

The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

Vol. No. VI ■ Issue No. 93 ■ RNI-ASSEN/2014/58385 | GUWAHATI ■ WEDNESDAY ■ MAY 19, 2021 | PAGES 8 ■ PRICE RS. 7.00

China divorces drop 70%
after controversial '...'

03

Stuart Broad feels former England selector
Ed Smith 'didn't rate me'

07

NEWS IN BRIEF

Two arrested

GUWAHATI, May 18: In a major development, Assam Police arrested two accused in connection with the murder case of businessman Debajit Sinha on Diphu-Dhansiri Road in Karbi Anglong on May 15. Police arrested the two accused - Francis Engti and Waisong Terang on Tuesday. Both of them are residents of Diphu. Police also recovered a pistol along with ammunition. "In connection with Dhansiri murder case, two accused have been apprehended namely Sri Francis Engti R/o Manja and Sri Waisong Terang R/o Diphu.

Chaman Lal Gupta passes away

New Delhi, May 18: Veteran BJP leader and former Union minister Chaman Lal Gupta passed away after a prolonged illness at his residence in Jammu on Tuesday. Gupta was 87 years old. According to his family, Gupta, who tested positive for Covid-19 on May 5, returned home from Narayana hospital on Sunday after successful treatment. A media report quoted his elder son Anil Gupta as saying: "He had tested positive for COVID-19 on May 5 and returned from Narayana hospital on Sunday after successful treatment." BJP leader and former Union minister Chaman Lal Gupta passes away. His condition suddenly deteriorated in the wee hours and he breathed his last around 5.10 am." Anil Gupta added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP national president JP Nadda, Jammu & Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha and other leaders have expressed deep condolences at the demise of the former Union minister.

Covid19 death toll

Guwahati, May 18: The Covid-19 death toll has reached 20 in Lakhimpur district as the pandemic situation is fast getting worse in the district. This was known from the latest Covid bulletin released by the district health department. According to the district health officials, three people lost their lives in Lakhimpur district on Monday. The district's Covid-19 positive cases accumulated to 1,901 with a single-day spike of 107 cases on Monday.

Work on vaccine alternatives for children on priority basis: Delhi CM Kejriwal appeals Centre



New Delhi, May 18: Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Tuesday (May 18) appealed to the Central government to immediately cancel all air services with Singapore, saying a new strain of coronavirus there is said to be "very dangerous" for children. This new strain of the virus could invade India in the form of a third wave, he said. **Contd...Page 6**

India to take part in Global Health Summit co-hosted by Italy, EU on May 21



New Delhi, May 18: India will take part in the Global Health Summit which is being co-hosted by Italy as the Chair of the G20 group and the European Commission this year. India will be represented by its Sherpa for G20 Suresh Prabhu at the meet that will take place on Friday, 21st May. The key outcome of the Global health meet will be the "Rome Declaration" which will focus on lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. Last year G20 grouping had

announced a number of coordinated measures to deal with the pandemic, including the economic fallout. Ahead of the summit, Prime Minister of Italy Mario Draghi said that the summit "will provide a timely opportunity to share the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic. We will discuss how to improve health security, strengthen our health systems and enhance our ability to deal with future crises in a spirit of solidarity." The summit will see the participation of all G20 member countries and 3 guest countries - Singapore, Spain, and the Netherlands. Other than that, **Contd...Page 6**

CBSE 12th Board Exam: Plea In Supreme Court Against Cancelling Exam

New Delhi, May 18: A PIL (Public Interest Litigation) has been filed in the Supreme Court against the cancellation of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class 12 board exams. Tony Joseph, a teacher from Kerala, said in his petition that scrapping exams will be an unfair decision for students. **UPDATE:** Admissions are open at Manipal (MAHE) CLICK here to start your application. "Class 12 exam is an integral part of the life of a student and important for admission to higher **Contd...Page 6**



Assam Reports Record 92 Covid Deaths, Locks Down Travel Within State

Guwahati, May 18: Assam registered 92 COVID-19 fatalities, its highest so far in a single day. The state also reported 6,394 new Covid cases, which is also its biggest in a 24-hour period. Of the new cases, 1,100 were from Guwahati. The positivity rate has dropped to 6.99 percent as the state conducted 91,481 tests on Monday. At 56, the state reported its lowest deaths in two weeks on Sunday. The rate of recovery from the disease, said Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, stands at 85.73 per cent. To cut the virus transmission chain, the Chief Minister has announced a ban on inter-district movement from May 21. "There will be a ban on inter-district movement from Friday. It is necessary to check the spread of COVID-19," Mr Sarma said. During the first wave, Assam employed an

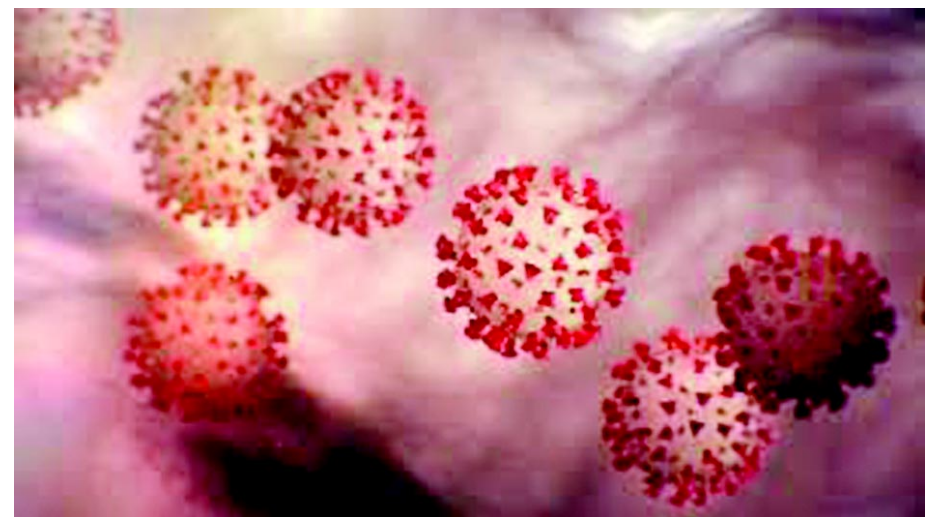


aggressive testing strategy - with tests going up to a lakh on several days. In the past one month, in the middle of a virulent second wave of infections, the state has been able to do on an average only 42,884 tests per day, which is 165 people tested per 1 lakh population, NDTV data analysis show. The data from the Union Health Ministry and Assam Health Department show that the northeast state is among the top five states in the country in terms of percentage of rise in cases in the past fortnight. Assam, over the past 14 days, has reported 69,668 fresh cases, the percentage of change is a whopping 101 **Contd...Page 6**

At 6.99 %, Assam Sees Sharp Dip In Covid Positivity Rate

Guwahati, May 18: Amid the devastating second wave Covid pandemic, Assam has started recording a gradual dip in the case positivity rate. On Monday, the positivity rate stood at 6.99 per cent, while just five days ago on May 13 Covid cases positivity rate was 9.13 per cent. Notably, the positivity rate of the state has decreased in spite of a sharp increase in Covid testing conducted in the state which indicates a dip in positive cases. On May 13, the state registered 5,468 new cases out of 59,594 tests conducted, while, on May 17, 6,394 new cases were detected out of 91,481 tests done.

This data by the state National Health Mission shows that COVID testing has nearly doubled in the last five days, but, the active cases on May 13 was 42,144 and on May 17 it was 44,942. Since the outbreak of the pandemic last year, over 95 lakh Covid tests have been conducted across the state. It may also be mentioned a similar trend could be seen in the month of January where the case positivity rate of 9.2 per cent dipped to 7 per cent between January 13 and 17. Nearly 92,000 tests were conducted by January 17 and the new cases touched almost 6,400 cases. Moreover, the



discharges have shot up too. As of May 13, the state reported a total of 2,70,079 cured patients, and five days later with over 16,000 recoveries, the discharged numbers surged to 2,86,463. The recovery rate has also improved to 85.50 per cent. However, there a grim scenario could be

observed due to Covid fatalities with the state recording the highest single day spike of 92 deaths on Monday. The state so far has recorded 2,271 deaths. As of January 1, 2021 the total Covid Count was 1,049. The death rate of the state has spiked from 0.48 per cent to 0.68 per cent. Assam

Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma informed on Monday that the state has been providing oxygen to six northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, and Nagaland. The state has been producing 80 metric tonnes **Contd...Page 6**

Churning in Maldives raises Delhi's stakes in Indian Ocean. Why Modi should rule the waves

New Delhi, May 18: Maldivian speaker Mohamed Nasheed celebrated his 54th birthday Monday recuperating in a military hospital in Berlin, Germany, days after surviving a bomb attack back home in Male and undergoing several critical, life-saving surgeries. Forensic teams from several countries around

the world, including India, have since flown in trying to get to the bottom of the story. Three people have been picked up and are being investigated. A remote-controlled improvised explosive device (IED), which had been strapped to the side of a motorcycle, was detonated when Nasheed stepped out of his house on 6 May at 8:27 pm. The parliamentary committee on national security services has begun an inquiry. Certainly, the Indian Ocean is astir again. As if the first major bomb blast since 2007, in which 12 tourists

were injured, has not been enough to roil the waves, this tiny South Asian nation of 5 lakh people is staggering under a 60 per cent Covid positivity rate. In absolute terms, 101 people have died so far, but because the population is scattered across scores of islands and atolls, the government is seriously apprehensive about the outbreak. It now seems that the Maldives desperately requires 100,000 vaccine doses that it ordered from the Serum Institute of India (SII), **Contd...Page 6**

Uttar Pradesh: 68% villages free of COVID-19 infection, vaccination registration simplified

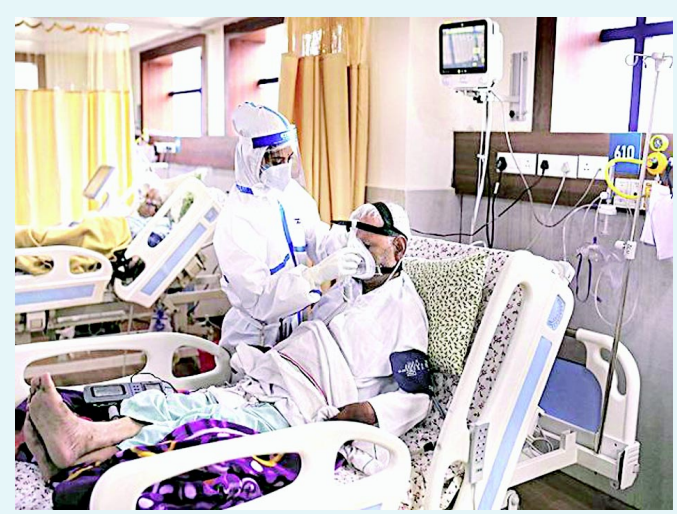
Lucknow, May 18: 68 per cent of the villages in Uttar Pradesh are free of COVID-19 infection, state Additional Chief Secretary of Health Amit Mohan Prasad said on Tuesday (May 18). He added that the state recorded 8,737 new COVID cases, while 21,108 patients were discharged in the last 24 hours. The total number of active cases in UP is 1,36,342. In a bid to simplify the vaccination process, the UP

government has decided to start registrations at common service centres across all districts. The move is aimed at helping people in rural parts of the state register on the CoWin app for vaccination. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has said that about 1.3 lakh such centres will be opened across the state. "To increase the pace of vaccination in rural **Contd...Page 6**

270 doctors succumbed to Covid-19 in India, fifty died in one day: IMA

New Delhi, May 18: A total of 270 doctors across the country succumbed to the Covid-19 infection in the second wave of the pandemic, the Indian Medical Association (IMA) on Tuesday said. 50 among those died on a single day. Shockingly, only 3 per cent of these doctors who passed away were fully vaccinated, the report said. Bihar saw the maximum number of 78 deaths of medical practitioners, followed by Uttar Pradesh (37), Delhi (29) and Andhra Pradesh (22). According to the IMA Covid-19 registry, 748 doctors had succumbed to the disease in the first wave of the

pandemic. 270 doctors succumbed to Covid-19 in India, fifty died in one day: IMA. IMA general secretary Dr. Jayesh Lele said that many doctors have not taken the vaccine and the organisation is doing all it can to inoculate the workers. "We want to highlight that the doctors are understaffed and overworked. They sometimes work for 48 hours at a stretch without any rest. This adds to the viral load and they ultimately succumb to the infection," he added. IMA president Dr. JA Jayalal said that last year 748 doctors across India succumbed to Covid-19, while in the current wave, **Contd...Page 6**



CM visits TMCH and reviews Covid situation in Sonitpur

CM to make late night video calls to doctors on duty

Guwahati, May 18: Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today visited Tezpur Medical College and Hospital (TMCH) and took stock of the Covid scenario in Sonitpur district with DC, SP, senior doctors and other officials. Expressing concern over 10 percent increase in Covid positivity rate in the district, the Chief Minister asked the district administration to intensify containment measures through micro containment zones. The Chief Minister took stock of availability of ICU beds, oxygen, medicine etc. and directed TMCH authorities to increase number of ICU beds from its present strength of 40 to 70. He also instructed principal TMCH to ensure service of senior doctors in the rank of Associate Professor, Assistant Professor or Registrar at nighttime to reduce the mortality of critical Covid patients during late night hours. Chief Minister Sarma said that he would personally make video calls at 2 am every

night to doctors on duty as no complacency could be allowed during these difficult times. The Chief Minister also instructed

Das who was present in the meeting to pursue the matter with NHM Assam for completion of the project. He directed PWD (Build-

ing) to complete the work of laying more oxygen pipes in the Govt. Hospitals at the earliest. He directed the district administration and police to enforce strict restrictions to contain the pandemic and directed not to allow those Covid Positive patients above the age of 50 years home quarantine if they do not have separate toilets in their households. Later talking to media persons, the Chief Minister said that the district administration has been directed to help the poor people staying in containment zones. He also informed that the district administration would bear the cost of transporting Covid-19 patients from death beds to the cremation ground and conduct cremation free of cost. He further said there is no scarcity of doctors in the state and dedicated service would be provided to Covid patients round the clock. MPs Pallab Lochan Das and Topon Kumar Gogoi, MLAs Prithviraj Rabha, Ganesh Limbu and Krishna Kamal Tanti, DC and SP Sonitpur, Joint Director of Health Services, Principal and senior officials of TMCH were present in the meeting.



