

The Assam Rising

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Of course Carrie Symonds loves Dilyn, so why mock her for ...

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Earthquake Hits Assam

Guwahati, May 30 : An earthquake hit Assam at 2:23 PM at a depth of 16 km from the surface. Tezpur: An earthquake of magnitude 4.1 was reported near Tezpur in Assam this afternoon, according to India's National Center for Seismology. The epicentre of the earthquake was 40 km west of Tezpur, Assam, the agency said. The earthquake struck at 2:23 PM at a depth of 16 km from the surface.

Samiran Bordoloi dies

Guwahati, May 30 : Samiran Bordoloi, a multifaceted personality, who made an impact in the fields of literature, culture, sports and social work passed away at his Sonarigaon residence on Sunday morning. Samiran Bordoloi passed away due to a terminal illness at the age of 65. Bordoloi was the former in-charge General Secretary of the Asam Sahitya Sabha. He will be remembered for being the driving force behind an Olympic sized swimming pool in Jorhat. Bordoloi was also a former member of State AASU executive committee and actively took part in the Assam Agitation. He was also actively associated with several, socio-cultural, sports and business organisations which included Jorhat Swimming Society, North East India Petroleum Dealers Association, Bokulban Trust and Gonesh Gogoi Kabita Kanan. Bordoloi, son of freedom fighter Tuleswar Bordoloi, leaves behind his wife, three daughters and a host of relatives. Jorhat Deputy Commissioner Ashok Kumar Barman, a delegation of Jorhat district unit AASU and several other organisations paid tribute to the departed soul at his residence.

Drug peddler arrested

Guwahati, May 30 : During an operation, carried out on the basis of secret inputs, a police team from Dhula police station of Darrang district was able to apprehend one drug peddler. The drug peddler has been identified as 23-year-old Rahul Amin, a resident of Khataniapara village under Dhula police station. The police team seized a consignment of brown sugar, weighing 62 gms from the possession of Rahul Amin. It is estimated that the market value of the banned drugs would be more than Rs 30,000, the officer-in-charge of Dhula police station, Kalyan Borah told Northeast Now. Also read: Assam: Over 4 kgs of ganja recovered, one arrested in Darrang. A case has been registered at Dhula police station in connection with the seizure. Earlier, on May 20 evening, Darrang Police arrested a drug peddler from Mangaldai and seized a consignment of brown sugar from his possession.

CAA rules on hold, Centre opens similar citizenship window in five states

New Delhi, May 30 : With the Centre yet to frame rules under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) 2019, it issued a gazette notification Friday granting powers under existing rules to authorities in 13 districts of Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Punjab to accept, verify and approve citizenship applications from

members of minority communities hailing from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. The notification lists Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians as the communities that will be covered, and states that the applications will have to be submitted online. The order has been issued under the Citizenship Act,

1955 and the Citizenship Rules, 2009 and not under the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 since its rules have not yet been framed, sources in the Ministry of Home Affairs said. A similar notification had been issued in 2018 as well for other districts in several states. "In exercise of the powers conferred by section 16 of the Citizenship Act, 1955 (57 of 1955), the Central Government hereby directs that powers exercisable by it, for registration as a citizen of India under section 5, or for grant of certificate of naturalisation under section 6, of the Citizenship Act, 1955, in respect of any person belonging to minority community in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, namely, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians... shall also be exercisable by the Collector, within whose jurisdiction the applicant is ordinarily resident," the notification said. The districts **Contd...Page 6**



HSLC, HS Exams To Be Held With Reduced Subjects: Assam Edu Minister

Guwahati, May 30 : Refuting rumors of HS and HSLC exams being cancelled, Assam education minister Dr



Ranoj Pegu stated that the exams will be held with reduced subjects. However, it was not clear which subjects will be taken in consideration. The minister said he consulted with various enti-

ties including students' organisations, teachers' organisation as well as parents before deciding on the matter. He also said that students will be informed 15 days prior to the commencement of the exams. Talking to reporters, Pegu said, "After a few days, we will announce about the exams in select subjects. The exams will definitely be held." Further, he said there will be no change in the format of the question papers. Earlier this month, the HS first year exams were cancelled and students were promoted to second year. The decision was taken due to the worsening COVID-19 situation in the state.

Woman raped while returning from hospital after testing Covid-19

Guwahati, May 30 : Allegedly, the hospital had refused to arrange a vehicle for the woman and her daughter to return home after they were released during the curfew time on Saturday. A woman was raped by two miscreants in Assam's Charaideo district while she was return-



ing from hospital to home after testing negative for Covid-19. The incident took place at Dhudarali near Borhaat tea garden in Charaideo district on Saturday evening at around 7 pm. According to the reports, a tea garden worker family of Borhaat Nagamaati area tested positive for COVID-19 few days back and they were under home isolation. When their health condition had deteriorated, they were admitted to Sapekhati Model Hospital. On Thursday, the husband tested negative for COVID-19 and the hospital authorities had released him. On Saturday, the wife and their daughter were also found negative and the authorities released them as well. As they were released during the curfew time, the woman and her daughter had requested the hospital authority to arrange a vehicle for them to **Contd...Page 6**



On the occasion of 7 years completion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi led Central Government, Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma visited Maa Kamakhya Old Age Home run by Golaghat Mahila Nirman Got at Panjabari in the city and interacted with inmates and donated fruits, food items, masks and sanitizers. He enquired about the well-being and health issues of the inmates during the pandemic and assured all help to the management in running the old age home smoothly during this difficult time.

