for 43. Harmer was denied all 10 by part-time spinner Dan Lawrence, for the second time

in his career. Following on, Derbyshire's innings started badly when Luis Reece was bowled for nought, but Brooke Guest batted sweetly to make his maiden first-class fifty. Middlesex's batting once again proved flaky in the face of Kyle Abbott and Mohammad Abbas, as they collapsed to a seven-wicket defeat to Hampshire. They staggered to 101 in their second innings, the highest score captain Peter Handscomb's 24. Hampshire needed just 66 to win, a race against the weather, but Sam Northeast eased them home. Abbott finished with 11 for 85 in the match. Centuries from Durham's Will Young and Jack Burnham, his first since 2016, and 86 from Ned Eckersley, who ping-ponged six sixes, left Worcestershire with a tricky final day at the Riverside. A belated goodnight after an eventful day - 99 for Joe Root, nine wickets for Simon Harmer, a win for Hampshire and perhaps the biggest news that which didn't happen: a recurrence of Jofra Archer's elbow injury meaning he didn't bowl a ball for Sussex. It seems his chances of being fit to play New Zealand in the Test series are low. Poor guy. In the words of Ian Salisbury, "That's life, that's sport."

Ellis Genge doubles up as Leicester hold off another Harlequins fightback

Leicester, May 16: Harlequins are fast becoming the Premiership's escape artists but a third consecutive last-ditch comeback proved just beyond them against Leicester, for whom Ellis Genge scored two tries and served up a reminder as to why he may be missed on the British & Irish Lions tour this summer. On more than one occasion Leicester looked home and hosed but Harlequins, who have completed remarkable turnaround wins over London Irish and Wasps in recent weeks, clawed their way back to within six points and were battering away in the Tigers' 22 in the closing stages. Not this time, however, and though it may seem harsh on Marcus Smith - their very own Harry Houdini - it must be said that he missed three conversions and managed only one on a difficult day from the tee. George Ford edged the battle with the pretender for his England No 10 jersey but it is not as if Smith played badly, only that he could not conjure the sort of magic he has produced of late. It should also be noted that Leicester, no doubt with an eye on next Friday's Challenge Cup final, replaced the majority of their frontline stars early in the second half. They may well have been more

comfortable had they not. If it was a surprise that Leicester had the bonus point wrapped up by half-time given Harlequins' form of late, it was entirely warranted judging by the Tigers' ascendancy in the opening 40 minutes. The centre Matt Scott



was first over - Leicester prizing opening Quins with relative ease - and Genge had his first from close range soon after, thundering through the visitors' defence. Jasper Wiese had taken the Tigers to within a couple of metres in another eye-catching performance from the No 8 hopeful of

facing the British & Irish Lions this summer. Harlequins were feeding off scraps but on a rare foray into the Leicester half they came away with five points with Nathan Earle finishing off a fine move after a strong carry from Alex Dombrandt and clever support work from Joe Marchant. Leicester had number three before the end of the first quarter, however. Ford's long distance penalty into the corner was inch perfect, allowing Tom Youngs to burrow over on his return to the side. A penalty try for Harlequins was immediately followed by a yellow card for Dan Cole and Genge joined him two minutes later, seemingly opening the door for the visitors to find a way back into the match. Genge's yellow was for an illegal clearance on Jack Kenningham and was given after the referee Luke Pearce consulted the TMO. It meant that he reversed a decision to send Earle to the sin-bin for a deliberate knock-on and left Harlequins with a two-man advantage. No matter for the Tigers who won that period 3-0 with a Ford penalty and after Genge had returned he steamrolled through Jack Lang before picking and going again for his second try of the afternoon, handing Leicester a commanding 29-12 lead at the interval.