Health Department to expedite conversion of Sirajuli and Ghoramari MPHCs into Covid care centres and asked Urban Development Minister Ashok Singhal over phone and MP Pallab Lochan

ing) to complete the work of laying more oxygen pipes in the Govt. Hospitals at the earliest. He directed the district administration and police to enforce strict restrictions to contain the pandemic and

Aalo Town Faces Water Crisis due to Extensive Damage of Main Supply Pipe



Mechuka, 18 May : The Aalo town is facing acute water supply for the last three days due to extensive damages caused to 300mm DI Pipe catering water needs of the town. The damage was due to erosion triggered by monsoon. The huge accumulation of sand silts and debris above the pipe due to road construction works that is aligned along with pipe of PHED. The department of PWD and contractor involved in the construction work is also assisting

the PHED to restore it at the earliest. The JE PHED, Tumba Ete who is supervising work disclosed that Falkland are being pressed into service to clear the debris and men and materials are being placed to join the pipes that have been broken into pieces. The department of PHED is facing such restoration works ever since the road construction works began at the site and in monsoon pipes are always damaged to give water scarcity problems.

Let us join hands to save our nature: Padma Hazarika



Biswanath Chari, May 18: 'The ecological balance of the earth has been decaying day by day. In this crucial hour, we all have to stand united to protect the ecology' this was observed by Padma Hazarika, the MLA of Sootea LAC on Tuesday. He further appealed to the general people to come forward to plant trees as much as possible. In this connection, a green mission of planting one lakh saplings before the world environment day this

year has been taken out by Sootea MLA Padma Hazarika at Kanyaka Bohumukhi Krikhsi Pam located on the river side of the Jiya Bharali River here. The plantation drive which began at 7 AM was formally inaugurated by Rohit Sribastav, the Commanding Officer of 134 Assam Regiment in presence of Sootea MLA Padma Hazarika. A total of five thousand valuable saplings were planted with the help of army personnel on May 18.

447 cases recorded, two more die of COVID at Nagaon

NAGAON, May 18: 447 more fresh COVID positive cases were recorded today, taking the total cumulative active cases in the district to 2738 while two more COVID patients succumbed to the virus today. Including these two death cases, total 32 people succumbed to COVID 19 in the district till filing of this report, sources said. Meanwhile 97 COVID positive patients who were undergoing treatment in hospital as well as in their homes were recovered from infection of the virus. Sources claimed that among those who tested positive today, 62 were admitted to Nagaon COVID hospital as well as other institutions for isolation while the rest were put in home quarantine. Rapid Antigen Test was conducted on 5418 people today while RT-PCR test was conducted on 24 swab samples. Significantly, Nagaon MP Pradyut Bordoloi inaugurated an MP COVID Care Centre near Nagaon Civil Gate Chari today. Inaugurating the COVID Care Centre, MP Bordoloi however claimed that the party volunteers would carry out their selfless services for round the clock and would try their best to provide help to those COVID victims in the constituency.

We want to co-operate the government to combat the ongoing pandemic situation in the district. Besides, it will work as a complement to government services to deal the COVID scenario in the constituency, Bordoloi said while interacting with the local media persons here after inauguration of the COVID Care Centre. He however said that COVID test was conducted only on 5 percent people in the Nagaon Parliamentary constituency while the RT-PCR test was conducted only on 2 percent people. He appealed to the government to set up a RT-PCR test centre even at Nagaon so that the COVID test percentage could be increased. On the newly appointed Superintendent of Police, Anand Mishra (IPS) took stocks about 190 stranded bus drivers as well as helpers of Kerala at Khotikotia bus parking center in the town. Significantly, these people from Kerala were being stranded in the town for over a month due to the ongoing COVID situation. SP Mishra however ensured their safe return to their native villages in Kerala soon and said that the district administration would provide food and other to all of them till their return to Kerala.

Renovated Building Inaugurated

Golaghat, May 18: The renovated building of TB Control Centre Golaghat was today inaugurated by Deputy Commissioner of Golaghat Bivash Chandra Modi. In the inaugural ceremony Joint Director of Health Services Golaghat Dr Arun Mahanta, District TB Officer Dr Sunita Ekka along

with several others were present. The TB Center located at Station Road area in Golaghat got a grand look with an aid of ten lacs rupees provided by the DC. The newly renovated TB Center has facilities of laboratory, medicine room, medicine store, computer room, office and a meeting hall.

Vi Announces Covid-19 Special Relief Offers for 60 Mn Low Income Users

Extends benefits worth up to Rs. 2,940 Mn to the deeply impacted customer base

Guwahati, May 18 : Vi, India's leading telecom operator, today announced special Covid-19 relief offers for its 60 million low-income customers to help them stay connected at all times during the ongoing second wave of the

pandemic. *As a special relief offer, Vi will provide Rs. 49 pack Free to over 60 million low income customers due to the current situation. The pack offers talktime of Rs. 38 and 100 MB data with a validity of 28 days. With this Vi is hopeful of enabling its customers to stay connected safely, and have access to all necessary information in these challenging times. As a special gesture, with this one-time offer, ViL

will be extending benefits worth up to Rs. 2,940 Mn to the low income group users in the country. * Additionally, Vi has also launched a new Combo Voucher RC79 offering huge benefits to a large base of the population. This special recharge comes with the benefit of Double Talktime of Rs. 128 (64+64) and 200 MB of data for a validity of 28 days for a limited time period.

Micro Containment Zone declared in Lakhimpur district

North Lakhimpur, May 18: The geographical areas of Maji Gaon under Subansiri Revenue Circle and Padumoni Kekuri village under Kadam Revenue Circle in Lakhimpur district were declared as Micro Containment Zone on Monday. Lakhimpur District Magistrate Khageswar Pegu, vide an order issued on Monday, ordered immediate sealing of the areas in order to arrest the alarming rise of the Covid-positive cases in the localities. The sealing areas are -- Vill. -- Maji Gaon (Boundary: East: State Highway 22, West -- Maji Gaon paddy field, North -- Maji Gaon paddy field, South -- Maji Gaon Naamghar) and, Vill. -- Padumoni Kekuri (Boundary: East: NH - 15, West: Railway Track, North: Padumoni Park, South: 14th Mile area). The order shall be effective from 8 P.M. of 17-05-2021 for an initial period of 14 days, stated in the order. Notably, total

11 nos. of COVID-19 positive cases were detected at Maji Gaon while total of 14 nos. were detected at Padumoni Kekuri in the second wave of the pandemic.

Covid Update from Golaghat

Golaghat, May 18: Today 156 new Covid positive cases were reported in Golaghat. One person named Suit Rahman (42) from Balijan, Bokakhat succumbed to Covid today. With this Covid death toll rises to 31. Meanwhile 149 Covid patients got discharged today. At present the number of Covid Active cases in Golaghat is 914 and Active Containment Zones are 7.

India tops list of media victims to Covid-19, passes Brazil with over 200 casualties



Geneva/ Guwahati, May 18 : India has overtaken Brazil in the number of journalists died of Covid-19, the Press Emblem Campaign (<https://pressemblem.ch/pec-news.shtml>) announced in Geneva on Tuesday. At least 1,330 journalists have died in 76 countries from the coronavirus since March 2020. India has just passed the milestone of 200 journalists dead from Covid-19, just ahead of Brazil (194). In India, 69 journalists have died from Covid since the beginning of May, an average of four a day, a majority of them in their 40s or 50s. Outside India, the largest increases have been in recent weeks in Colombia, Argentina and Nepal. "The pandemic continues to ravage the media community in South Asia and Latin America, as the death toll has declined elsewhere," said PEC General Secretary Blaise Lempen. "Immunization remains insufficient in developing countries and journalists in these countries pay a very high price for having to inform," he added. The PEC deplores these unprecedented losses among the media and sends its condolences to the families and colleagues of the victims. PEC India Representative Nava Thakuria added that "the actual number of Covid-19 victims is certainly

higher, as many media houses avoid reporting their own victims as well as corona-positive colleagues (not to speak of special patronages to them)." Some of recent journalist victims to Covid-19 in India include Saroj Tripathi, Anjan Bandyopadhyay, Rajesh Pati, Kailash Chandra Sahoo, Ratikant Bal, Bishnu Prasad Patra, Sunil Jain, Mohammad Ali, Mahadev Prakash, Sandip Jagdale, Jayatheerth Kagalkar, AR Wig, Akhilesh Kr Mohan, Satyendra P Srivastava, Sumanta Mohanty, Prakash Deshpande, Rattan Lal, Shishir Dwivedi, Shiv A Pateria, Shivacharan Kalita, Rubul Dihingiya, etc. After India and Brazil, Peru has the most victims among journalists (140) ahead of Mexico (109), Colombia (61), Italy (55), Bangladesh (52), the United States (49), Ecuador (48), Great Britain (28), Argentina (27), Dominican Republic (27), Pakistan (26), Turkey (25), Iran (21), Russia (21), Venezuela (19), Panama (16), Bolivia (16), Spain (15), and Ukraine (15). The media community in Latin America is the most affected, with more than half of the victims since March 2020 (718). Asia follows with 326 deaths, ahead of Europe 181, Africa 59 and North America 50.

Guwahati, May 18 : Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today visited the residence of abducted ONGC employee Ritul Saikia at Titabor in Jorhat district and met his family members. While interacting with his parents and wife, Sarma informed that all-out effort has been made to bring back Saikia safely. MPs Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, Topon Kumar Gogoi and Pallab Lochan Das and local MLA Bhaskarjyoti Baruah were present during the visit of the Chief Minister. Later talking to media persons, Chief Minister Sarma informed that as per state government sources, Ritul Saikia is at India-Myanmar border and in good health. He said the State government is leaving no stone unturned to ensure his safe return. Replying to a query regarding the ceasefire called by ULFA (I), Dr. Sarma termed it a positive development saying that several issues were involved in the dialogue process. He however viewed that there would be a renewed boost to peace and tranquillity in the state if dialogue process begins honouring the limitations of all. Urging Paresh Baruah to shun violence and join the path of peace, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma said that people of the State do not want incidents like grenade blast at Tingrai or abduction of Ritul Saikia, rather they want peace. He informed that ULFA (I) did not call ceasefire in consultation with the government and if discussion is to be carried forward there is a need to frame certain ground rules. Further informing that ULFA

CM visits abducted ONGC employee Ritul Saikia's residence, interacts with family



(I) has called ceasefire in view of the outbreak of COVID-19 and also to give an opportunity to the new government, the Chief Minister categorically stated that government doors are always open if ULFA (I)

desires to join peace process by preparing ground rules. Nevertheless, there is hope in the unilateral ceasefire announced by ULFA (I) and this must be considered in good stead, the Chief Minister observed.

China divorces drop 70% after controversial 'cooling off' law



London, May 18 : The number of divorces in China dropped more than 70% in the first quarter of this year, after a controversial law forcing a "cooling-off period" for couples came into effect. According to data published by the ministry of civil affairs, 296,000 divorces were registered during the first three months of 2021, down from 1.05m in the previous quarter, and 1.06m in the same time period the year before, according to state media. China's divorce rate had been rising steadily, and the simultaneously declining marriage rate has been linked to the low birthrates driving China's demographic crisis. In response, the government has promoted traditional family values and marriage, and discouraged divorce. The cooling-off period is part of a sweeping civil code that came into effect on 1 January, covering laws including marriage, adoption and property ownership. The law requires couples who are mutually seeking a divorce to wait for 30 days before formalising it. If the couples don't show up for two appointments between 30 and 60 days after applying, their application is automatically cancelled. The cooling-off period isn't supposed to apply to those divorces involving domestic violence, but several cases of violence or murder have raised questions about the reality of this in practice. The announcement of the cooling-off period sparked anger at the time, especially among women, and drew suggestions from young people that they were now more likely to avoid marriage altogether.

'A new Chile': political elite rejected in vote for constitutional assembly

London, May 18 : Chile's established political elite has been roundly rejected at the polls six months ahead of a pivotal presidential election, as the country turned to a progressive new generation to write the next chapter in its history. Resounding victories for leftist and independent candidates saw rightwing politicians crash to a dismal electoral defeats alongside those with links to Chile's transition to democracy. Across two days of voting, Chileans cast votes for the 155 delegates who will write a new constitution to replace Augusto Pinochet's 1980 document and the neoliberal model it enshrined. People also voted for regional governors for the first time ever, as well as for councillors and mayors - with candidates backed by president Sebastián Piñera's Chile Vamos coalition faring poorly in each case. Crucially, with the government coalition's list securing only 37 seats in the assembly, Chile's traditional right-wing fell well short of the one-third bloc it had targeted to obstruct the inclusion of progressive articles the constitution. "Many people are saying that yesterday was the day that the transition to democracy finally reached its conclusion," said Verónica Figueroa Huencho, an academic at the University of Chile's school of public affairs. "The participation of indigenous peoples and independent candidates in a gender-equal constitutional assembly is a launchpad for a new Chile." The 155-member assembly will include 47 independent candidates and 17 representing the country's 10 indigenous groups, whose participation was guaranteed for the first time in Chile. Gender parity had been assured before the vote took place - for the first time ever in a national constitutional project - yet female candidates performed so well that the eventual adjustment ended up favouring men. In late 2019, a mass protest movement exploded in Chile, targeting the country's insulated and disconnected political elite as well as inequalities engendered by the dictatorship's economic model. From the mass of demands that arose from the demonstrations, a constitutional referendum was scheduled as political parties' response to the crisis. On 25 October 2020, Chileans headed to the polls for the plebiscite and an emphatic 78% of voters opted to draft a new constitution. As people gathered in Plaza Italia in



Santiago that night, dubbed Plaza Dignidad as it became the epicentre of the protest movement, the word "Reborn" was projected triumphantly onto a nearby building - but the rejuvenation of the political landscape was only finalised when Chileans came to vote this weekend. Candidates who stoked the sentiments of the protests performed strongly, as did those without the baggage of political affiliation. "This weekend we have seen the categorical rejection of the constitution and the political culture it fomented," said Fernando Atria, a law professor who has campaigned in favour of writing a new constitution and was elected to the assembly over the weekend. "The current constitution was designed to prevent transformation and progress, but our role now is to create a new political system that is capable of responding to the demands of the people." Candidates backed by the government also did poorly in local elections, losing important mayorships and failing to force their way into gubernatorial run-offs. In an address from the presidential palace last night, Piñera recognised that Chile's "traditional political forces" were "not in tune with people's demands". "This is the triumph of social and political unity," declared Santiago's mayor-elect, Irací Hassler, in the city's Plaza de Armas, flanked by several of the women who won their elections. "This is the beginning of a significant change in the way we do politics. The protest movement, feminist strikes and socio-environmental movements are here to stay." Communist party candidate Irací Hassler celebrates her election as mayor of Santiago. Hassler usurped incumbent Felipe Alessandri, who was running for a second term backed by Piñera's coalition, to claim the district in the heart of the capital for Chile's Communist party. A period of solemn introspection has begun for the country's traditional