Human Rights Council ready to mediate between Centre & ULFA(I)



Guwahati, May 30 : The International Human Rights Council (IHRC), a United Nations-recognised organisation, has ex-

pressed its willingness to be the mediator between the ULFA(I) and the Centre. IHRC national general secretary Kamal Raj Chetry has written a letter to the ULFA(I) Commander-in-Chief Paresh Baruah expressing the organisation's willingness to mediate between the outfit and the government. "IHRC is elated with the recent news of your decision and willingness to **Contd...Page 6**

NLFB cadre, disguised as Rapido rider, held in Guwahati

Guwahati, May 30 : A dreaded cadre of the newly created militant outfit - National Liberation Front of Bodoland (NLFB) has been nabbed by the police in Assam's capital city - Guwahati. The arrested NLFB cadre has been iden-

tified as Dipak Choudhury, the General Secretary of the outfit. The 32-year-old NLFB cadre was arrested from Salbari Hills in Noonmati, where he was taking refuge at his brother-in-law's residence. Choudhury **Contd...Page 6**

Mehul Choksi repatriation : Private jet in Dominica is from India, confirms Antigua PM

New Delhi, May 30 : Antigua Prime Minister Gaston Browne confirmed that a private jet from India arrived at the Douglas-Charles Airport in Dominica as Indian fugitive Mehul Choksi continues to be in the custody of Dominica Police. The picture of the jet was posted on Antigua Newsroom. "My understanding is that Indian government has sent certain documents from courts in India to confirm that he is indeed a fugitive and my understanding is that the documents will be utilised in the court case as you know the judge in Dominica has put a stay on deportation till Wednesday. So Indian government seems to be going all out to make sure he is repatriated to India to stand trial," Browne said to an FM

channel. A Bombardier Global 5000 jet of Qatar Executive landed at Dominica's Douglas Charles airport on Saturday. It's publicly accessible flight path shows that it took off from New Delhi on May 28 and reached Dominica via Madrid. On Saturday, the first photos of the multi-crore PNB scam-accused were released where he could be seen behind the bars, with an eye swollen, bruises on his arm. These were the first public photos of Choksi in the last three years that he spent in Antigua as a legal citizen after he fled India before the scam surfaced. Mehul

Choksi was apprehended by Dominica Police on Wednesday after he reportedly on missing on Sunday evening. Since then, he has been in



the custody of the Dominica Police. Antigua PM earlier said that he won't accept Choksi **Contd...Page 6**

New Delhi, May 30 : Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation in the 77th edition of his monthly radio programme, Mann Ki Baat, at 11 am on Sunday (May 30, 2021). The address came on the same day when Bharatiya Janata Party-led government at the Centre completed seven years in office. While addressing the nation, PM Narendra Modi touched upon the central government's seventh anniversary and said the nation has followed the mantra of



"sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka vishwas" in this

period. "Today, we're having 'Mann Ki **Contd...Page 6**

CM visits GMCH and reviews Covid treatment status

Covid situation is expected improve in the state drastically by June 7: CM

Guwahati, May 30 : Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today visited Gauhati Medical Col-



lege and Hospital and took stock of the Covid treatment infrastructure and other related issues. Later talking to the newsmen, Dr. Sarma informed that he discussed the matter of deputing doctors in the 300 bed Covid hospital being set up by DRDO at Sarusajai Sports Complex and the **Contd...Page 6**

IMD predicts heavy rainfall in Northeast India till June 3

Guwahati, May 30 : The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted heavy rainfall in various parts of Northeast India till June 3, 2021. Informing this, the Union ministry of earth science in a statement on Sunday said the National Weather Forecasting Centre of the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has predicted heavy rainfall at isolated places over Sikkim, Assam and Meghalaya on May 30. Lightning & gusty winds (speed reaching 30-40 kmph) may also hit isolated places over Sikkim,

Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura on May 30. On

May 31, the IMD has predicted "heavy to very heavy rainfall" at isolated places over Assam &



Meghalaya and heavy rainfall at isolated places over Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. On June 1, the IMD has predicted thunderstorm with lightning & gusty winds (speed reaching 30-40 kmph) in Sikkim and at isolated places over Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura. IMD has predicted "heavy to very heavy rainfall at isolated places very likely over Assam & Meghalaya" and "heavy rainfall at isolated places" over Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, **Contd...Page 6**