Richard Bland wins British Masters for first Tour title at 478th attempt

London, May 16: An emotional Richard Bland defeated Guido Migliozi in a play-off to win his first European Tour title at the 478th attempt after a dramatic finish to the Bettfred British Masters. Bland parred the first extra hole at the Belfry after Migliozi three-putted from long range to become the oldest first-time winner on the European Tour. The 48-year-old carded a superb final round of 66 to set the clubhouse target on 13 under par, but looked in danger of being denied victory by Migliozi. Birdies on the 15th and 16th gave Migliozi a share of the lead and he then found the green in two on the par-five 17th, but missed from five feet for birdie after

force extra holes. Eddie Pepperell had taken a one-shot lead into the final round but the 2018 champion could only manage a closing 73 to fall back into a tie for 11th



lipping out from long range for an eagle. Migliozi's tee shot on the 18th plugged in the wet grass on the edge of a bunker but after receiving a free drop the 24-year-old hit his approach into a greenside bunker and got up and down to

with the tournament host, Danny Willett. Robert MacIntyre, the top-ranked player in the field, held a share of the lead after birdies on the second and third, but the world No 45 eventually signed for a 71 to finish joint eighth with Calum Hill and Edoardo Molinari.

Pernille Harder: 'The biggest thing would be to see Magda lift the trophy'

London, May 16: Twice a losing Women's Champions League finalist, the Dane believes resilient Chelsea can clinch the crown: "No matter how the games are turning we know we can come back if we have a setback." Pernille Harder will be hoping it is third time lucky when she steps on to the pitch at the Gamla Ullevi stadium in Gothenburg to play Barcelona in the Champions League final on Sunday evening. She knows exactly what it is like to lose. In 2018 she was agonisingly close to getting her hands on the trophy, scoring first in extra time for Wolfsburg before Alex

around £300,000. "Of course it puts some pressure on you," she says. "Everyone thinks you can do everything on the pitch when you have that price. It puts on pressure, or some expectations at least. But handling expectation is something I've been working with for the last five or six years. I knew how to handle it. Obviously some of the things I could do on the pitch in Wolfsburg I couldn't do right away. First you have to adapt, then you can bring the qualities you have on the pitch which I think I've been doing across the season." Harder had an advantage on most



Popp was sent off and the finely balanced game tipped in Lyon's favour, the French champions scoring four to twist the knife well and truly. In 2020 the teams and outcome were the same but they were less well matched and Lyon earned a 3-1 victory in normal time. It is testament to the influence and brilliance of Harder, though, that in both years, despite being on the losing side, the Danish forward was named European player of the year. Now with Chelsea, she will have another go, in a new set-up and against a different team. "Unfortunately I can tell you what it is like to be on the losing side," she says with a laugh. "It's not a good feeling. It's always nice to get to the final but, when you are there, you want to win it and not being on the winning side is disappointing. To be so close and not get it is tough. So, of course, I'm really motivated." There is an air of resilience about this Chelsea team demonstrated by their battling run to the final. In the last-16 against Atlético Madrid a red card for Sophie Ingle in the 13th minute had Chelsea on the ropes but they weathered the resulting pressure and would go on to win the game 2-0 and the tie 3-1. In the next round, against Harder's former team Wolfsburg, they progressed with a 5-1 aggregate win against the team they had failed to get past three times. In the semi-final against Bayern Munich they became just the third team in the 20-year history of the competition to lose the first leg and still reach the final. "To be 2-1 down in the first leg and then turn it around to win 4-1 at home at Kingsmeadow was an unbelievable feeling," says Harder. "You really know why you play football, why you put so much time in, to win and play games like that. It was amazing." Does that resilience give them an edge? "We still believe that we can turn any game around. The game is 90 minutes, at least 90 minutes, and no matter how the games are turning we know we can come back if we have a setback." Harder arrived at Chelsea after the defeat in last year's final as the world's most expensive player, for a fee of

new arrivals at Chelsea. Her partner, Magda Eriksson, is the captain of the side and she arrived with a deep understanding of the club and its players. "I've been following the team for a long time, with Magda playing here, and I saw the development of the team," she says. "It was so interesting to see what was happening and I just felt like I wanted to be a part of it. That was what was mostly my motivation to come to Chelsea." Magda Eriksson and Pernille Harder celebrate with the WSL trophy this month. Winning alongside Eriksson would be a special moment. "We talked about it the other day, if we would have thought six years ago, when we were at Linköping [the Swedish side where they met], that we would eventually play a Champions League final together, that would have been the biggest dream. Now we get to do it. The biggest thing would be to see Magda lift the trophy, that would be a very proud moment for her and me also." With the pressure on as Chelsea vie for a third trophy of the season - after their WSL title last Sunday and league cup win earlier in the season - it would be easy to imagine that they take football home with them. "We always leave football on the pitch and the good thing is we can be super honest with each other on the pitch, good and bad things or helping each other. Then in private, we are private," she says. What will they do if they win? "For me it's not about framing medals or anything like that. For me it's about the memories and the feelings we have when we win. That's what I remember and I save," says Harder. "If it happens and we win it, the aim again will be the same. It's not the end if we win the Champions League. We want to win the title and the Champions League again and for me that's for the memories and feelings that football brings." She adds, "On and off the pitch, no matter what we are competing in, we both have a winning mentality ... good and bad."