Nasa leads push for electric planes in next frontier of cutting emissions

Washington, May 18 : Over the next year, at a research site on the fringes of the Mojave desert in California, Nasa will hunt for a breakthrough against one of the climate crisis's most stubborn challenges - how to eliminate carbon pollution from aviation via a new generation of electric airplanes. Prodded by Joe Biden's quest to slash the US's planet-heating emissions to net zero, Nasa is corralling companies to demonstrate improved ways to power aircraft via batteries rather than jet fuel, with the aim of phasing in electric flights for Americans within the next 15 years. The demonstration tests of electric propulsion will be overseen by Nasa's Armstrong Flight Research Center, located north of Los Angeles, the site of several previous landmarks such as the first crewed plane to break the speed of sound. Breakthroughs of similar importance can be made to tackle the growing, and unsolved, problem of how to curb planet-heating gases belched out by the tangle of commercial flights that crisscross the world. Electric planes may be, finally, getting ready to take off. "Industry used to scoff at the idea of electric planes but that's no longer the case, they are very interested in this," said Jim Heidmann, manager of advanced air transport technology at Nasa's Glenn Research Center, which operates an electric flight test facility near Cleveland, Ohio. Nasa has been working on electric

planes for the past decade, grappling with laws of physics that haven't dogged the mainstream adoption of electric cars. Currently, to power a 737-size jet with electricity would require a battery the size of the plane itself. "That's just not feasible, it would be too heavy to take off, let alone fly," Heidmann said. "Weight is quite a bit more important for planes than cars." A long, international flight on a large plane may



have to rely upon a hybrid model of battery and jet fuel, a sort of Prius of the skies, but advances in lithium-ion battery technology and other components are also leading to the development of smaller, propeller-driven electric aircraft that are now coming to fruition. Nasa has created the X-57, an experimental two-seater electric plane it expects will have a range of about 100 miles and a cruising speed of 172mph. Private companies, meanwhile, are eyeing smaller regional flights of up to 500 miles as a first step. Last summer, a modified Cessna that can carry nine passengers made a successful 30-minute flight in Washington state, a journey that was more cost effective, as well as cleaner and quieter, than if it had run on aviation fuel, according to AeroTEC and magniX, the companies behind the feat. "Initially we will get to

planes carrying up to 20 people, while the technology Nasa is working on will stretch that perhaps to planes with 100 people," said Kevin Noertker, co-founder of Ampaire, a California-based firm recently acquired by SurfAir Mobility, another aviation company, that has run tests of a six-seater electric plane in Hawaii and plans to further try out its technology in the UK later this year. "For that regional aviation, commuter

planes, it's a no-brainer. I think by the early 2030s we'll be able to deliver electrified planes that are larger and higher-performance and for the very big planes, some sort of hybrid. "What was billed as the world's first commercial electric airplane - a 62-year-old, six-passenger DHC-2 de Havilland Beaver seaplane retrofitted with a 750hp electric magni500 propulsion system - flies in Vancouver, Canada, in 2019. Noertker said technology improvements and the push from the Biden administration to electrify transportation is "tremendously exciting". He added: "This is a transformational moment in the aviation industry, it's an inflection point," he said. But significant barriers remain. Jet fuel is still far more energy-dense than batteries, meaning the technology isn't yet ready for universal adoption. There are other issues,

too - aviation regulations aren't geared towards electric planes, airlines produce thousands rather than millions of units unlike the car industry and there is a certain level of public nervousness about being propelled into the skies by avant-garde technology. But airlines are coming under increasing pressure to cut emissions in order to address the climate crisis, particularly given the shift to clean energy already under way in the power sector and other modes of transportation. Before the Covid-19 pandemic, which has badly hit the industry, airlines around the world carried a record 4.3 billion passengers, with carbon dioxide emissions leaping 33% in the six years to 2019. The airline industry accounts for about 2% of global emissions but this share is set to increase as flights rebound and other sectors start embracing renewable energy. Researchers have warned that air travel could eat up as much as a quarter of the "carbon budget" the world has left to avoid global heating of more than 1.5C, a point at which civilization will face punishing climate disasters. Various airlines have promised to cut their emissions to net zero by 2050 but none can yet vow this will be through ditching jet fuel and going electric. Other avenues being looked at include hydrogen-based fuels, carbon "offsets" where forests and other carbon-rich sites are protected or an ethanol-based fuel derived from the gut bacteria found in rabbits, which has been touted by the Virgin Atlantic founder, Sir Richard Branson. A combination of different approaches may prove the way forward. "Many of the airlines are on the sidelines looking at what we are doing and it's our goal to go as fast as possible to get them those solutions," said Noertker. "This has already caught the public attention - just look at the rise of flight shaming, or France cutting short-haul flights where you can take the train instead. Call me an optimist, but coming out of this pandemic things will be shaken up and the industry will be more accepting of this technology. Things are going to change."

Petra Diamonds pays £4.3m to Tanzanians 'abused' by its contractors

London, May 18 : The British mining company Petra Diamonds has agreed to pay £4.3m in compensation to dozens of Tanzanians who allegedly suffered serious human rights abuses at a mine famed for producing a flawless pink diamond for one of the Queen's favourite brooches. The 71 Tanzanian claimants, represented in the London high court by the British law firm Leigh Day, alleged grave violations by the company, among them being shot, beaten, stabbed, assaulted, detained in cramped and filthy holding cells, and handcuffed to hospital beds. The abuses were allegedly carried out by security personnel contracted by Petra's local subsidiary, Williamson Diamonds Ltd, which has a majority share of the mine, and by Tanzanian police who worked at and around the mine. Ten of the claims were brought by family members of illegal diggers allegedly killed at the mine in Shinyanga, one of Tanzania's poorest regions. An additional 25 claims are being investigated as part of the settlement, which could increase the total payout. In a statement, the London Stock Exchange-listed company, which says it is an "ethical diamond seller", noted that it had

appointed a new security contractor, closed the on-site lock-up where the UK corporate watchdog Rights and Accountability in Development (Raid) claimed to have found evidence that local residents had been detained and beaten, and launched an independent grievance mechanism to resolve future complaints transparently and quickly. The company said it would also fund community projects and establish a medical support programme. "Petra acknowledges that past incidents have taken place that regrettably resulted in the loss of life, injury and the mistreatment of illegal diggers," the statement said. "The agreement reached with the claimants, combined with the other actions put in place, are aimed at providing redress and preventing the possibility of future incidents." Petra had agreed the settlement



on the basis of "no admission of liability", it said. George Joseph Bwisige, leader of a group seeking compensation for abuses at the mine, said: "I have been waiting a long time for Petra Diamonds to recognise what its operations did to me and fellow members of my community." Anneke Van Woudenberg, executive director of Raid, said: "Petra Diamonds should allow effective independent monitoring of the security and human rights situation going forward. Without this, it will be hard to have faith that the company has truly changed its ways."

Rijksmuseum slavery exhibition confronts cruelty of Dutch trade

Amsterdam, May 18 : The aim of a first exhibition on the Dutch slave trade to be shown at the Rijksmuseum, launched on Tuesday by King Willem-Alexander, is not to be "woke" but to be a "blockbuster" telling a truer story of the Golden Age, the director general of the national institution has said. Taco Dibbitts said his museum had no intention of taking sides in a political and cultural debate but that the royal visit, broadcast live on national television, highlighted that the wealth bestowed and cruelty endured was not just relevant to the descendants of those enslaved. The Slavery exhibition, showcasing 140 objects, ranging from two Rembrandt portraits of married and lavishly wealthy owners of enslaved people to a display of ankle chains, examines 10 lives caught up in the Dutch slave trade between the early 17th century and 1863, when the practice was finally made illegal in Suriname and the Antilles. An audio guide for the exhibition includes the

voice and thoughts of a Ma Chichi, a woman born into slavery in 1853, who in turn tells how her grandmother, enslaved in 18th-century Curaçao, urged her to always remember that she was equal to anyone. "She never did what the lords wanted," Chichi says in the recording dating from 1958, when she was 105 years old. Valika Smeulders, a curator of the exhibition and the Rijksmuseum's head of history, said it had been vital to unearth oral history due to the lack of property and written

evidence of enslaved people. "[Chichi] talks about her grandmother telling her you are equal to everybody else, you are equal to the children of the master of the house," she said. "It gives you a female perspective, which is pretty rare, and it gives you the perspective of the people who were so aware of their humanity even though they lived in a system that took all that humanity away from them." Dutch traders shipped over 600,000 Africans to north and South America and between 660,000 and 1.1 million people around the Indian ocean. Last year King Willem-Alexander apologised for the "excessive violence" of the Dutch colonialists in Indonesia. There remains a live debate in the Netherlands



about the treatment of empire and slavery in schools and public places through street names and statues, as there has been in the UK. But while Dibbitts said the museum did not want to instruct people on what to think, it had to "strive to be completer". "We are the museum for everybody, so it's very important to listen but I've also always said ... that in the end you also have to take decisions, because you can't accommodate everything," he said. "You take the decisions about the people you choose to tell the story about, who you involve. I mean if people want to see it as a woke exhibition, fine, but that's not what we are after ... I hope Slavery will be a blockbuster exhibition so a lot of people get to know it," he said. "And that's also why we made an online version of it and why it's incorporated in school programmes. So ... people who haven't thought about it think about it, and also keep on emphasising that it's something that concerns us all."

THE ASSAM RISING

VOL. NO. VI, ISSUE NO. 93 WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2021

Israeli airstrikes and Hamas rocket barrages

Biden has issued a statement for the first time expressing support for a ceasefire between Israel and Gaza's militant rulers, Hamas, after a phone conversation with the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. However, the US president stopped short of calling for an immediate halt to the eight days of Israeli airstrikes and Hamas rocket barrages that have killed more than 200 people, the vast majority of them Palestinian. "The president reiterated his firm support for Israel's right to defend itself against indiscriminate rocket attacks," the White House statement said after the phone call, the second known call between the leaders in three days. "He encouraged Israel to make every effort to ensure the protection of innocent civilians. The two leaders discussed progress in Israel's military operations against Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza. The president expressed his support for a ceasefire and discussed US engagement with Egypt and other partners towards that end." Israel carried out a fresh wave of airstrikes in the pre-dawn hours of Tuesday, levelling a building in Gaza City. The Israeli military said it had fired 100 bombs and missiles against 65 targets. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The military said it also shot down a drone "approaching the Israeli border" in the north-east, far from the Gaza fighting. It did not say where the drone originated, and the army could not immediately be reached for comment. It is possible the drone came from Syria. Israeli reports quoting military officials suggested that Israeli forces wanted to continue their military operations for another day or two before withdrawing. Netanyahu told Israeli security officials late on Monday that Israel would "continue to strike terror targets" in Gaza "as long as necessary in order to return calm and security to all Israeli citizens". Meanwhile, the US blocked – for the third time in a week – the adoption of a joint UN security council statement calling for a halt to Israeli-Palestinian violence. The White House press secretary, Jen Psaki, and the national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said the US was focusing instead on "quiet, intensive diplomacy". The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, speaking in Denmark on Monday, said the US was ready to help if Israel and Hamas signalled interest in ending hostilities – but that the US wasn't demanding that they do so. "Ultimately it is up to the parties to make clear that they want to pursue a ceasefire," Blinken said, before noting that it was "a big world and we do have responsibilities". Protests were expected across the region on Tuesday in response to a call by Palestinian citizens of Israel for a general strike. The protest has the support of Fatah, the party of the Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas. The latest outbreak began in East Jerusalem last month when Israeli police cracked down on Palestinian public gatherings during Ramadan amid the threatened eviction of Palestinian families by Jewish settlers. Tensions exploded last week after Israeli police wounded hundreds of Palestinians during protests, and officers in riot gear stormed al-Aqsa mosque – the third holiest site in Islam. Hamas then began firing rockets toward Jerusalem, triggering the Israeli assault on Gaza. Gaza health officials put the Palestinian death toll at 212, including 61 children and 36 women, since hostilities began last week. Ten people have been killed in Israel, including two children. A US administration official familiar with Monday's call told Associated Press the decision to not explicitly demand a ceasefire was intentional. Biden and top aides are concerned about the mounting bloodshed and loss of innocent life, but the statement's wording reflects White House determination to support Israel's right to defend itself from Hamas, the unnamed official said. Biden has been facing increasing pressure from his own party to take a tougher line towards Israel and press for an immediate ceasefire. There was outrage from some Democrats over a Washington Post report that the administration had approved the sale to Israel of \$735m-worth of precision-guided bombs. On Monday night, the top US military officer, Army Gen Mark Milley, warned that the violence could spread. "My assessment is that you risk broader destabilization and you risk a whole series of negative consequences if the fighting continues," Milley, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, told reporters before landing in Brussels on Monday for talks with Nato allies. "It's in no one's interest to continue fighting." President Abdel Fatah al-Sisi of Egypt, which has long acted as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, said on Monday a ceasefire could be within reach. On Monday, the Israeli army said it launched artillery towards Lebanon in response to rocket fire from the neighbouring country.

In the age of Zoom, it is challenging to maintain eye contact. What can we do to fix it?