The UK's richest union is fighting in the courts, but not for the low paid

Capital will stage a brutal demonstration of its power over labour when the furloughs and state protections of the Covid pandemic end. Across the west, but most particularly in the UK, employees' ability to defend themselves will depend on whether they are in a trade union. The new working class of young, female and ethnic minority workers in hotels, gyms, security guard huts, supermarkets, call centres, restaurants, shops and bars needs unions. Whatever pain is coming, precarious private sector workers will feel it the most. The labour movement must surely be concentrating its energies on helping radically insecure workers as the crisis approaches. Last week, solicitors representing Anna Turley threatened to send bailiffs to the head office of Unite in Holborn, central London, with instructions to carry off everything that wasn't nailed down. Faced



with the threat that Len McCluskey, Howard Beckett and the union's other post-Leninist apparatchiks would have nothing to sit on but overturned crates, Unite handed over its members' money. Turley received the final part of legal costs of £1.3m

and damages of £75,000, compensation for a libel claim that has cost the union between £2m and £2.5m in total. It has been a busy time in the small but vicious world of militant trade unionism. Turley is not a traditional enemy of organised labour. Until 2019, she was the Labour MP for Redcar. Because she was a "centrist" or "Blairite" or whatever the far left was calling politicians like her at the time, the union falsely claimed, through the Skwawkbox website, that Turley was a cheat who had tried to join a section of the union reserved for the unemployed on "a fraudulent basis". If it had corrected the mistake and apologised, it would have likely cost union members a few hundred pounds, if that. As it was, Unite wasted several million hiring a ferocious QC, who said of Turley in open court and in the middle of the 2019 election campaign, "she is not fit to

Nick Cohen

say about its priorities. Also last week, for it has been a busy time in the small but vicious world of militant trade unionism, the Labour MP Neil Coyle alleged to the parliamentary commissioner for standards and the certification officer, who regulates trade unions, that Unite was using members' money to subsidise a string of legal cases. The media picked up his claim that Corbyn had not properly declared financial support from Unite for legal disputes involving antisemitism. The high quantity and abysmal quality of the cases

Coyle claims the union is fighting struck me. Coyle alleges Unite has become a bank, funding a dozen or more legal actions, nearly all involving accusations of antisemitism, with potential costs running into the millions. A few are on the public record. Unite told the judge in the Turley case that it would cover all the costs of the Skwawkbox site's libels. Barristers said in open court that Unite was picking up the bills for five people accused of leaking a Corbyn-era report that purported to clear him and his supporters of antisemitism, while blaming Labour employees for all that went wrong. The result is dozens of suits for libel and breach of privacy from ex-Labour staffers. When I asked Unite if it was funding the remaining cases Coyle raised, its PR person said: "The information you have ranges from being false to widely inaccurate. It is, of course, a matter for you as to whether you print false or widely inaccurate information." "OK," I replied, "which information is false and wildly inaccurate? All, some?" Answer came there none. Once, a Marxist might have defended Unite's obsession with far-left factionalism. Unions were "schools of war", wrote Friedrich Engels in his Condition of the Working Class in England in

1845, where members learned to fight "the supremacy of the bourgeoisie". Andrew Murray, Unite's chief of staff, is descended from the Earls of Perth and the royal house of Navarre. He was born into a family that sells a Picasso when it is short of money. He is possibly the poshest man in England after Prince Charles. But he is also a committed communist, who presumably sees Unite as a tool to overthrow the power of his fellow aristos, although how the union defaming a woman such as Anna Turley brings the revolution closer is beyond me. The alternative conception of trade unionism holds that Labour party or Leninist revolutionary politics are as nothing when set against the overriding need to protect employees' interests. It recognises that trade union membership does not guarantee support for the left - at the last election almost as many Unite members voted Tory as Labour - and does not care. What matters is supporting millions of unprotected employees. By this measure - the only measure that matters in my view - the trade union movement is failing. The Resolution Foundation said last week that trade union membership stood at just 12.9% of private sector workers in 2020. In the hospitality industry, where long hours and low pay are standard, only 3% of workers are in a union. There are flickers of hope. The GMB union fights to defend the workers in Amazon warehouses, and has forced Uber to recognise its right to help and support its drivers. There are other examples I could cite, most notably in retail, but they cannot disguise that trade unionists are today far more likely to work in the public rather than the private sector, to be old rather than young and, for all Engels's talk about fighting bourgeois supremacy, to be middle rather than working class.

Non-fungible tokens aren't a harmless digital fad - they're a disaster for our planet

If you happen to count yourself among those appalled by the seemingly unstoppable rise of NFTs, or non-fungible tokens, over the past few months, you might be forgiven a little schadenfreude at the recent news that a dispute has broken out over the ownership of Mars House, a digital file that sold in March for \$512,000 (£360,000). Let's be clear what's been purchased here. Mars House itself is nothing more than a string of ones and zeroes residing on a server somewhere. But the NFT isn't even that string. All it is another such string pointing to that one, certifying that it is the only copy of that precise sequence of ones and zeroes in existence. Put aside, if you can, the obscurity of a purely virtual dwelling selling for half a million dollars. The dispute over Mars House makes plain what should have been obvious all along: NFTs aren't even capable of guaranteeing the one thing their value is supposedly predicated on, ownership of a unique digital asset. NFTs are one of the signature fads of this deeply odd late-pandemic moment. At the centre of all the buzz surrounding them is something exceedingly curious: a digital token, generated using a cryptographic protocol of the same sort that underwrites currencies such as bitcoin, certifying the uniqueness of some image or other digital file. Again, what's being bought and sold on the NFT market isn't the artwork itself, just a kind of pointer to it, with the buyer's name inscribed upon it. An artwork need have no other merit - neither historical resonance nor social relevance nor aesthetic refinement nor even skill in execution - to be valued in this way. You can't do anything with Mars House, other than own it. What is