Down but not out: lampooned Allardyce can still make Albion proud

London, May 16 : The summer of 2016 has a lot of answer for. What if England had not been beaten by Iceland in the last 16 of the Euros? What if they had not lost their nerve, if Joe Hart had not made that mistake, if somebody, anybody, had demon-

strated any kind of clarity of vision and attempted a mode of attacking that was not just whacking the ball into the box or giving it to Wayne Rooney? What if they had then scrambled through a quarter-final against the anxious hosts, France, to set up (another) semi-final showdown with Germany? Perhaps Roy Hodgson would have had his contract renewed, perhaps Sam Allardyce would not have been appointed and perhaps Sunderland would be a thriving Premier League side. Think back, to that final league game of 2015-16 at the Stadium of Light: a 3-0 win over Everton in front of jubilant stands to secure survival; Allardyce on the pitch afterwards, tie somewhere near his navel, celebrating before an audience that truly appreciated him; Allardyce downing bottles of lager in a brief post-match press conference; Allardyce with Jim Montgomery, the goalkeeping legend of the 1973 FA Cup final, holding court in the bar of



the Hilton Garden Inn after that. Whatever the symbolic importance of the Papa John's Trophy success, that was probably the last time Sunderland fans were truly happy; certainly the last time it felt the club might be able to sustain itself as a Premier League force. Given what happened as Allardyce took the England job, how a craven FA and hysterical media reaction forced him to resign after a Telegraph sting that proved nothing other than that he was capable of looking slightly undignified after a boozy dinner, and his increasingly gloomy progress through Crystal Palace, Everton and West Brom, it might have been the last time Allardyce was really professionally happy as well. Allardyce has become a figure it is fashionable in certain quarters to mock, the demonic spirit of English football's primitive past, jowly long-ball, POMO and all that. But his demeanour disguises his radical edge. He was a pioneer not only of statistical analysis in English football, but of cryogenic chambers to aid recovery and the possibilities of the loan system. When the offside law began its present evolution, it was he who started experimenting with players lingering behind the opposing line. He

has an inquiring, restless, imaginative and occasionally mischievous mind. When he complained he would get more respect if only he were called "Allardici", he was only half-right; he is representative more generally of the overlooked middle. Even his supporters tend to focus on how he can organise a defence and make a team hard to beat, those grudging acknowledgements that the game may not actually be all rabonas and nutmegs and giff-able content. But even that is slightly to misunderstand Allardyce. His Sunderland were actually defensively fairly fragile, leaking six at Arsenal and four at Manchester City and Tottenham. In the second half of the season they kept only four league clean sheets. What changed as he steered them to safety was that they themselves failed to score in only four games in that period, while putting four past Swansea, and three past Norwich, Chelsea and Everton. What he did was to make the best of what he had, encouraging Patrick van Aanholt's attacking forays from left-back for instance, and augmenting them with January transfers. The central defender Lamine Koné, who scored twice against Everton, may have been the arrival who briefly became a cult figure - before becoming disaffected under David Moyes - but the key signing was probably Wahbi Khazri, whose hunched shuttling on the left liberated Van Aanholt. More than anything else, Allardyce is a pragmatist. There have been the easy sneers that his magic touch has left him as he has been relegated from the Premier League for the first time but there has been an upturn for West Brom - the problem was that it came too late. Their season in effect splits into three parts: there were the first 13 games under Slaven Bilic, which yielded seven points, then the following 10 under Allardyce that brought five. Since fielding the three