The pandemic has exacerbated an already troubling trust deficit across political, economic and demographic divides. Research shared just before the pandemic's onset uncovered that millennials are reluctant to trust government, business leaders, corporations, social and mass media or even traditional social institutions. Meanwhile, a recent Canadian survey found that half of respondents believe business leaders are purposely trying to mislead them, and just under half believe the same about government. The decline in trust is understandable, a predictable consequence of very real failures in leadership. But something else is happening as well. The pandemic has forced most of us to move our lives on to screens. And as we get more comfortable hiding behind screens, rarely receiving and making eye contact, we are also handicapping our ability to trust. Trust is the bedrock of civilization, and living through screens is taking a significant psychological toll. Researchers have found that real and direct eye contact holds our attention. As psychologist Christian Jarrett explains, eye contact forces us to make sense of the fact that we are dealing with the mind of another person looking at us, and shapes our perception of that other who meets our gaze. Perhaps most importantly for this context, direct eye contact promotes trust when folks are saying things that we're not so sure about. Announcements of a Zoom-infused future – like recent news that Ontario schools boards must offer virtual learning as an option for the entire 2021-22 school year, or that certain businesses are selling off their real estate



and making a permanent shift to remote work – are very worrisome. In researching my book, *Connected Capitalism*, I watched award-winning puppeteer Ronnie Burkett not only delight an audience, but call on them to perform essential tasks in the show, like adjust the lighting, music and act out supporting roles as amateur puppeteers. When I asked Burkett how he got a diverse crowd of strangers to trust one another enough to work together in this unexpected manner, he attributed it to eye contact. He explained that we declare ourselves with eye contact. A gaze is like saying "I disagree with you but keep talking to me." Burkett's eye contact invited attachment and a feeling of safety for the audience. But feeling safe doesn't mean we aren't expected to be active. It simply enforces the sense that we can trust our cooperative partners; that they have our best interests at heart even as we are challenged to push ourselves to do something novel. And now, in the age

of Zoom, it is challenging to find and maintain eye contact. This single most powerful tool for fostering trust and strengthening relationships has largely gone missing. So what can we do to fix it? First, knowing all this, make an extra effort to engage in and receive eye contact in all of your off-screen, in-real-life interactions. Second, compensate for the loss of this tool with an effort to project trustworthiness. Jay Barney, a professor in strategic management at the University of Utah, defines trustworthiness as the attribute of being worthy of the trust of others in not exploiting any adverse selection or moral hazard. What is the difference, then, between trust and trustworthiness? Trust is a mutual effort allowing an existing relationship to operate with minimal stress. Seeking to be seen as trustworthy, on the other hand, is an individual initiative directed at those who we have yet to meet. It need not be reciprocated to be valuable. And it will

enable us to partially compensate for the trust deficit in the post-Zoom era as we re-enter the world to try and build connections. Third, normalize friendship in spaces that need trust. Viewing friendship as, for example, a meaningful work resource may seem strange. But as social beings, we constantly engage in efforts to influence others to collaborate or co-operate. What motivates co-operation? Sometimes I co-operate with you because I believe that doing so is consistent with my principles, so trust is a secondary consideration. But sometimes co-operation is born of a relational motivation, based on the need for identification through social relationships. This means that I choose to co-operate with you because I want and expect to establish or maintain a satisfying relationship with you, usually based on reciprocity. Here, trust looms large. And if I can't stimulate it with eye contact, I can compensate with the language of friendship. This notion may not sit well with some. But cutting-edge research demonstrates the decision to engage in pro-social behaviours stems primarily from intuition. When we co-operate, it's not because we engaged in a deep analysis and calculated it as worthwhile. It's actually because of feelings. Without eye contact, we need to boost these relational feelings with words. Bottom line? Trust after Zoom will be tough. But projecting trustworthiness and friendship in places where we are used to being more transactional can help. The ConversationDavid Weitzner, Assistant professor, Administrative Studies, York University, CanadaThis article is republished from The Conversation under a Creative Commons license. Read the original article.

Less than 4% vaccinated - Transgender Indians have been 'othered' by vaccines and forms



India is aiming for higher and wider vaccination targets to tackle the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic, but transgender persons are still getting 'othered' in the process. Whether it be through outreach and awareness programmes or through Covid testing and vaccine registration forms. Dhananjay Chauhan, a leading transgender activist from Chandigarh who got her first jab of the vaccine last month, told me she was shocked when she had to unwillingly

pick 'others' as her gender because there was no other option. "I am not others," she says. "Why can't they write transgender instead of this 'others' and all? It is so sad." Despite the NALSA ruling, being discriminated against so casually on most occasions exacerbates the community's scepticism about any sensitised treatment from society and the State. This also serves as a reason for their reluctance to get vaccinated. It's a

dangerous situation in the second wave because many in the transgender community are already immuno-compromised and at greater risk of Covid. Data backs this trend. The transgender community makes up only 0.013 per cent of the total vaccinated population of India so far (as of 9 am, 15 May). Sex reassignment surgery, hormone intake, drug addiction and HIV have made many in the transgender community vulnerable to the coronavirus. What makes it worse is their scepticism towards the medical industry because of the transphobia and stigma they usually face when reaching out for aid. Also, the lack of transgender representation in medical trials fails to convince them of the efficacy of medicines and vaccines. Equality magazine says "communities that are underrepresented in medical trials, including those for vaccines, have developed considerable mistrust in the overall effect certain medicines and products will have on their health." Alisha from Rajasthan has not yet registered herself for vaccination in the second wave because she fears the side effects after hearing stories of people

dying. "Didi we already are keeping ourselves indoors and what if something happens after vaccination? Even normal people are not getting beds in hospitals, who will bother about saving an orphan kinnar?" she tells me when I tell her to get vaccinated. As of this week, the number of 'others' vaccinated is only 19,392 persons out of the total 13,98,65,001. That roughly translates to 3.97 per cent of the total transgender population (4,87,803), going by the 2011 Census. Uttar Pradesh – with the highest number of 'others' population – barely recorded 1.51 per cent vaccination. Ironically, only Lakshadweep recorded 100 per cent vaccination of 'others', but its transgender population was only two, according to the 2011 Census. Disappointingly, the highest percentage reached by any state/UT after Lakshadweep is Kerala with 20.73 per cent of its transgender population vaccinated. Apart from these two, not even a single state has been able to vaccinate even 20 per cent of its 'others' population. Vaccine hesitancy alone isn't the reason for the low participation of the transgender community. Lack of valid photo ID cards is also a hindrance. Many transgender people faced this hurdle while registering themselves on CoWin. Taking cognisance of this, on 6 May, the Narendra Modi government came up with special provisions for those who don't possess photo identity cards – but the new process now is even more difficult. Shreya Reddy, a transwoman and activist from Hyderabad, told me of another roadblock. Many of her transgender friends, who are not so well educated, could not get vaccinated at walk-ins because they entertain only pre-registered people or there is a shortage of doses. There is still so much to aim for when it comes to transgender welfare and healthcare in India. Authorities and officials need to sensitise themselves on issues of inclusion to maintain the chord of trust between the State and transgender persons. Sweeping expressions like 'others' not only break this chord, but also snatch the right to proper documentation of healthcare data of transgender persons. To facilitate better access and reach of vaccination, awareness drives should be planned by governments to amplify the post-vaccination experiences of transgender leaders and community members. This will help eradicate the fear of the transgender populace about the side effects of the vaccination. For the lesser-educated transgender population living in community-specific areas and for those who fear reaching out for medical aid, governments can collaborate with trans activists to arrange local vaccination camps. An inclusive vaccine drive is crucial as India prepares for a third wave of the Covid pandemic. And we can't be so complacent as to leave out an entire community of Indians.

Israel faces greater dangers than Hamas's rockets



Israel and Hamas have taken to open warfare yet again. The sense of déjà vu, as the militant group's rocket attacks on Israeli territory are met by retaliatory airstrikes in Gaza, is compounded by Western politicians repeating an old formula: "Israel has the right to defend itself." That's undoubtedly true. And yet it's equally clear that Israeli actions are unlikely to deter Hamas. Nor will re-establishing military superiority over a technologically primitive enemy obscure Israel's new and acute vulnerabilities. The shocking images of lynch mobs and street fighting between Arabs and Jews within Israel underscore the fact that the most formidable threat to the country's present and future stability is now internal. About one in 5 Israelis are Arabs, the descendants of Palestinians who stayed in the country after the creation of Israel in 1948, and they have long been disaffected. Feeling

marginalized even further by 2018 legislation that exalted Israel's Jewish majority above all other groups, as well as the mainstreaming of explicitly racist, far-right Israeli parties, Arab Israelis have now erupted into open mutiny. The mob violence between Jews and Arabs should not be underestimated: It represents a watershed in the history of Israel. For traditions of co-existence cannot be repaired once they have been so brutally violated. The bitter history of communal fratricide in India and Pakistan tells us that the legacy of hate and suspicion corrode a country from within, making it even more susceptible to far-right movements. Israel's external challenges have been multiplying, too. Reflexive pro-Israel statements from Western politicians have long obscured the unease they feel about the country's direction. German Chancellor Angela

Pankaj

Mishra

Merkel summed up the tension in 2011 after a crucial United Nations resolution against Israel that both Germany and the United States unprecedentedly supported. Chastised by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Merkel reportedly said, "How dare you? ... You haven't made a single step to advance peace." Forging intimate relations with such figures as Narendra Modi, Jair Bolsonaro and Viktor Orban, Netanyahu openly scorned the Obama administration when the latter tried to check Israel's settlement program in the West Bank. In another instance of myopic policy, Israel's longest-serving prime minister allied his country closely to the Republican right as President Donald Trump facilitated a series of diplomatic victories for him. Trump trashed the nuclear deal with Iran, moved the U.S. embassy to the disputed city of Jerusalem, cut off U.S. aid to Palestinians and supervised Israel's entente with Gulf Arab regimes. But not even Trump-friendly Arab despots can afford to remain silent when Israel's police assault Islam's third-holiest site. And the Biden administration, which adopted a standoffish approach to the Israel-Palestine issue, cannot do much as China, enthused by the success of its vaccine diplomacy, steps in. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's recent six-country tour of the Middle East proclaimed his country's intention to involve itself in the region's most complicated issue. China has even offered to host peace talks between Israeli and Palestinian leaders. Beijing's increased proximity to Iran should leave no one in doubt over which side it's likely to favor. More significantly, Israel has been steadily losing its moral stature as a nation-state built for and by vic-

tims of monstrous crimes against Jews. For many Europeans and Americans who came of age after 1945, the Holocaust was the main, if not the sole, touchstone for moral and historical awareness. This made for understandably deep emotional identification with and stalwart support for Israel, especially when the country faced existential threats. Today, a younger generation of Westerners is learning about older and relatively under-explored crimes of white supremacy (genocide, slavery and colonialism) and their present-day manifestations in structural forms of cruelty and injustice. Statues have been toppled, educational syllabuses revised with a view to diversity, and reparations proposed for historical victims of racist and supremacist regimes. Israel, recently indicted by Human Rights Watch in a 224-page report for "crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution," seems to embody many of the things that politicized young people loathe about the past and present. The historian Tony Judt, who was a fervent Zionist in his youth, warned in 2003 that "the very idea of a 'Jewish state' – a state in which Jews and the Jewish religion have exclusive privileges from which non-Jewish citizens are forever excluded – is rooted in another time and place." Judt's belief that Israel is an "anachronism" feels truer today. At a time when institutions and individuals struggle to understand and overthrow "unconscious bias," a majoritarian Israel appears to be a case study in conscious and unreconstructed bias. Israel, of course, has the right to defend itself against Hamas's rockets. As always, it will exercise that right robustly. However, against many other clear and present dangers in the wider world, Israel is growing increasingly defenseless.

Why is share market resilient in face of Covid-19 ? Kalpen Parekh reveals; says, watch these stocks

Mumbai, May 18 : While India battles the second wave of covid-19, share market has shown resilience, refusing to fall more than 5% from all-time highs. Domestic stock markets have been helped by the high liquidity, better profitability owing to cost-cutting, and some positives on the vaccine front, said Kalpen Parekh, President, DSP Investment Managers, in an interview with Kshitij Bhargava of Financial Express Online. Kalpen Parekh shares his views on what investors should make of Nifty's P/E ratio and discusses sectors where he sees opportunity at this juncture. Here are the edited excerpts. Q - Market fell only 5% from all-time highs before moving up again, despite the severe second covid-19 wave; why so? Nifty, Bank Nifty, HDFC, RIL, Titan Nifty may hit 15,400 in medium term; BFSI, infra sectors, HDFC, RIL, Titan stocks look strong on charts Nifty, Bank Nifty, Wipro, Cipla, Lupin Nifty may trade in 14,400-15,000 range this week, Bank Nifty below 20, 50, 100 day SMAs; Wipro, Cipla in focus We are seeing financial markets and most asset classes around the world trending upward despite the impact of Covid. This is driven by significantly higher liquidity in the markets and the cost of that liquidity being very

low. Additionally, in the last few months, companies have significantly cut down on costs. Some of these cost savings are permanent and thus companies will show very good profitability in the results season. At the same time, vaccinations do give hope



that we would be able to navigate through wave 2 sooner than later. Though as we speak, we are seeing lockdowns due to the intensity of wave 2 and we will need to be watchful of trends in the coming quarters. Q - With revised lockdowns in place now, how far have we pushed the economic recovery? It is a bit premature right now to determine the pace of economic recovery. Lockdowns are likely to last a few months till the

number of cases come down drastically and the pace of vaccinations picks up. We may see lower than expected profitability and business growth at least for the next one or two quarters with the new wave and closure in most states now. Yet stock prices are rising. Generally

in periods of excess liquidity, markets look through negative events as temporary events and assume eventually, things will normalize. Yet it's time to be cautious. Q - Nifty's P/E ratio is down from highs but still not cheap, what do you make of it right now? The reason remains the same. When there is so much liquidity, investors will continue to invest plus the hope of improved profits keeps us positive. Over the last 20 years, in good

times, our earnings have been priced at 25 to 30 times and in bear markets at 10-12 times. In phase 1 of lockdown, we have seen markets hitting recent lows at 17 times PE. So at a market level, valuations are high in aggregate. At the same time, there are companies and sectors that are either cheap or fairly priced. Sector popularity has changed over the last five years. Banks/NBFCs/Autos have given way to Cement, Healthcare and IT stocks that have done better in the last 12 months, thus creating valuation gaps and opportunities. Q - In the battle between growth and value stocks, how do you construct your portfolio? Our preference today is companies that have survived and are becoming better in this phase of consolidation. Companies that are increasing market share, adding capacity without too much debt as well as companies that are under-owned but going through significant improvement in their balance sheets form a part of our portfolio construction. We have a mix of market leaders across sectors as well as survivors in difficult sectors across our funds depending on the mandate of each fund. Our starting point is good companies first - and then within that look for valuation comfort. It is also true that the best companies are

never cheap and vice versa. It is a very unique phase in the market cycle, where growth rates are moderate, but valuations are not. Q - What sectors are you overweight in? In some of our large funds, our portfolios are constructed keeping individual companies in mind. Although banks and NBFCs are the largest sectoral constituent in our indices right now, our portfolios only have the top three or four banks and very few NBFCs. We have been overweight in the technology space for the last one year. We are overweight here considering that there is a very large shift towards digitization globally because of the way COVID has played out and the very large move for work from home, and the long term trend of most businesses digitising. Our other preferences are companies in healthcare/cement/industrials too. Q - SEBI's new circular talks about fund houses having skin in the game, what are your views? As a mutual fund house, DSP announced the alignment of interest rule for all our employees (not just key) around two and a half years back, so that every employee of our company invests only in mutual funds and that too, just DSP schemes. We have adapted to these principles for the last two years.