valuable about the string of digits that makes up the token is that you as purchaser are the sole possessor of it. And, as the recent legal conundrums makes clear, even that most basic assertion rests on shifting sands. All of which makes Mars House, like all NFTs, an infinite zero, and a perfect representation of the meaningless churn so much of our economy is based on. In part, this is because NFTs, as the ultimate in artificial scarcity, solve a non-problem, an issue nobody actually had. The NFT frenzy marks the convergence of the art world and the disturbingly Ponzi-like dynamics of cryptocurrency trading, where enthusiasts speak openly of their contempt for "bagholders", the last suckers to have bought in big before the market finally comes to its senses; the whole thing stinks of tulips. This is evidently no problem for an art market that long ago gave up the pretence that artworks might hold a critical mirror up to the rest of society, or are anything other than a particular, specialised asset class. But ultimately, this isn't why it's so depressing

Adam Greenfield

to see artists rushing to prop up the NFT market. The real problem has to do with a presently inescapable feature of the way NFTs work. Each transaction on the Ethereum blockchain, on which most NFTs are currently recorded, involves a set of calculations called proof-of-work. Those calculations are intentionally designed to be energy-intensive. The furious churn of all the processors involved in validating proof-of-work globally burns vertiginous amounts of electricity, at significant environmental cost. The New York Times recently quoted a French artist taken aback to learn that their "release of six crypto-artworks consumed in 10 seconds more electricity than [their] entire studio over the past two years." Similarly, Elon Musk's recent large-scale transactions in proof-of-work-based Bitcoin released more carbon into the atmosphere in just a few days than the amount saved, in principle, by all the Teslas ever sold. Artists peddling their work as NFTs may or may not care about this brutal

calculus. But it makes particular nonsense of art that claims to spur the viewer to some kind of ecological consciousness. Consider, for example, John Gerrard's recent announcement of an NFT for his video piece Western Flag - according to Gerrard an artwork that, in "flying the flag of our own self-destruction", asks us "to consider our role in the warming of the planet and simultaneous desertification of once fertile lands". By choosing to release a Western Flag NFT, though, it's as if Gerrard and his gallerists have scrawled this statement across the land in letters of crude oil a mile from tip to tip, and then set them on fire ... a thousand times over. The promoters of Gerrard's NFT promised that its environmental impact would be carefully offset, the sale rendered carbon-negative by investment in something called regenerate, farm, "a cryptofund for climate and soil". But this is more than a little fatuous. Even assuming that all the claims regarding offsets prove to be true, Gerrard's announcement created buzz, credibility and, crucially, validation - and there-

fore underwrote the market for other NFTs, the overwhelming majority of which were not offset or buffered, either by regenerate, farm or in any other way. Indulging in this kind of sophistry feels like reckless disregard for the planet, and depraved indifference to the damage being caused. Some 12 years after bitcoin's launch, and six after Ethereum's debut as a blockchain that could be programmed in a way that permits NFTs to be issued, the technology's many promised and radical innovations have yet to arrive. All that has actually come to pass is a transfer of power from the institutions of global finance to even sketchier and less accountable actors, while the rest of us are saddled with an environmental impact nobody can afford to bear. One can't help but wonder if the proud new owner of Western Flag will think it was all worth it on some day, not so very far from now, when the coastal cities have drowned, the brackish water that comes from the tap needs to be boiled before it is safe to drink and climate refugees huddle in tent cities stretching to the horizon.

A Covid inquiry must be held immediately, to spare families like mine more suffering

My father died last April, but it feels like the government has learned nothing about the pandemic since then. The Covid memorial wall outside St Thomas' Hospital, London, 30 April 2021. As Dominic Cummings began speaking at the joint inquiry by the Commons' health select committee and the science and technology committee into the handling of Covid-19 on Wednesday, sitting laid-back in his unbuttoned white shirt, I was intrigued. But I couldn't have anticipated how agonising the next seven hours would be. I lost my dad in the first wave of the pandemic in April 2020. He fell ill just after the first lockdown was announced. It started off with a temperature, then cough-

ing, before later being taken to hospital. We waited five hours for the ambulance. I called 999 three times, on each occasion updating them on my dad's deteriorating state. I sat by his side coaching him on how to breathe. He would have ignored me normally, but I saw the desperation in his eyes. Dad

Areeb Ullah

let me brush his hair as he slowly breathed what little oxygen he had left in his body. The ambulance eventually came, but was it too late? Should I have called the ambulance earlier? Was the hospital right to put him on a ventilator so soon? Did my dad get the virus because our government failed to close the borders and lock down sooner? These are just some of the ques-

tions that haunt families like mine every day. And listening to Cummings' testimony it became clear that our worst fears were true: my dad's death might have been avoidable. I can't begin to explain how painful it was to hear claims that, while the victim would kill my dad was spreading across the country, Boris Johnson was calling it "kung flu" and suggesting he inject himself with it live on television; to hear that, as many of those who would go on to die were catching the virus, the government was discussing "chickenpox parties", asking "who needs to die" and were resolute that the British public "would never accept lockdowns"; to hear that even by 13

Of course Carrie Symonds loves Dilyn, so why mock her for that?