January loan signings, Okay Yokuslu, Ainsley Maitland-Niles and Mbaye Diagne, together for the first time in the Valentine's Day draw against Manchester United, West Brom have picked up 14 points from 12 games - not starting but nor is it bottom-three form. Relegation, in truth, was likely from the moment West Brom were promoted. Theirs was a squad that always looked thin and the summer transfer business was dismal. As Bilic fumed, West Brom brought in seven players on permanent deals, three of whom liked to operate on the left of the forward line, while none satisfied the demand for a centre-forward or a holding midfielder. Sam Allardyce offers his hand to Matheus Pereira. Under the former England manager West Brom have picked up 14 points from 12 games: it's not startling, but it is not bottom-three form. Whether that was the fault of the Chinese owners, of the sporting director, Luke Dowling, or of Bilic himself is disputed but the result was that Bilic began the season with an air of disillusionment, as though he were waiting for the sack. Sheffield United's troubles perhaps disguised just how bad West Brom were in those opening weeks. Had it not been for the pandemic, Allardyce would perhaps have been able to bring in his January signings earlier and the upturn would have come sooner. Even here there is a sense of opportunities missed, against United, against Newcastle, against Aston Villa. West Brom were not close to staying up - and Fulham, even more so, can point to the way for a large chunk of the season their results refused to track how well they were playing - but equally it is possible to imagine how with a couple more wins earlier Allardyce might have been able to conjure the survival spirit once again.

internal battling, and the finances are so tight, that there's been an atmosphere of discord. We all have a responsibility to put self-interest to one side for the greater good." Monday's games have been months in the making for the five clubs opening their turnstiles first. "The situation has been very fluid," Fitzpatrick says. "Most rugby league grounds have terracing and for a while it looked as though we wouldn't be able to use it due to social distancing. But we've overcome that and we had a pilot event recently which ticked all the boxes." "It'll be a surreal night but a great one for rugby league, to be among the first to reopen." But in a sport blighted by boardroom discontent the togetherness and satisfaction the fans' return will possibly be a seminal moment for some. "It's so sterile without anyone in the stadiums," Radlinski says. "In a world of madness we are a sport that still practises old-fashioned values and has a strong bond with its supporters. I hope we can all appreciate things like this more than ever before. We need to be more united than ever."

Rugby league fans return : 'They're unique - I can't wait to see them'

London, May 16 : Super League will take centre stage in the UK's sporting landscape as the turnstiles to live events open this week. Rugby league's decision-makers have never been known for their savvy but on Monday evening Super League will take centre-stage in the UK's sporting landscape as the turnstiles to live outside events open for the first time in months. After the competition wisely decided to move five of this weekend's six fixtures to allow spectators to attend, the sport is stealing a march on its rivals. Supporters are the lifeblood of all sports but rugby league is especially reliant on them. Even the competition's leading clubs, with their wealthy backers, have not been immune to the effect of playing behind closed doors for the past year. Now its fans can experience the thrill of live sport once again. The excitement is not confined to the terraces, either. "It's been a soulless experience," says Wigan's chief executive, Kris Radlinski. "There is nothing quite

like getting to a game early and watching the crowd build and the atmosphere intensify. Those moments are really magical. Seeing fans from all different teams side by side, cheering on their club, league fans are truly unique in sport in that sense. I can't wait to see fans inside again." Wigan will play in front of around 4,000 supporters at local rivals Leigh while a similar number will watch



Warrington's game with Huddersfield. "It's shown how fragile we are as a sport, not having supporters here," says the Wolves' chief executive, Karl Fitzpatrick. "We've all pulled together when we needed to and if we wouldn't have done that I'm not sure we'd have survived in one

piece." "To not think any club needs revenue from supporters is delusional. We're not like football, with a mega television deal and huge backing. We need our members and supporters just as much as they need us to provide a bit of relief and entertainment." Radlinski agrees, before revealing the extent of the pandemic's financial impact. "Without the support of the government and the continued backing of fans, rugby league clubs would have ceased to exist," he says. "Fans donated their season-ticket money last year when they could have asked for a refund. It was a leap of faith from them but massive for us - every game without supporters is a loss approaching £100,000. Wigan does not exist without its fans. Simple." That may not sound significant but given how clubs spend around £2m each year on player wages every game without fans is a major loss of income. "There has been so much uncertainty for every sport but it's felt a little bit more significant for rugby league," Radlinski says. "There's been so much