Provident Fund: Left or lost job? Employees can now update date of exit - Here's how



Mumbai, May 18 : Employees Provident Fund account: Left or lost a job? Employees can now update their date of exit on the EPFO portal upon leaving a job. According to EPFO rules, if an employee is transferred from one institution to another, he is required to be enrolled as a member under the new establishment, for transferring his provident fund from his previous account. An employee can continue as a PF member even after his retirement if he continues to work even after attaining the retirement age. Employees Provident Fund (EPF) is considered an investment option for retirement purpose. As per the EPFO norms, contribution to the PF account is mandatory for both the employee and the employer. The PF account holder has to contribute 12 per cent of his basic salary while a matching amount is also contributed towards PF and EPS by the employer. rupeeIncome Tax Alert! Employees Provident Fund, LTC to ITR Filing rules - 10 big changes to know before April 1 CBT meet on March 4 to discuss PF interest rate For updating the date of exit, employees need to visit the Member Unified Portal and login with UAN and password. After this, go to Manage and click on Mark Exit. Then chose PF Account Number from Select Employment dropdown. Now, click on Request OTP and enter the OTP sent on your Aadhaar linked Mobile Number. Then select the Checkbox and click ok. Your 'Date of Exit' would now be updated successfully. How to update date of exit on Employees Provident Fund (EPFO) portal Here's a step by step guide Step 2: Enter UAN, Password and CAPTCHA. Step 3: Go to Manage and Click Mark Exit Step 4: Choose 'PF Account Number' from 'select employment' drop down Step 5: Enter 'Date of Exit' and 'Reason of Exit' Step 6: Click on option 'Request OTP' and enter OTP sent on your Aadhaar While switching jobs, it is advisable for PF account holders to transfer one's PF account to the new recruiter.

Financial Express managing editor Sunil Jain passes away

New Delhi May 18 : Financial Express managing editor Sunil Jain passed away due to a cardiac arrest after battling COVID-19 on 15 May. He was 58 years old. Jain was admitted at AIIMS Delhi after his condition worsened on 3 May and despite the best treatment possible, he couldn't be saved. "My brother, Sunil Jain, passed away this evening after post-Covid complications. He suffered a cardiac arrest earlier in the day, but was revived, and finally passed after another cardiac arrest around 8.30 p.m. The doctors and all medical staff at AIIMS did their best and more. I thank you for standing by us in this dark hour," his sister Sandhya Jain said in a statement. 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 govt extends Covid-19 lockdown for one more week; PM Modi speaks to CMs of 4 hotspot states Prime Minister Narendra Modi took to Twitter to express grief. "You left us too soon, Sunil Jain.

Multibagger smallcap, midcap stocks: Less leverage, quality management; better bet than large-cap shares?

Mumbai, May 18 : No doubt the large-cap stocks offer a better risk-reward for the retail investors, but the precise selection and right portfolio mix of mid/small-cap stocks can generate alpha and wealth over longer term. Midcap, smallcap, multibagger returns, large caps, RIL, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HDFC Bank Investing in small and mid-caps has been manifested with a lot of complexity, information uncertainty and issues of liquidity and impact costs. Investing in small caps is a dilemma. Investing in small and mid-caps has been manifested with a lot of complexity, information uncertainty and issues of liquidity and impact costs. We believe mid and small-cap stocks display cyclical nature, unlike the large caps that are steadier. Mid and small caps typically have short boom and burst cycles - they are cyclical in nature and best returns can be harvested if you play the cycle right. We have seen enough disruptions - on the macro front, political or geopolitical, and even frequent change in regulations, and these small size companies are more prone to risk under these uncertain environments. The fundamentals of mid and small-cap can change quickly under these circumstances and the prices can fall quickly. Mid and small-cap investing works best when picked from the bottom of a bear market. RIL, Bharti Airtel, stocks in focus RIL, Bharti Airtel, Tata Motors, GSK Pharma, Route Mobile, L&T, Union Bank of India stocks in focus Nifty, Bank Nifty, HDFC, RIL, Titan Nifty may hit 15,400 in medium term; BFSI, infra sectors, HDFC, RIL, Titan stocks look strong on charts Investors look for undiscovered stocks, basically for potential multibagger gains. There definitely exists an opportunity in this space, as these stocks are under-researched and hence under-priced also. But the characteristics of a good quality business - the one we look for - the fundamental reasons why we own stocks (businesses) is true for mid and small caps too. Management quality is the single most important factor, more so in this case, as lesser information and limited performance track record of the company and owners are available in the public domain. On the other hand, large caps deliver steady returns with relatively lower risk. We will find lots of large caps, even in Nifty 50 or top 100 stocks that have been a long-term compounder of wealth. Stocks like HDFC twins, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Infosys, and Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), etc. have been a no-brainer and have generated significant wealth for their stakeholders. These comfort stocks, unlike the mid and small-cap, have less volatility and hence better risk-adjusted returns. There exists an information and survivor bias whenever we talk of mid and small caps, as



only the surviving mid-caps and their multibagger returns are talked about, while there are a lot of companies in the mid and small-cap space that have gone burst and fallen off the radar or closed their businesses. There lies the need for a knowledgeable investor, the right advisor, the fund manager who can balance the portfolio risk effectively and include the large and Mid/small caps in the portfolio to generate excess returns. Best returns are reaped when you catch midcap and it transforms into a large-cap in a few years and there exist so many examples around us. Stocks like Eicher Motors, Page Industries, AIA Engineering, Shree Cement, and Astral pipes fall in that category and have weathered various storms (economic disruptions) and emerged successfully, and in the process created tremendous wealth for their stakeholders. And these small/mid-cap stocks that generated excess returns over long periods of time had similar characteristics - less leverage,

huge market opportunity, capable and quality management, focus on productivity and capital efficiency and concern for their minority shareholders. No doubt the large-cap stocks offer a better risk-reward for the retail investors, but the precise selection and right portfolio mix of mid/small-cap stocks can generate alpha and wealth over longer term. The portfolio composition becomes important and depending upon the risk appetite of an individual, the right proportion of large-cap stocks and Mid/small-cap stocks should be included in the portfolio. I am confident that such a portfolio can generate returns that far exceed the benchmarks over longer periods of time. The debate of large-caps vs Mid/small-cap will keep on, the research on this has been going on for ages, but there is no denying the fact that small and mid-caps deserve a risk premium over large ones. Both the categories are important for generating excess returns in a portfolio.

Can digital cash make inflation worse? Fed, other central banks need to be cautious

Mumbai, May 18 : Inflation is coming. Or wait, it's already here. Bond investors are looking at the 4.2% annual rate that U.S. consumer prices jumped to in April and wondering if it's all because of depressed levels from last year. Could it be that the Federal Reserve is wrong about higher prices being transitory? In that case, the Fed and other central banks may have to rethink, among other things, their space-race-type competition to offer digital cash. It's a project best undertaken after price pressures have eased, and the vast pools of excess liquidity to fill the gaping economic hole left by the pandemic have dried. A premature contest to introduce a digital yuan, digital euro, FedCoin or BritCoin could see them emerge as widely accepted substitutes, not only for physical cash but for bank reserves. Tackling inflation could then get harder. Indian economy India's economy will do well once vaccination reaches critical mass, says Ashima Goyal Lockdown woes: Joblessness rate near 1-year high; unemployment up in rural areas; virus threat hits demand for MGNREGS work To see why, consider the

typical response to unexpected inflation from a monetary authority that has done a lot of quantitative easing. It has to taper its bloated balance sheet by selling some government and corporate bonds to the banking sector, draining the excess reserves they're keeping with the central bank. Less liquid lenders would, in turn, sell loan assets. Tighter monetary conditions would tame inflation. Now, think of a twist in this standard playbook: You and I are free to convert the funds in our bank accounts into electronic cash issued directly by a monetary authority. Commercial institutions lose our deposits, but if they aren't bothered about becoming a little less liquid, they won't sell income-earning loan assets to compensate. Instead, they may shed another asset to balance their books: their idle cash with the central bank. The monetary authority now owes a little

Darasing Khurana, on behalf of UNICEF urges people to be mindful of safety precautions



A lot of celebrities have been doing their bit to offer help and support to those affected by Covid-19 in the country. Model-actor Darasing Khurana, who is also associated with the UNICEF, took to social media to encourage people to take all the required precautions to prevent testing positive for coronavirus.

In the video, Darasing says, "I request everyone to wear their masks properly by fully covering your mouth and nose. Also, it's imperative to wash your hands properly, keep reusable masks at a hygienic place post usage and throw the disposable masks properly. My entire UNICEF family and I earnestly request you all to follow all the safety guidelines properly."

In these tough times when the number of daily cases are soaring exponentially in India, it's good to see how various celebrities are investing their time and effort to offer help to fellow citizens.

Despite Covid challenges, Indian Railways completes 800m tunnel drive in East-West Kolkata Metro Corridor

Mumbai, May 18 : Now the entire TBM tunneling work for the Kolkata Metro's East - West Corridor Project is completed. Kolkata Rail Metro Network: Big progress for East West Kolkata Metro Corridor Project! The tunneling work was recently completed in the East West Metro Corridor by Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) with the breakthrough of "Urvi" at Bowbazar, Kolkata. With this achievement, now the entire TBM tunneling work for the Kolkata Metro's East - West Corridor Project is completed. According to the Railway Ministry, the metro stretch was difficult for tunneling work as it had century old buildings. However, the challenging tunnel drive of 800 metres was successfully completed amidst the ongoing pandemic situation following the COVID-19 protocols, the ministry said. The TBM called 'Urvi' which had earlier completed the east bound tunnel from Esplanade to Sealdah in Kolkata on 9 October 2020 was relaunched from Sealdah after necessary refurbishment as well as inspection on 9 January 2021 in order to complete the balance 800 metres tunneling work in west bound tunnel from Sealdah to Bowbazar. railway hospitals, oxygen plants Fight against COVID-19 continues! Indian Railways' hospitals to have 86 oxygen plants cyclone, railways From Train Cancellations to Disaster Management Cell, steps by Indian Railways to face Tauktae cyclone According to the ministry, this TBM has passed below the Sealdah flyover for which movement of vehicles was closed on the flyover for three days for safety reasons. Following the completion of this TBM drive, 'Urvi' along with the other stalled Tunnel Boring Machine 'Chandi' will be retrieved from this retrieval shaft at Kolkata's Bowbazar area. The Railway Ministry further stated that shaft excavation after ensuring the water tightness of the shaft and the affected tunnel, as well as retrieval of the Tunnel Boring Machines, are intricate activities that have to be safely done.

less to commercial banks, and a little more to us. The size of its balance sheet hasn't changed, and the tapering it wanted to achieve by selling bonds to the private sector hasn't occurred. Digital cash "renders the current asset-purchase programs quasi-permanent, as reversing such programs becomes harder to implement," says a recent study by researchers at the Swiss Finance Institute. Central banks in China and Sweden have fairly advanced plans to introduce currencies in electronic form for retail use.



Contd. From Page 1

India to take part in Global Health

international and regional organizations such as the UN, WHO, IMF, OECD, AU, ASEAN, WTO, FAO, GAVI, Global Fund will be part of the summit. Members from New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) will also participate.

At 6.99 %, Assam Sees Sharp Dip

of oxygen every day. The central government has also allocated 100 mt oxygen to the state which will be provided to the six states, Dr. Sarma noted. The Chief Minister also visited the Premier Cryogenics Limited's oxygen plant at Saukuchi in Guwahati to assess the oxygen generation capacity of the plant. In a boost to the oxygen availability in the state, Premiere Cryogenics Ltd, on the state government's request agreed to restart the production of oxygen from the plant. The plant was non-operational for a long time will be now able to produce 14 mt of oxygen per day enhancing the state's oxygen availability. Dr. Sarma also asserted that once the second unit starts to function in the plant, it would further improve the oxygen generation capacity. Last month, Dr. Sarma also revealed that the state would have close to 18 Oxygen plants by the mid of May, which would be sufficient to meet the demands of the state as well as its neighbouring states in the North-east. The minister then had also informed that the state was also supplying stocks of Remdesivir to the other northeastern states. "We are considering North-eastern states as one region and we will exercise responsibility to our sister states," Dr. Sarma was quoted as saying in one of the media reports.

Churning in Maldives raises

but cannot get them because all exports have been shut down in view of the alarming Covid situation in India. Bangladesh and Nepal are in the same soup. With cases rising rapidly, India's neighbours are beginning to look further east - at China - to fulfil their Covid vaccination promises to their people. There are two reasons why Maldives is in a category of its own. The first is that when the Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) dramatically overthrew Abdulla Yameen's government in 2018, India's applause was among the loudest. It bears recalling, for just a moment, the situation that prevailed at the time - the MDP leadership was largely in exile, mostly in Colombo and the UK, and Yameen had allowed China a free run in the Maldives. The return of the MDP to power, with Ibrahim Solih as President and Nasheed as Speaker, both of whom invested heavily in the relationship with India, has proved to be a model for India's relationships with the rest of South Asia. India reciprocated the warmth in full measure. In the last couple of years, New Delhi has spent at least \$2 billion bringing significant development to far-flung islands - including better roads, a reclamation project in the southernmost island Addu, water and sanitation project in 34 islands as well as the Greater Male connectivity project across four islands. Will making an exception for the Maldives by sending over a mere 100,000 vaccine doses hurt India? Certainly, the Congress-led Opposition is targeting the Narendra Modi government for messing up its vaccine strategy by disbursing vaccine doses abroad without first securing the needs of Indians at home - it bears to reason that External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is on the mat. (Of course, Jaishankar may alleviate some of that criticism when the US sends a part of its unused AstraZeneca doses to India and other countries.) India's stakes are high in the Indian Ocean. China is encircling the waters, giving 600,000 Covid vaccine doses to Sri Lanka's Rajapaksa government and in March voting against the UN Human Rights Council resolution, which sought to censure Colombo's human rights record - India abstained. Speculation is also rife that all is not well inside the MDP in the Maldives, that Nasheed is chafing at his limited role as Speaker and is eager to transform the presidential system of the Maldives into a parliamentary one, where he takes on the key leadership role. According to The Times of Addu, Nasheed has even sent a letter to President Solih in this regard. One fallout of the inner-party crisis is that the MDP recently lost local polls in Male. Tackling high-stakes conflict is easier said than done, but it is a measure of India's enhanced responsibilities if it wants to be a regional player - to not just stare off China's expanding influence in the Indian Ocean, but keep a close watch on the situation within Indian Ocean nations such as the Maldives. For the time being, Nasheed is severely injured and under treatment at a Berlin hospital; the rest of the Maldives is waiting for the investigation into the bomb blast to be completed. No terror group has claimed the attack, but investigators are hinting at domestic religious extremists. Perhaps a local with a grudge has put a bounty on Nasheed's head. The bomb blast has driven home the realisation that Nasheed remains a target; perhaps someone wants to curb his larger-than-life character. It also underscores the point that if India wants a special relationship with the Indian Ocean, it needs to remain engaged more than ever with island nations like the Maldives.