While obviously not the most important takeaway from The Great Outpouring, Dominic Cummings really hates Carrie Symonds, doesn't he? Understandable really. She took his best mate away. They were so close, but then she came along and Boris didn't have time for him any more... Oh sorry, I appear to have segued into a half-remembered Byker Grove storyline - a "teaching moment" for schoolboy viewers about feeling left out when your mate gets a girlfriend. Only in the Westminster version, a pandemic is brewing and Cummings depicts Symonds "going crackers about something completely trivial" - a story claiming that Dilyn, the jack russell cross she rescued with Boris Johnson, was being "reshuffled". Thing is, though, I understand why Symonds was upset and I rather like her for it. Cummings clearly wanted to present Symonds as a Violet Elizabeth Bott figure, a preposterous, demanding drag on the prime minister's focus at a critical moment. Admittedly, the now-leaked letter of complaint Symonds drafted to the Times is an overwrought belter, citing violations, demanding corrections and ending with the classic: "We look forward to hearing from you as a matter of urgency." Elsewhere, never mind the first fiancée's taste for swanky decor, stories abound about her pushing animal welfare

Barbara Ellen

could be missing a vital component - direct input from victims. Last week, analysis of Home Office figures showed that only 1.6% of rape cases resulted in a suspect being charged in 2020. The England and Wales review, two years in the making and overdue, could arrive in June. However, it appears that charities and groups wrote a letter expressing dismay at the reluctance of the review to directly engage with rape survivors. This review represents a crucial juncture in how rape is dealt with in England and Wales. How many prosecutions are made has an impact on public trust in the system - a rape victim's confidence that there's a point in coming forward about their attack. By anybody's reckoning, 1.6% of reported incidents resulting in a prosecution is an insult to sexual assault victims. Those in charge of the review say that they didn't wish to re-traumatise people, so they used research conducted by victims' organisations rather than deal directly with survivors. Which doesn't make sense. No survivors would have been forced to take part and there could have been trauma specialists on hand for those who did. If victims are going to be re-traumatized by anything, it would be by not being heard about the vile crimes committed against them. The review is supposed to be looking into how rape survivors routinely failed to get justice. Now, with this review, survivors have found themselves sidelined and muted, with no direct way of contributing. If corners were cut, it's disrespectful and absurd. In this context, whose voices, testimonies and thoughts could possibly be more important, more useful and illuminating than those of survivors?



relate. The story was about Dilyn potentially being rehoused because of bad health and unruliness (shagging legs and the like). Never mind that it's supposed to be true that Johnson had wearied of Dilyn (maybe partly accounting for his waving away Symonds's letter as "nonsense"). For an animal lover, and especially someone who's rescued an animal, this would be upsetting. Adopting a rescue is a serious commitment - a lot of these animals have already been abused and abandoned (I read that Dilyn was rescued from being put down because of a wonky jaw). By rescuing, you make a sacred pledge to your vulnerable animal: "That's the last time you're scared" and you mean it. Or you should do. While there's been a pandemic pet boom, charities are already worrying about animals being abandoned post-lockdown. In that grim context, I'm all for Symonds raging, however disproportionately, over a story about them offloading Dilyn. I'm touched that she banded out that mad letter. She loves her dog, so sue her. Nor am I entirely averse to the unelected Symonds pushing animal welfare agendas (there has to be some upside to being Johnson's fiancée). The bond between British people and their pets can get highly emotional and sometimes irrational, but it's also the best part of us. Cummings was clearly trying to ridicule and diminish Symonds, but he probably won her some new

ever, it appears that charities and groups wrote a letter expressing dismay at the reluctance of the review to directly engage with rape survivors. This review represents a crucial juncture in how rape is dealt with in England and Wales. How many prosecutions are made has an impact on public trust in the system - a rape victim's confidence that there's a point in coming forward about their attack. By anybody's reckoning, 1.6% of reported incidents resulting in a prosecution is an insult to sexual assault victims. Those in charge of the review say that they didn't wish to re-traumatise people, so they used research conducted by victims' organisations rather than deal directly with survivors. Which doesn't make sense. No survivors would have been forced to take part and there could have been trauma specialists on hand for those who did. If victims are going to be re-traumatized by anything, it would be by not being heard about the vile crimes committed against them. The review is supposed to be looking into how rape survivors routinely failed to get justice. Now, with this review, survivors have found themselves sidelined and muted, with no direct way of contributing. If corners were cut, it's disrespectful and absurd. In this context, whose voices, testimonies and thoughts could possibly be more important, more useful and illuminating than those of survivors?