bulge. The noise inside Wembley was extraordinary in that moment, a clamour that erupted into a huge, hot wall of sound as the Leicester players ran to the crowd. Has there ever been a better Cup final-winning goal than this? It is hard to remember one that stands out so starkly, a moment of clarity and space in the middle of all that high-grade hustle. There was still time for another pea-brained intervention from VAR. Ben Chilwell's apparent equaliser was ruled out after another line-drawing exercise. Chilwell had been deemed offside by a millimetre or two (for which he gained no advantage). As ever this is based on the bogus notion that the VAR can judge to a minutely precise degree the moment when a ball is kicked. It is simply bad science, although this time there was no dilution of drama in the stadium, as both sets of fans and players got to celebrate the moment wildly. Somehow Leicester were always going to hang on, helped by one supreme one-handed save from Kasper Schmeichel. Football got something back here too, in a game given its grace note by a goal fit to join that fond old folksy pantheon of Cup final bangers.

Bravura Leicester make Wembley erupt in a huge, hot wall of sound

Leicester, May 16 : With 63 minutes gone at Wembley Luke Thomas, an academy kid from Syston and still only 19, picked up a loose pass and fed it forward to Youri Tielemans in a sudden pocket of green space. Tielemans is the one note of real high-end quality in Leicester City's midfield. In a goalless opening hour at Wembley he had been tight and defensively smart. Leicester had yet to muster a genuine shot on target but they carried a fast-breaking threat. Tielemans himself had produced four snaking crosses from a deep position on the left, looking for space down the side of Chelsea's back three. Now he had some grass in front of him. He started to run. The FA Cup final has its own history of impossibly vivid goals. It's a Wembley thing too. In the old stadium there was something about the basic structure of the netting that just seemed to urge the ball to come clanking down out of those sacred corners. Wembley feels big. That wide open space behind the goals just seems to invite shots from distance. Tielemans found himself beckoned on towards it, heading into the Leicester end, which had already begun to bristle. He took another few steps and looked up. Until that moment this Cup final had been a tight, gripping thing, given a shot of life by

wonderful full-stretch blocks inside the penalty area. What a player he is, and what rich dividend for Leicester's scouting and coaching networks: a central defender who looks capable of playing anywhere, of taking his game to whatever level he chooses. For all their possession Chelsea were blunt in attack. There may be slower wing-back pairings in elite-level football than Marcos Alonso and César Azpilicueta but none spring to mind. At various times in this game Chelsea had six different high-class attackers on the pitch, but it was still hard to see how exactly they were hoping to score a goal. After half-time Leicester began to push a little harder and to play further up the pitch. It was from that advanced position on the left that the pass from Thomas ended up with Tielemans. The FA Cup has a history of great goals, of long shots, of nets bulged. As Tielemans measured his final stride the crowd began to rise with that familiar feeling of time starting to slow, energy being displaced. Tielemans looked up and saw Kepa Arrizabalaga in the centre of his goal, still 25 yards away. There was only one way for this one to go: diagonally, right to left, the ball rising and fading away from Kepa's right hand, then meeting the top corner with that bravura



the surprise of all that energy from the stands. This was the other story at Wembley. Fourteen months on from the shift into the plague times, with its robot crowds and touchline screams, its synthesised intensity, something strange happened. A football match broke out. There was a nice moment as the Leicester players came out before kick-off and the western end of this vast grey bowl was suddenly alive, a wave of warmth rolling around the scattered Leicester City supporters. Fans always clap their teams. But this was something else, a kind of embrace. There was a huge stored-up ovation for Tielemans and Jamie Vardy as they waved and clapped and drank in that heat. At times the sound of a real human crowd felt like having your ears syringed after a year of digital buzz. Chelsea dominated possession for much of the first half as Leicester fell back into a five-strong defensive bolt. Timo Werner took up his familiar position on the halfway line, crouched in the starting blocks for a pass over the top. Time and again he found Wesley Fofana there next to him, a defender with the rare ability to match him over those short distances. Twice Fofana produced

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