CBSE 12th Board Exam: Plea

educational institutions. ..." the petition said. Last week, another plea in the top court had prayed for the cancellation of the Class 12 board exams conducted by the CBSE, and the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE). It had suggested assessment of students through an 'objective methodology' within a specified timeframe. The petition, filed today by Mr Joseph, is opposed to the previous plea filed in the Supreme Court by Advocate Mamta Sharma. "Large section of educationalists and heads of institutions are in favour of conducting exams. Educational experts have opined that exams should not be cancelled and should be conducted using digital mediums," the plea by Mr Joseph said. The petitioner argued results on the basis of internal assessment will be "unfair" because in the 2021-22 academic year, "hardly any teacher had seen the students physically." The CBSE had earlier said it is yet to take any decision regarding the Class 12 students. When taken, such a decision will be communicated to students officially, the board had said.

Uttar Pradesh: 68% villages free

areas, we have decided that common service centres will be roped in to help people register on the CoWin app. Each centre will provide this facility and also that of vaccination in the near future. The work will be done for free and nobody is to be charged for helping someone with the work," a government spokesman was quoted. Additional chief secretary (Information) Navneet Sehgal said that the work of vaccination in rural areas will be rolled out at war footing. He said that till now, 1.16 crore people had received their first vaccine shot while 31.6 lakh people had received their second. The state government had announced free vaccination for those in the age group of 18 to 44 years. It has also made crucial changes to its global tender conditions which will now allow companies like Pfizer and Moderna to bid. It has halved the global tender earnest money deposit amount from Rs 16 crore and made changes to temperature and storage conditions.

Assam Reports Record 92

percent. It is followed by Himachal Pradesh with 55,749 fresh cases and the change percentage over the same period is 98.28 per cent; Tamil Nadu had reported 3,91,104 fresh cases with a change rate of 81.35 per cent. Puducherry reported 23,145 cases with a rate of change of 70.31 per cent and Jammu and Kashmir reported 61,122 cases over the past two weeks with a rate of rise in cases at 66.12 per cent. Assam chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma has appealed to the people of the state to contribute to Chief Minister's Relief Fund or Assam Arogya Nidhi. CM Sarma requested the people for their contribution in the fight against COVID-19 pandemic. "Time for us to come together! The ongoing #COVID pandemic, you all know, has left us all shaken. While we try to rebuild & bounce back, how nice to help each other, with whatever one can. I appeal you to contribute to Chief Minister's Relief Fund or Assam Arogya Nidhi," Sarma wrote in a social media post.

270 doctors succumbed

in a short period, 270 doctors have lost their lives. "The second wave of the pandemic is turning out to be extremely fatal for all and especially for the healthcare workers who are at the forefront," Dr. Jayalal told a news agency. The list of the deceased doctors includes former IMA president Dr. K K Aggarwal, who succumbed to the deadly virus on Monday.

Health ministry releases list

or bruising of skin in an area beyond the injection site; persistent abdominal pain with or without vomiting; seizures in the absence of previous history of seizures with or without vomiting; severe and persistent headache with or without vomiting (in the absence of previous history of migraine or chronic headache); weakness/paralysis of limbs or any particular side or part of the body (including face); persistent vomiting without any obvious reason; blurred vision or pain in eyes or having double vision; change in mental status or having confusion or depressed level of consciousness. Any other symptom or health condition which is of concern to the recipient or the family. According to the AEFI Committee, it has completed an in-depth case review of 498 serious and severe events, of which 26 cases have been reported to be potential thromboembolic (formation of a clot in a blood vessel that might also break loose and carried by the bloodstream to plug another vessel) events - following the administration of Covishield vaccine - with a reporting rate of 0.61 cases per million doses.

Work on vaccine alternatives

in a tweet. "The new form of coronavirus in Singapore is said to be very dangerous for children. It could reach Delhi in the form of a third wave. My appeal to the Central government: 1. Cancel all air services with Singapore with immediate effect 2. Work on vaccine alternatives for children on a priority basis." Kejriwal said in a tweet in Hindi. Meanwhile, the national capital on Tuesday reported 4,482 Covid-19 cases, the lowest single-day rise since April 5, and 265 fatalities, while the positivity rate dipped to 6.89 per cent, according to the latest health bulletin. Delhi had reported 4,524 cases and 340 fatalities on Monday, while the positivity rate was 8.42 per cent. The Covid-19 situation in Delhi has been showing signs of improvements over the past few days with the number of cases and positivity rate going down steadily. According to the government data, the number of coronavirus infections reported Tuesday is the lowest since April 5 when 3,548 people were diagnosed with the disease. Out of 24,305 hospital beds, 9,906 are vacant, said the bulletin, adding that there are 50,863 active cases in the city of which 31,197 are in home isolation. The number of cumulative cases stands at 14,02,873 and the death toll at 22,111, the data added.

Sanitization drive carried out by ABVP



Biswanath Chari, May 18 : The Jamuguri branch of Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) had carried out sanitization drives in various places including Jamuguri police Station, Jamugurihat branch of Post Office, Inspection Bungalow of Jamugurihat etc. The office bearers of ABVP had distributed face masks to the general people at Jamugurihat creating mass awareness against the deadly disease. The sanitization drive was also attended by Bishnu Das, secretary of ABVP Jamuguri branch, Deepjyoti Das, district convener, Bibek Paul, state executive member of the student body along with others.

North Lakhimpur Press Club commemorated martyr-journalist Parag Kumar

North Lakhimpur, May 18: The North Lakhimpur Press Club organised a brief program in the Press Club Bhavan situated at Chandmari, ward no. 14, North Lakhimpur town to commemorate the martyr-journalist Parag Kumar Das in his death anniversary yesterday. The program started with the lighting of earthen lamp by working president of the Club Kumud Baruah followed by the garlanding of the portrait of Parag Kumar Das by assistant secretary Ajit Kumar Medhi. Then the members of the Press Club paid floral tribute to the portrait of the journalist. The whole program was held under the management of the Club secretary Karuna Krishna Nath.

'Black fungus' cases in Covid patients are rising, says AIIMS chief, warns against misuse of steroids

New Delhi, May 18 : AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria on Saturday said that mucormycosis, also known as 'black fungus', is not any new infection but the number of cases has increased due to Covid-19. AIIMS Director Randeep Guleria also warned against the spread of mucormycosis and recommended that with COVID-19 cases increasing, it's of paramount importance that protocols of infection control practices are followed at hospitals. He said that misuse of steroids is a major cause behind the infection (Mucormycosis). Chances of fungal infection increase in the patients who are diabetic, COVID positive and are taking steroids. To prevent it, we should stop the misuse of steroids. Mucormycosis, a rare but dangerous fungal infection, has now been found to be affecting some coronavirus patients. He said, "This disease (Mucormycosis) can affect the face, infecting nose, orbit of eye, or brain, which can cause even vision loss. It can also spread to the lung." "As COVID-19 cases are increasing, it's of paramount importance that we follow protocols of infection control practices at hospitals. It is seen that secondary infections - fungal & bacterial - are causing more mortality," Dr Guleria further added. Dr Suresh Kumar, MD LNJP Hospital said, "Steroid use must be reduced. If given to patient with O2 level over 90, black fungus is a possible side-effect. Early diagnosis critical. CT scan of face would detect this infection. Anti-fungal drug Amphotericin being used for treatment." He also said, "Overuse, misuse & rampant use of steroids in COVID patients causes black fungus, also known as Mucormycosis. We have 4 patients here who also are diabetic. Quite often a patient dies due to black fungus instead of COVID-19." The Facebook-owned chat application had put out an official blog stating the changes that users will experience if they don't accept the privacy policy. The black fungus infection, also known as mucormycosis, is caused by a fungus called mucor.

26 Covid Patients Die At Goa Hospital, Health Minister Seeks Court Probe



Panaji, May 18 : Goa Health Minister Vishwajit Rane today said 26 COVID-19 patients died at the state-run Goa Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in the early hours and sought an investigation by the High Court to find out the exact cause. He said these fatalities occurred between 2 am and 6 am "which is a fact", but remained evasive about the cause. Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, who visited the Goa Medical College and Hospital, said the gap between the "availability of medical oxygen and its supply to COVID-19 wards in the GMCH might have caused some issues for the patients" even as he stressed that there is no scarcity of oxygen supply in the state. Speaking to reporters, Mr Rane admitted the shortfall in the supply of medical oxygen at the Goa Medical College and Hospital as of Monday. "The high court should investigate the reasons behind these deaths. The high court should also intervene and prepare a white paper on oxygen supply to the GMCH, which would help to set the things right," the state Health Minister said after Chief Minister's visit to the hospital. Mr Rane said the medical oxygen requirement of the facility as of Monday was 1,200 jumbo cylinders of which only 400 were supplied. "If there's a shortfall in the supply of medical oxygen, the discussion should be held about how to bridge that gap," he said. Mr Rane said a three-member team of nodal officers set up by the state government to oversee COVID-19 treatment at Goa Medical College and Hospital should give its inputs about the issues to the Chief Minister. Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister wore a PPE kit and visited the COVID-19 wards at Goa Medical College and Hospital where he met patients and their relatives. Will be holding a meeting with the medical and administrative team to resolve all the issues and to ensure that everyone gets necessary facilities. 2/2 "There are issues over the availability of oxygen in these wards which need to be sorted out," the Chief Minister said. He announced the setting up of a ward-wise mechanism to ensure a smooth supply of medical oxygen. "Doctors, who are busy treating patients, cannot spend their time in arranging logistics like oxygen. I will hold a meeting immediately to set up ward-wise mechanisms to ensure that oxygen is supplied to patients in time," Mr Sawant told news agency Press Trust of India. The Chief Minister said there was no dearth of medical oxygen and cylinders in the state but the problem arises sometimes as these cylinders do not reach their destinations on time. Mr Sawant said the state government is making efforts on all fronts to tackle the pandemic. "We have abundant supplies of (medical) oxygen. There is no scarcity in the state," he said. Goa's COVID-19 tally stood at 1,21,650 as of May 10, while 50 deaths had taken the total number of deaths to 1,729, an official had said. Meanwhile, Mr Sawant warned of action against private hospitals that refuse the coverage of Deen Dayal Swastha Seva Yojana (DDSSY) to COVID-19 patients. He said the pending financial dues on part of private hospitals under this scheme will be cleared in the next 15 days.

COVID-19: Andhra CM writes to PM Modi seeking increase in oxygen allocation to 910 tonnes

New Delhi, May 18 : Owing to the surge in COVID-10 cases in the state, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy on Tuesday (May 11) wrote a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi seeking an increase in liquid medical oxygen (LMO) allocation to 910 tonnes. Reddy said that oxygen allocation was 480 tonnes as of April 24, which was revised to 590 tonnes on May 8 but that was not sufficient to meet the demand in hospitals. "The revised allocation is not at all commensurate with the increasing active (COVID-19) cases. On May 10, oxygen supplies from Chennai and Karnataka were delayed and led to the unfortunate incident wherein 11 persons died due to lack of oxygen in Tirupati," the letter read. "I request your intervention to increase the LMO allocation to 910 tonnes and also allot 20 LMO tankers so as to ensure oxygen supplies to all hospitals to take care of the current patient load," he added. Earlier, Reddy ordered an inquiry into the death of 11 COVID-19 patients at Ruia Hospital in Tirupati. The patients, who were on ventilator support, died due to low pressure in the medical oxygen supply at the hospital. In his letter to Modi, Reddy pointed out that the oxygen allocation from Karnataka and Odisha can be increased. The allocation from JSW plant at Bellary in Karnataka has to be increased from 20 to 150 tonnes as it has enhanced its capacity recently, he wrote. He added that supply from Odisha should be increased from 210 to 400 tonnes. "In addition, 20 LMO tankers may be allotted to the state to transport this extra allocation from Odisha using the Oxygen Express methodology, duly tying up with the Indian Railways," he said further. Delhi has run out of Covaxin stock for people in the 18-44 age group and will have to shut 125 centres where the coronavirus vaccine was being administered, AAP MLA Atishi said on Tuesday (May 11). In an online briefing, she also said Delhi will get 2.67 lakh more doses of Covishield vaccine from the Centre by Tuesday (May 11) evening. "We have run out of Covaxin stock for 18-44 age group and will have to shut 125 centres where it is being administered after Tuesday evening," Atishi said. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader urged the Centre to replenish Covaxin and Covishield stocks and said otherwise "we will have no option but to stop vaccination drive". She said that more than 1.39 lakh people were given vaccine jabs in the national capital on May 10, the highest daily figure since the inoculation started. Till Sunday evening, Delhi had 4.65 lakh doses of coronavirus vaccines available for those above 45, and healthcare and front-line workers, while 2.74 lakh doses were available for the 18-44 age category.

Pfizer May Sell 50 million Vaccine Doses to India by Q3

New Delhi, May 18 : US pharma giant Pfizer is in talks with the Indian government to sell 50 million of its vaccine doses in the country by the third quarter of this year. Top government officials, The Times of India reported, have discussed availability of the vaccines with senior Pfizer executives in several meetings. The negotiations between the government and Pfizer are also close to reaching a breakthrough over the issue of indemnifying the company against liabilities that may arise from any side-effects after using its vaccines, Economic Times reported. The vaccines, which are relatively expensive, will be available for purchase by the government only for the vaccination programme. India Needs Proper Vaccine Strategy, Govt's 'Disastrous Policy' Will Ensure 3rd Wave: Rahul Gandhi Himachal Extends Curfew Till May 26, Essential Commodity Shops to Open for 3hrs Daily The development comes in the backdrop of India falling short of vaccines in the wake of a massive demand amid the catastrophic second Covid-19 wave ravaging the country. Many states such as Uttar Pradesh and even the Mumbai civic body have announced to float global tenders to procure vaccines.