March 2020, around when my dad likely caught the virus, the government was in total disarray, with top civil servants apparently claiming, "There is no plan, we're in huge trouble." There is nothing the government or Cummings can do to bring back my dad, or any of our loved ones. But the least they can do is treat those grieving



with respect and dignity. Wednesday's spectacle, complete with snippets put out on Twitter beforehand to "build a buzz", was the opposite of that. My family feels the pain of losing my dad every single day, and we deserve better than having our trauma treated as a political football. This is one of the reasons we need an urgent public inquiry: it is clear now that the truth is going to come out one way or the other, the question is whether it's done respectfully or in pantomime displays like the one we witnessed on Wednesday. After my dad passed away, I joined Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice, to support and be supported by others who have had the same experience.



A member of Saraya al-Quds brigades, the military wing of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement, takes part in a military parade in Gaza

Centre to provide financial cushion to families losing earning member to COVID-19, check top 5 benefits

New Delhi, May 30 : In a bid to support the families severely affected financially by the wrath of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Indian government on Saturday (May 29) rolled out a slew of welfare measures. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the benefits in his address. Here are the top 5 measures aimed at supporting families: The Indian government announced that the dependents of those who have lost an earning member of the household amid the pandemic will be given a family pension under the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). The dependent family members will be entitled to pension benefits equal to 90% of the average daily salary taken by the employee as per the existing norms. The benefit will be available with retrospective effect from 24.03.2020 and till 24.03.2022 for all such cases. Families of those who have lost an earning member will also get insurance benefits from the Employees Deposit Linked Insurance (EDLI) scheme. The amount of maximum insurance benefit has been increased from Rs 6 lakh to Rs 7

lakh. The provision for a minimum insurance benefit of ₹ 2.5 lakh has also been restored by the Indian government. The insurance benefits will be retroactively provided from 15 February 2020 for the next three years. Families of contractual and casual workers will be able to benefit from the continuous employment clause. The government said that the rules of continuous employment have been liberalised. Detailed guidelines in regard to continuous employment will be issued by the Ministry of Labour and Employment. Children who have been orphaned due to Covid-19 will be supported under the 'PM-CARES for Children' scheme. A corpus of Rs 10 lakh will be provided to children when they turn 23 years of age. They'll also get free primary and secondary education. The Indian government is offering free health insurance to all the children who lost their parents to Covid-19 under the Ayushman Bharat Scheme (PM-JAY). The scheme free treatment up to Rs 5 lakh at empanelled private and government hospitals.

Tens of thousands of Brazilians march to demand Bolsonaro's impeachment

Rio de Janeiro, May 30 : Tens of thousands of protesters have poured out to the streets of Brazil's largest cities to demand the impeachment of President Jair Bolsonaro over his catastrophic response to a coronavirus pandemic that has claimed nearly half a million Brazilian lives. The demonstrators turned out in more than 200 cities and towns for what is the biggest anti-Bolsonaro mobilisation since Brazil's Covid outbreak began. "Today is a decisive milestone in the battle to defeat Bolsonaro's genocidal administration," said Silvia de Mendonça, 55, a civil rights activist from Brazil's Unified Black Movement as she led a column of protesters through Rio's dilapidated city centre. Osvaldo Bazani da Silva, a 48-year-old hairdresser who lost his younger brother to Covid-19,

distancing or lockdowns. Irene Grether, a 69-year-old psychoanalyst who was also at the demo, said two relatives had died as a result of her government's inaction. "This government is more dangerous than the virus," she said as thousands of protesters gathered near a statue remembering the anti-slavery resistance leader Zumbi dos Palmares. Grether's niece, a 46-year-old economist called Ana Paula Carvalho said she believed Bolsonaro should be brought before the international criminal court in The Hague "for crimes against the Brazilian people". "He fosters death and destruction," she said. "Bolsonaro is a Brazilian tragedy." Bolsonaro has defended his response to the pandemic, claiming his dogged opposition to lockdown is designed to

rightwing populist's handling of Covid, with 57% of the population now backing his impeachment. A congressional inquiry is currently dissecting Bolsonaro's calamitous response to the public health crisis with damaging revelations about his government's conduct being broadcast each night on the news. Bolsonaro appears particularly rattled by the reemergence of his political rival Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the former leftist president who looks poised to challenge him for the presidency in next year's election. In a recent interview with the Guardian, Lula, whose political rights were recently restored, said he had no doubt the Brazilian people would "free themselves" from Bolsonaro in 2022. "He could have avoided half of these deaths," Lula said of Bolsonaro's reaction to Covid.



said: "We can't lose any more Brazilian lives. We need to hit the streets every single day until this government falls." In Rio many marchers carried homemade placards remembering loved ones they have lost to an epidemic that has killed nearly 460,000 Brazilians, the world's second largest official death toll after the US. "I'm here in his memory," said Luiz Dantas, 18, clutching a photograph of his grandfather, Sebastião, who died in February aged 75. "The culprit has a first and a second name," Dantas claimed, in reference to his country's far-right president who has repeatedly trivialised the coronavirus as a "little flu" and sabotaged containment efforts such as social

project Brazilian livelihoods and jobs. But Carvalho said that by allowing the uncontrolled spread of the virus - and failing to acquire sufficient vaccines - Bolsonaro had destroyed the economy, as well as lives. "Today the Brazilian people have a choice between dying from the virus or of hunger," she said. Saturday's demonstrations - which also took place in major cities including São Paulo, Belo Horizonte, Recife and the capital Brasília, as well as scores of smaller towns - come with Bolsonaro at arguably his lowest ebb since he took office in January 2019. Polls suggest growing anger at the