Nadal and Djokovic refusing to relinquish ground to the young challengers

Stuart Broad feels former England selector Ed Smith 'didn't rate me'

London, May 18 : As the Italian Open shifted into action last week, the state of play in men's tennis four months into the 2021 season seemed relatively clear. The sands are shifting, just gradually. The previous four Masters events and the season-ending ATP Finals had all been won by players of the younger generation, all born in the late 1990s and positioned by the tour as its future. Daniil Medvedev, Stefanos Tsitsipas, Alexander Zverev and even the lesser-known Hubert Hurkacz have all recently hoisted big trophies to the skies while dreaming of taking the next step. And yet, they still seem far from it. When the matches matter most, over best of five sets and deep in the slams, either Novak Djokovic or Rafael Nadal are usually around at the end and in good enough form to succeed. Unless, of course, one decides not to play and the other disqualifies himself. There were two instances in Rome where it seemed like the tournament would follow a similar pattern. Nadal had arrived, by his otherworldly standards on clay, in so-so form. In his third round against the 22-year-old Denis Shapovalov, he was down 6-3, 3-0 and facing break points, then Shapovalov later held two match points on Nadal's serve at 6-5 in the third set. Nadal had struggled under Shapovalov's barrage of fearless winners, but on both match points Nadal locked down his groundstrokes. He refused to entertain even the possibility of making an unforced error. Both times, Shapovalov struck wild, nervous mistakes, and Nadal eventually closed off the final-set tie-break as his opponent unravelled. Djokovic started his Rome tournament in even worse form and he faced the Monte Carlo champion Tsitsipas, 22, in the quarter-final. He was thrust into a similar position in a match

disrupted by rain and played over two days. He trailed 6-4, 4-2, then 3-1 in the third set with Tsitsipas, the current ATP Race No 1, generating four break points for a double-break. Tsitsipas then served for the match at 5-4. Each time Djokovic seemed to be on the brink of being suffocated by Tsitsipas, he focused his energies and elevated his level. He reeled off three games in a row to close. Just



one of those comebacks alone would have been notable, but Djokovic and Nadal both digging deep to hold off their younger rivals a few days apart was a poignant sight. To them as well; as they edged closer to the final, they came across each other in the locker room on Saturday and laughed about their refusal to relinquish ground to the youth. They are both still motivated and striving for more in part because the other is doing the same. Their final was intense, filled with momentum shifts and constant tactical adjustments. Both played well, often not at the same time, and Nadal emerged with a record-extending 10th Rome title. For once, though, the winner of the match actually seemed less important than what the overall week signified with Roland Garros on the horizon. They both needed strong performances to enter Paris in pristine condition and, under

immense pressure, they found them. On the court, Djokovic was asked if their combined success was a message to the "NextGen" and he responded with a joke: "Rafa, Roger and I have reinvented the 'NextGen.' We are the NextGen." Except it wasn't really a joke. Later, in his press conference, asked if he was bored of the subject, he was blunt: "That's the reason why I answered the way I

answered," he said, smiling. "I mean, I said it a thousand times. I don't know how many times people want me to repeat it. Of course the NextGen is there, is coming, whatever. But here we are still winning the biggest tournaments and slams." In a sport that can often see players opt for modesty over, perhaps, reality, Djokovic's bluntness was welcome. He may respect the younger players' abilities and welcome their challenges but his goal is to crush them for as long as he can. So far, he and his rivals have done so admirably when it matters. Djokovic's irritation is also understandable - since the emergence of the ATP's NextGen campaign in 2017, in which the tour sought to market the new generation, the established players have been constantly charged with speaking as much about these inferior young players. Domination

can become stale, particularly after 15 years some are seeking new stories to tell. As the youngsters have failed to break through on the biggest stages, there are conversely others who criticise the youngsters for their ineptitude. The reality of men's tennis now is perhaps less interesting than that: the NextGen campaign has been a success. The young players are easily identifiable, they have continued to grow and they have positioned themselves at the top of the sport. But they are also simply not as good as their predecessors. Djokovic and Nadal are vastly better tennis players and the gap between their mental fortitude and that of the rest of the field is the size of a canyon. Age has left its mark on them - their athleticism has naturally waned, their bodies are no longer fit to contest 100 matches per year and they are far removed from their peaks. Their success is unprecedented and it has endured because of their willingness to continue improving, adjusting and adapting their games over the years. The shift will eventually come, but Nadal and Djokovic are committed to maintaining their spot at the top table as long as it lasts. Their performances in Rome were an affirmation that they remain the story of men's tennis for now.

London, May 18 : Stuart Broad has described his relationship with Ed Smith as a case of working under somebody who did not rate him and said he would accept missing a Test match this summer provided the reasons are communicated properly. England will name their squad for the upcoming Test series against New Zealand on Tuesday, the first since Smith's three-year spell as national selector was terminated last month and his powers handed over to the head coach, Chris Silverwood. While Jofra Archer's name will be missing due to persistent elbow problems, Broad will clearly feature among the seamers. But how he and Jimmy Anderson are deployed during the two Tests at Lord's and Edgbaston from 2 June - and then the visit of India for five later this summer - will again be a talking point. Last summer Broad missed the first Test against West Indies at the Rose Bowl and he made his disappointment clear about this in Sky's diary room. It was the catalyst for a golden run of form but if Silverwood and the captain, Joe Root, are pondering a repeat, they may need to show the 34-year-old their workings. "I was disgruntled because the selectors had said the first Test team of the summer will be our best team," said Broad, speaking at a school coaching event for Chance To Shine run by sponsors Lifebuoy. "To be told I suddenly wasn't in the best team with my record in England, that's what upset me." Is it realistic that I'm going to play every Test? No. But if the communication is done well, you understand why you might miss certain



games to be fit for others. When the communication disappears, that's when players can't see reasons. "It was something of an open secret that he did not see eye-to-eye with Smith in this regard, a tension which dated back to being dropped from the first Test in Barbados in early 2019 when the former national selector was on tour. Asked to appraise Smith's time, Broad replied: "I think you can say it was a success in the sense that the team won games and a World Cup. And he brought some fine players through. But personally, from my point of view, we struggled a bit on the communication side and probably saw the game of cricket slightly differently." A lot of people have bosses who don't rate them as much as other people and I think he was mine. He probably didn't rate me as much as other players. That's fine but I kept trying to prove some selection decisions wrong." I really disagreed with getting left out in Barbados where it's one of the best places to bowl as a tall fast bowler and there are a few occasions where I have felt a bit disgruntled and didn't have the clarity of communication that I would like. "I am very open to being told things.

Try hard: Sam Simmonds closing in on Chapman's 23-year-old record



London, May 18 : One of the most sought-after achievements in club rugby celebrated its 23rd birthday this week. On 17 May 1998 the diminutive but distinctly rapid Richmond winger Dominic Chapman touched down twice at Sale's Heywood Road to extend his try-scoring tally for the season to 17 in 22 Premiership games. It has since been equalled by Wasps' Christian Wade in 2016-17 but never overtaken. Now, at long last, Chapman's peak could soon be eclipsed. Exeter's Sam Simmonds has scored 16 tries in 17 league matches with four regular season rounds left. He and his team face London Irish on Tuesday evening and the last time the flying Chief faced the Exiles, in February, he touched down twice: a similar return at Brentford and Chapman's claim to fame will finally need some updating. Before expanding

further on Simmonds's rare talent - he is, lest it be forgotten, a forward - it is worth pausing momentarily to wind the clock back and reflect on the original record. Chapman, all 5ft 9in of him, was part of a very decent Richmond side - Scott Quinnell, Ben Clarke, Gus Pichot, Alan Bateman, Adrian Davies etc - and the idea that defending was slightly more optional back in the day is backed up by neither the era's teamsheets nor the statistical evidence. Aside from Chapman only three other players in the league - Sale's equally pacy Tom Beir, the outstanding Scotland scrum-half Gary Armstrong and the marauding Quinnell - made it into double figures. The mind's eye recalls Chapman, who turned 22 only late in the season, generally being too quick to catch; like a water boatman on a pond he seemed to glide over the most saturated of surfaces and leave the cover defence trailing. Sadly the elusive Chapman, capped off the bench in England's 76-0 tour defeat against Australia that same year, remains exactly that: the Breakdown has been trying its hardest to track him down but to no avail. The record books, though, speak for themselves: nine of his tries came with a rush in the season's last six games, including a hat-trick against Bristol and two-try contributions on successive April weekends against Northampton and Gloucester. If anyone was going to break it, the prolific duo of Wade and Chris Ashton would have been decent bets. But while Wade, before trying his luck in American football, did draw level in May 2017 during a 35-15 win against a slightly weakened Saracens, the best return Ashton could muster was 16 for Northampton in 2010. In terms of forwards, both Neil Back (Leicester) in 1998-99 and Thomas Waldrom (Exeter) in 2014-15 have also managed 16 in a season, underlining the value of a predatory back-rower from close range. None of the above, though, posed the triple threat currently offered by the 26-year-old Simmonds. Not only can the Teignmouth tearaway score spectacular tries from halfway, as demonstrated at Harlequins on the opening day of the season, but he can also hammer them in from two metres and create havoc with his dancing footwork and strength out wide. Power, pace and precision is a useful trifecta, as the British & Irish

Lions head coach, Warren Gatland, has identified. Those who work most closely with Simmonds on a day-to-day basis firmly believe he is scoring tries that mere mortals would not. "There are games when he shouldn't be scoring tries and he's still finishing them off," says his club captain, Jack Yeandle. "He's very, very athletic. He was always a standout performer in sevens and he's got the pace and power of a back. Some of his tries have been absolutely phenomenal ... just pure individual brilliance." Yeandle also highlights Simmonds's consistency, even if the latter had eight tries already chalked up after the first four games on the back of being crowned European player of the year after helping Exeter to secure their trophy double in October. The No 8 drew a rare blank in January but two more tries against Worcester this month have elevated him seven clear of the rest of the field. As and when he reaches the holy grail, however, a share of the credit will also be due to the aforementioned Waldrom, whose instincts and ability to anticipate exactly when to strike close to the line remain as much a part of Chiefs' folklore as his improbable physique. "He probably did pick up a lot from Tom Waldrom in terms of being in the right place at the right time but he's not necessarily as greedy as Tom was," jokes Yeandle. "Tom would lawn mower a few people to get himself on the ball close to the try line." The Chiefs' director of rugby, Rob Baxter, also believes the precedent set by Waldrom's stocky frame helped to propel Simmonds into the starting lineup more smoothly than might otherwise have been the case. "With Tom Waldrom here we worked around having a pack of forwards with a shorter, stockier, powerful ball-carrying eight. It complemented our pack really well so once Simmo started showing those qualities there was a way into the team for him. It wasn't like we were trying to replace a 6ft 5in No 8." Very soon the grateful Chiefs were seeing what England, for some reason, have mostly ignored. "He very quickly started having games when he'd just scorch through defences," says Baxter. "What he's added to that, to his credit, is a bulk and power that is very effective for us when he is on the ball in mauls. He's very good at pick and gos and he doesn't get the credit for the amount of stop tackles he puts in. Align that to his pace and it's all there. But it's been a growing package he's had to work very hard to achieve. And you've also got seven other forwards in that pack who understand his role. For both his tries against Worcester I think Dave Ewers was the bloke behind him latching on and helping him over." All that is left now is to leave all those try-hungry wingers choking on his dust and to finish with a flourish. Rugby officialdom, for some reason, seems to prefer to lavish golden boots on its goalkeepers rather than its try-scoring, ground-breaking top guns. Could this be the year, thanks to the electric Simmonds, that everyone finally sees the light?

Australian bowlers insist they had no knowledge of Cape Town ball tampering



Melbourn, May 18 : Australia's bowling group from the Cape Town Test match in 2018 has responded after comments made by teammate Cameron Bancroft, insisting they had no knowledge of the ball tampering which resulted in bans for Bancroft, David Warner and Steve Smith. Speaking to the Guardian last week, Bancroft was asked directly if

Australia's bowlers knew about the plan to use sandpaper on the ball during the Cape Town Test against South Africa three years ago and replied that the answer was "pretty probably self-explanatory". "Yeah, look, all I wanted to do was to be responsible and accountable for my own actions and part. Yeah, obviously what I did benefits bowlers and the awareness around that, probably, is self-explanatory," Bancroft said when pressed. "I guess one thing I learnt through the journey and being responsible is that's where the buck

stops [with Bancroft himself]. Had I had better awareness I would have made a much better decision." In a joint statement published on Mitchell Starc's website on Tuesday and addressed to "the Australian public", Starc, Pat Cummins, Josh Hazlewood and Nathan Lyon said they had already answered questions many times on the issue but felt compelled to go on the record again. "We pride ourselves on our honesty," the bowlers' statement read. "So it's been disappointing to see that our integrity has been questioned by some journalists and past players in recent days in regard to the Cape Town Test of 2018. "We did not know a foreign substance was taken onto the field to alter the condition of the ball until we saw the images on the big screen at Newlands.