Centre directs states, UTs to take action against institutions giving COVID vaccination package with hotels

New Delhi: The central government, in a notice addressed to the states and union territories, on Saturday (May 29, 2021) stated that the COVID-19 vaccination packages being offered by private hospitals in collaboration with various hotels are against the guidelines issued for the National Covid Vaccination Programme. The Centre have also directed the states and union territories to initiate legal or administrative action against institutions involved in such practices. In a letter, the Additional Secretary to Health ministry Manohar Agnani said, "it has come to the notice of the Union health ministry that some private



hospitals are giving package for Covid vaccination in collaboration with some hotels, which is against the guidelines issued for the National Covid Vaccination Program." Apart from government Covid vaccination centre and private Covid vaccination centre, workplace, near home Covid vaccination centre for elderly and differently-abled persons to be organised at group housing societies, there are no other avenues to carry out vaccination under the national Covid Vaccination Program so vaccination carried out in star hotels is contrary to the guidelines and must be stopped immediately, Agnani was quoted as saying in the letter. "Necessary legal and administrative actions should be initiated against such institutions. Therefore, you are also requested to monitor and ensure that the National Covid Vaccination drive is carried out as per the prescribed guidelines," he added. Meanwhile, India on Saturday recorded over 1,73,790 new infections, 3,617 coronavirus-related fatalities in the last 24 hours, which took the overall caseload to 2.77 crores.

Phone intercepts shine more light on Jordanian prince's alleged coup attempt

London, May 30 : Aides to the former Jordanian heir Prince Hamzah sought pledges of allegiance on his behalf from tribal leaders and former military officers in the weeks before he was detained, conversations caught on phone intercepts and listening devices suggest. The recordings are key pieces of evidence in the Jordanian government's case against two men accused of acting as proxies for Hamzah in a failed attempt to oust his half-brother, King Abdullah, as monarch. Both men - Bassem Awadallah, a former envoy to Saudi Arabia, and Sharif Hassan bin Zaid, a cousin of the king - are expected to stand trial in Amman in coming days. The calls and intercepts, which have been heard by the Guardian, took place over three weeks in March, a period in which officials say Hamzah tried to rally support from figures who could elevate what officials describe as a seditious plot into a serious challenge to Abdullah's reign. The recordings include the Arabic term mubayyaa, which implies swearing an oath to a caliph or monarch. The use of such a phrase alarmed intelligence officials who had begun surveilling Hamzah and his aides, setting in motion a real-life Game of Thrones, which placed two of Jordan's most senior royals at odds and implicated its two closest allies. The Guardian on Wednesday revealed the US had warned of the alleged plot in a call to Jordan's spy agency in March. At the

same time, a report was handed to Abdullah, who had been frozen out of plans by Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner to reshape the Middle East during the former US president's tumultuous four years. The American warning came after Bin Zaid allegedly approached a US diplomat soliciting support for the former crown prince's ascent to the throne. By then, intelligence officials had intercepted several calls that appeared to seek loyalty. One of the calls to a tribal official heard a voice saying: "Our guy has made a decision to move, do you pledge allegiance?" A bug placed in a meeting of tribal figures in northern Jordan recorded the men present discussing how to organise support for Hamzah. Meetings of civilians were to be kept to 15 people, while meetings of retired military leaders were limited to seven. The Jordanian case against Hamzah, who remains under house arrest, is that he sought to move against Abdullah, who removed him from the line of succession in 2004 and installed his son, around the time of a tragedy blamed on negligence at a hospital that killed seven patients in the city of Salt. "He arrived wearing his father [King Hussein's] tie," a senior official said. "There were messages between him and his friends saying 'you should not take a photo with His Majesty'." By mid-March, after the warnings had been delivered to the royal court and

Jordan's general intelligence directorate, officials believe Hamzah saw a confluence of circumstances - commemorations of a 50-year-old battle with Israel and of a decade-old youth movement, as well as Mother's Day - as a chance to build

Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was integral to Kushner's ambitions. Awadallah had remained on close terms with Riyadh, and the Saudi foreign minister, Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud,



momentum. "At that point Hamzah was asking for advice on how to proceed," the official said. "He was told: 'These decisions need well thought-out responses. When it's time for the full knockout, you will know.' His people told those they had recruited: 'When he acts, it is to be for the jugular.' Regional sources said the alleged plot may have been an epilogue to a wider drama in the region over the past four years: Kushner's attempt to launch his so-called 'deal of the century' plan, which ripped up the rulebook on the

is understood to have flown to Amman the day after he was arrested to seek his release. Abdullah rigidly opposed the Kushner deal, as a direct threat to the kingdom's custodianship of holy sites in Jerusalem - a key facet of Hashemite legitimacy - and a blow to hopes that Jordan's significant population of Palestinian refugees may one day be able to return to their own state. Hamzah is understood to be confined to his home, and was last heard from in leaked videos in April claiming his innocence.