Malins and Piutau fire Bristol to big win over Gloucester as fans return

Bristol, May 18 : Much has happened in the 14 months since Bristol's returning supporters last watched their local heroes play live. These days the Bears are clear Premiership leaders and remain on course for a home semi-final but, despite the cheerful presence of 3,128 excited fans, this bizarre contest was a reminder that nothing in rugby can ever be entirely delivered to order. Against opponents reduced to 14 men inside the first quarter, Bristol were as wasteful as a broken sewage pipe for lengthy periods, contriving to cross the Gloucester line eight times without registering a try. At least the Bears' five legitimate tries were enough to take them 12 points clear of second-placed Sale but they could - and probably should - have rattled up 70-odd points. The most glaring self-inflicted howler came when Charles Piutau was caught napping as he eased up in the in-goal area and had the ball knocked from his startled grasp by Kyle Moyle. Amid the dropped balls, forward passes and fractional knock-ons, however, the Bears can at least be consoled that when their rapier-like attacking rugby does click there

is currently no one to touch them. Gloucester, who last won a league game in Bristol four years ago, could also take pride from their defiance in adversity, with the Lions winger Louis Rees-Zammit even forced into emergency service on the flank. Ultimately, though, the best bit was the noise in the stands, a welcome indicator that post-Covid normality is finally within sight. Despite the reduced congregation, the vocal enthusiasm around the ground was still a genuine joy. "When we walked out it was like a shock, the noise," said Pat Lam, the Bears' director of rugby. "It was incredible what our fans did. I started getting a bit emotional when they came out, I'm getting soft, but it was

just so wonderful." Even the pre-match smell of burgers wafting from the stadium van felt delightfully decadent, a



forbidden pleasure with extra onions. Some of the home fans had travelled from as far as north Wales, reflecting the levels of expectancy beginning to surround the Bears. Around 8,000 season tickets have already been sold for next season, by which time all connected with Bristol hope the club will have featured in this season's Premiership final. They will need to stop being so profligate, however, to claim the title. After a couple of early penalties from the man of the match Callum Sheedy the tone was set when a stunning counterattack, instigated by Andy Uren and taken on by a surging Semi Radradra, was ruled out because Kyle Sinckler was adjudged to have lost control on his way over. Rather

more obvious was the inevitable red card shown to a penitent Matias Alemanno after Steven Luatua was up ended

with the type of dangerous double tackle which has thankfully grown rarer in recent times. When Val Rapava-Ruskin soon followed to the bin, reducing the visitors to 13 men, it appeared only a matter of time before Gloucester's implosion began. The Bears, though, seemed intent on finding assorted ways not to score until, finally the dam burst 12 minutes before the interval. Lions' South Africa tour restricted to Gauteng and Cape Town with no fansSpace opened up invitingly for the alert Sheedy and the fly-half's lovely reverse flick put Max Malins over for his latest high-class score. The classy England full-back has only limited experience on the wing but already looks entirely at home there. The odds on Gloucester still being within a single score at the interval at that stage were seriously long. Somehow, though, the Cherry and Whites continued to hang tough, Billy Twelvetrees' fine kick to the corner setting up decent field position and a fine long ball allowing Santiago Carreras just enough space to squeeze into the left corner. Again it seemed unlikely to matter as another glorious Bristol attack ended with Piutau sauntering over the line.

Pablo Fornals celebrates scoring for Villarreal at Real Madrid

London, May 18: David Moyes has a simple message for West Ham's creative players: If you don't run, you don't play. There is no room for passengers with Moyes in charge. Substance has to accompany style and West Ham have benefited from a humble approach this season, surpassing expectations by establishing themselves as the unlikely challengers for Champions League qualification. It has been an astonishing turnaround given that they spent last year battling against relegation. Flimsy and unreliable before reuniting with Moyes in December 2019, West Ham are pushovers no more. Spirit in the camp is high and the Scot has a buy-in from his attacking players, who know that they have to put the team first. "It's the way to understand football and most of the time understand life," Pablo Fornals says. "If you are passionate and give 100% things can be good or bad but nobody can say you didn't try. If I do something, I want to do my best." Fornals, who faces Leicester on Sunday, is the embodiment of West Ham's improvement. When the Spanish midfielder left Villarreal for £24m in the summer of 2019, he looked unsuited to English football. During those difficult early months it was hard to see why Andrés Iniesta had anointed Fornals as his heir. It seemed that West Ham, struggling under Manuel Pellegrini, had made another expensive mistake. "It was a bit of a shock because I thought I was a good player," Fornals says. "I couldn't understand why I wasn't doing the same as I was in Spain. I am a slim boy and football here is a little bit stronger. I needed to adjust small things to get myself at the same level as everyone." "What was difficult? "The speed, how strong

the game is, the things allowed by the referees," the 24-year-old says. "Everyone can see when English teams or Spanish teams are playing in European competitions. Sometimes it is frustrating because some referees whistle more for English teams, or for some Spanish teams the referees are not whistling the same as in Spain." In Spain



it is too difficult to speak with the referees. Here they understand you are in a game, your motivation is more than 100%. They try to speak gently with you. If you receive good vibes, you will give good vibes back." Fornals, who scored his fourth goal of the season in West Ham's win at Wolves on Monday, was ready to prove himself to Moyes by working on his speed and strength. He improved as last season wore on and has continued to progress. Fornals has been excellent this season. He creates and drives into the box, but he also works hard on and off the ball, fitting the template of the classic Moyes player. "When he came here I was finding myself with Pellegrini and trying to play good games," Fornals says. "When David Moyes

came I just tried to show him I was ready to give the team my experience, my youth, my energy. I want to play and for me it doesn't matter who is the coach. It's him who chooses between all of us and it's not easy competing with these really good teammates, so I always try to give 2,000%." The only hint of ego from Fornals comes when

he discusses his talent for Ludo. "I am really good," he says, explaining that he is rarely more competitive than when the board comes out and battle with his girlfriend commences. "In Spain we used to punish who lost. It makes you ready to compete for everything." Family matters to Fornals, who comes from Castellón, an hour's drive north of Valencia. "A small city or a big town - it's up to you," he says. "It's a beautiful place to live. Close to the sea, close to the mountains. We have everything. It is a quiet place. My mum and dad still work. I have a sister living in Madrid and working for a pharmaceutical company. She was here in England, in Nottingham, working for three years, and living in London as well to improve her English." My mum

lives football more than me. Listening for my name, she is excited and jumping on the sofa. Being away from his family is hard, although Fornals is happier now that better wifi means his parents can watch him play for West Ham. "We live in the mountains," he says. "It's not in the city centre so it's not the richest place." The connections were a little bit poorer. When the government put a really good fibre optic in place my family could watch our games. I bought them a big TV. It is another boost to know my family are watching me. My mum lives football more than me. Listening for my name, she is excited and jumping on the sofa. "The 24-year-old is full of energy, even bursting into song midway through an answer about Santi Cazorla, his former Villarreal teammate. "Villarreal is a small place but it is a great team and teams from everywhere in the world go there to learn," he says. "Tourists from everywhere come. We were on our training pitch and everyone started to sing: 'Ohhh Santi Cazorla!' The love that people have for him is amazing." Fornals bows to nobody in his admiration for Cazorla, who has continued to impress since joining Xavi Hernández's Al Sadd in Qatar, and calls the former Arsenal midfielder "a proper baller". He respects Spanish football's greats and is uncomfortable with the Iniesta comparisons. "It is a big responsibility for a young guy to hear you are going to be the next Andrés Iniesta," Fornals says. "Iniesta is the guy who gave Spain its first World Cup. It's not just one player - it is Andrés Iniesta!" Yet the hype grew when Fornals helped Spain win the European Under-21 Championship before joining West Ham. "It was a big moment,"

Women's Champions League: Glas gives Bayern first-leg edge over Chelsea



London, May 18 : Chelsea's defensive fragility was brutally exposed as they lost 2-1 against Bayern Munich in the first leg of their Champions League semi-final. Desperate to break the semi-final glass ceiling, having twice failed to reach the final, Chelsea instead hit the Glas ceiling after the Swedish defender Hanna Glas provide the assist for Sydney Lohmann's opener and scored a stunning solo goal, sandwiching the leveller deflected in by the former Bayern captain Melanie Leupolz. "It's half-time," the Chelsea manager, Emma Hayes, said. "We've got an away goal and it's half-time. The lesson for our team sometimes is you don't win the tie this round." After the final whistle had ended a bruising second half in the 2-2 draw against Manchester City on Wednesday as Chelsea took a point from their rivals and closed in on retention of their league title, Hayes had said she was "relieved". What did she want to see done differently in Munich? "Do what I want you to do, don't do something else," was the message

from the manager. Perhaps it was a nervousness at being 180 minutes away from a first Champions League final that rattled the Chelsea ranks but they looked far from the fluid, potent side Hayes would have wanted to see and that we have gotten used to this season. Instead, it was the out-of-form Bayern who exploded out of the blocks and put the make-shift visiting defence under pressure. A long-term injury to the right back Maren Mjelde meant Jess Carter once again started while the ongoing absence of the captain, Magda Eriksson, meant Sophie Ingle partnered England's Millie Bright in the centre of the defence. After a stunning late save prevented defeat in Manchester, the goalkeeper Ann Katrin Berger was at fault for the opener. Glas beat the left back Jonna Andersson and Berger's mistimed punch skidded towards Lohmann who headed past her into the open net. Hayes had spoken of the resilience of her side after the game on Wednesday and the confidence that gave her heading to Germany: "Sometimes when you don't play your game plan exactly how you want to you have to dig yourselves out, you have to gut something out," she had said. A shot from Melanie Leupolz (not pictured) spins into the net to give Chelsea a useful away goal. That mental toughness was tested further as Bayern, buoyed by their lead, pounded forward. The equaliser came from a familiar face, literally and figuratively: Guro Reiten's free kick was headed by Marina Hegering into the face of the former Bayern star Leupolz and rebounded in. The Bayern manager, Jens Scheuer, had said he was looking forward to the tactical battle but acknowledged his team would "have to play at our limits, at our best" to overcome the Women's Super League champions. They did. With almost an hour played Andersson sat back as Glas raced towards the box, cut inside the hesitant Swede and lashed high into the net. Scheuer went straight to Glas on the final whistle. "I went to her and congratulated her, I was just surprised that she can even score with her left foot, I underestimated her a little bit," he said with a laugh. "She is one of the best right-backs in the world." Favourites going into this tie, with Bayern having laboured to a 3-2 win against Turbine Potsdam four days after back-to-back defeats to end a 26-game winning run before this first leg, Chelsea's Champions League final dream looked to be unravelling.

Wallabies to host France in condensed biosecure Test series



London, May 18: The Wallabies and France will meet in three Tests in the space of just 11 days in July, with the teams playing two mid-week Tests. The first Test is in Sydney on Wednesday, 7 July at the SCG followed by a Tuesday night Melbourne match at AAMI Park on 13 July and a final Test on Saturday, 17 July at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium. The condensed series is due to French club commitments and hotel quarantine for the visitors. It is the first time since 2012 that the Wallabies have played a mid-week Test, with Australia losing that match to Scotland. Both countries will name larger squads than normal for the series given it is unlikely they can field the same starting side in succes-

sive Tests. France will bring out a squad of up to 40 in two groups, and the entire cohort will have been vaccinated before arriving. Rugby Australia chief executive Andy Marinos said on Friday. They will quarantine in Sydney but be allowed to train during the mandatory 14 days, similar to Argentina's arrangements when the Pumas toured Australia for last year's Tri-Nations. "The French team are going to be coming out here fully vaccinated which is a positive and coming out in a bubble," Marinos said. Les Bleus last toured to Australia in 2014, when the Wallabies claimed the series 3-0. France are ranked fifth in the world, and were as high as third during their recent run in the Six Nations earlier this year, while Australia are ranked seventh. However, given the Top 14 final is set for 26 June, some of France's best players will not be available for early Tests because of the quarantine requirements

on arrival in Australia. With the matches falling within school holidays Rugby Australia hopes to attract families while chief executive Andy Marinos says they are aiming to capture workers on the way home. "The return of midweek Test matches presents a unique opportunity for fans at home and at the venue, with each stadium in a central location for those attending after work," Marinos said. "France are one of the most exciting teams in World Rugby; they play with passion, flair and unpredictability and have proven time and time again they are one of the global forces of our game." Marinos said they had included RUPA - the players' association - in discussions surrounding the condensed calendar and had their support. "We have enjoyed constructive and engaged discussions with RUPA and the playing group on the international calendar, ensuring that player welfare and high performance outcomes can be optimised," he said. "Rugby Australia, World Rugby and member unions will continue their ongoing dialogue in planning for each Test match event, in line with the advice of the relevant medical authorities."

Iga Swiatek demolishes Karolina Pliskova to claim Italian Open crown



Rome, Mat 18: French Open champion Iga Swiatek served a warning to her rivals ahead of the claycourt Grand Slam with a 6-0 6-0 demolition of former world number one Karolina Pliskova in the Italian Open final on Sunday. The victory in 46 minutes meant the world number 15 from Poland, who shot to fame at Roland Garros last year by beating Sofia Kenin in straight sets in the final, will enter the top 10 for the first time when the new rankings are out on Monday. Swiatek's third title

overall following triumphs at Roland Garros and Adelaide came on the back of one of the most dominant performances of the 19-year-old's career as she dropped only 13 points against the Czech, who was the 2019 Rome champion. She served with ruthless accuracy, winning more than 93 per cent of points on her first serve, and converted six out of eight break point opportunities to close out the win against a frustrated Pliskova, who had no answers on the day.

Caps®

The bond of love and devotion.

100% DEPENDABLE... That's our guarantee !

CHIMNEYS WITH APPS | R.O. WATER PURIFIER | HOBS | GAS STOVE | OTHER KITCHEN APPLIANCES

Abhayapuri-94350-22784 | Agartala-98560-93668 | Baihata chariali-94351-42568/98641-40488 | Bangaigaon-7002184811. 9435547654,9435121367 | Barpeta road-94350-17865 99541-41975 | Barpeta town -94350-25127 | Bhawanipur-7002206773 | Banderdewa-98649-84753 | Bijoynagar -99570-98392/94010-01157/94353-40662 | Boko-94010-02588 | Chaygaon-9435014549 | Dadara -98546-98027 | Dhupdhara-96785-16189 | Dhamaji-99546-51322 | Dhubri-94350-29279 | Diphu-94350-66701/94350-66643 | Dudhnoi-94357-21505/94351-28048 | Goalpara-70023-10904/88762-23858 | Golaghat-96132-30384 | Guwahati -94355-59057/97065-94950 | Hajo-94353-47024/88763-09327 | Hojai-94357-29521/84028-59256 | Jorhat -94350-53934/98541-06776 | Kharupitia -98541-44223 | Kokrajhar-97070-29429/99548-88721/94354-81234 | Karimgunj-97061-39061 | Krishnai-88224-15337 | Lumding -94351-63327/97066-14137 | Mangaldoi -94350-87284/94351-86435/97065-39174/73994-79163 | Mirza-98540-71983/99572-81858 | Morigaon -94350-64986/80111-17171 | North lakhimpur-88224-21077 | Nagaon-97061-79408/94355-18665 | Nalbari -98644-14515/98540-30209 | Pathsala-80110-06658 | Dhekiajuli-98548-29934 | Dibrugarh-98548-11265 | Rangia -94351-05888/96782-26563 | Silchar -97061-39061/70054-86129 | Silapathar-70028-94393 | Shillong-90869-66640 | Suwalkuchi -98643-54859 | Tinsukia-94350-35156/94350-35511/94350-36463 | Tezpur-97060-73481 | Tihu-97068-53124 | Udalguri-97063-46492

Trade enq. 9435146909/9435559057/9435559056 www.capsindia.in Toll Free: 1800 103 4646