'Wrong and un-American': Biden blasts Texas Republicans' SB7 voting bill

New York, May 30 : Joe Biden has condemned as "wrong and un-American" a Texas state bill set to pass into law which the president said "attacks the sacred right to vote", particularly among minorities. The bill, known as SB7, clamps down on measures such as drive-through voting and voting on Sundays. It would also empower

moves in other Republican-controlled states which sponsors insist merely seek to guard against voter fraud but which are seen by most analysts to be aimed at restricting voting by sections of the population which tend to vote Democratic. According to the New York-based Brennan Center for Justice, nearly 400 such bills have

racist segregation which remained in place for 100 years after the civil war. As in other states, major corporations have warned Texas that SB7 could harm democracy and the economy. Republicans have shrugged off such objections and in some cases ripped business leaders for speaking out. The two Republicans who

that we've seen far too often this year - and often disproportionately targeting Black and brown Americans. "It's wrong and un-American. In the 21st century, we should be making it easier, not harder, for every eligible voter to vote." Republicans have acted to tighten voting laws as the man Biden beat in the presidential election, Donald Trump, continues to dominate GOP politics and to claim his defeat was the result of mass electoral fraud, a lie repeatedly thrown out of court. On Saturday, Biden said Congress should pass two federal measures, the For the People Act and the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. Both face failure in a Senate split 50-50 and where key Democrats have said they will not support moves to abolish the filibuster, the 60-vote threshold by which the minority can block legislation. Trump's lies about the election fuelled the deadly attack on the US Capitol by his supporters on 6 January. On Friday, Senate Republicans used the filibuster to block the formation of a 9/11-style commission to investigate that riot. Regarding the Texas bill, Biden said he "continue[d] to call on all Americans, of every party in persuasion, to stand up for our democracy and protect the right to vote and the integrity of our elections". Julián Castro, a former US housing secretary and candidate for the presidential nomination, said: "The final draft of Texas



partisan poll-watchers. Greg Abbott, the Republican governor of Texas, has said he will sign it. Democrats have said they will challenge it in court. The bill follows

been filed this year across the US, in 14 states. Biden has already blasted such measures, for instance calling laws in Georgia "Jim Crow in the 21st century", a reference to the system of

put SB7 together, Texas senator Bryan Hughes and representative Briscoe Cain, called the bill "one of the most comprehensive and sensible election reform bills" in state history. In a joint statement, they said: "Even as the national media minimises the importance of election integrity, the Texas legislature has not bent to headlines or corporate virtue signalling." Biden countered: "Today, Texas legislators put forth a bill that joins Georgia and Florida in advancing a state law that attacks the sacred right to vote. It's part of an assault on democracy



People cool themselves off in the tree shade in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

THE ASSAM RISING

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The vaccine stories

The gut-wrenching scenes of almost hundred dead bodies floating in the Ganga at Bihar's Buxar and Uttar Pradesh's Ghazipur in early May, are a grim and tragic reminder of the devastation and loss during the second wave of Covid in India. By all accounts, these dead bodies were abandoned in the river Ganga because their families were unable to cremate them and give them dignity even in death. The families were so poor that they were unable to afford the cremation costs - inflated due to the disproportionately high number of Covid deaths during those few weeks. These regions endemically have high poverty rates that have got heightened due to the Covid pandemic since March 2020 and ensuing economic crisis. Various think tanks and expert groups have been projecting that in India, hundreds of millions will slide back into poverty due to the pandemic. The International Labour Organization last year projected this number to be around 400 million. While this colossal human suffering continues due to the pandemic, a vulgar paradox is taking shape in form of windfall profits for the pharmaceutical companies leading to new vaccine billionaires. Since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, Moderna, BioNTech and CanSino, the makers of successful Covid-19 vaccines, have created at least nine new vaccine billionaires with a combined net wealth of \$19.3 billion, according to Oxfam, based on its analysis of the Forbes 2021 billionaires list. To put things into perspective, the amount is sufficient to buy enough vaccines to fully inoculate almost everyone in sub-Saharan Africa, a region whose vaccinations as of 2 May was a dismal 0.7 per cent. Apart from the new vaccine billionaires, a further eight existing billionaires with extensive portfolios in the companies making Covid vaccines and related drugs saw their wealth rise by a massive \$32.2 billion. This growing phenomenon of obscene inequalities is systemic and goes beyond the pharmaceutical companies, as we saw the top 10 billionaires of the world add over a trillion dollars to their wealth during the pandemic year of 2020. During the same period, the top 11 billionaires of India added so much to their wealth during the pandemic that just the increase could sustain the MGNREGA scheme for 10 years or our health ministry for 10 years. This outrageous increase in the wealth of the billionaires has happened in tragic times of more than three million deaths due to Covid, millions of people losing their jobs and livelihood and finding it hard to put food on their table or get treatment when they are sick. Even this unprecedented crisis does not invoke fundamental and systemic scrutiny of the political choices we make, and economic structures we have created that ironically legitimise and defend mammoth profits (in the name of intellectual property and patents on Covid vaccines and related technology) over saving lives of millions by providing vaccines as public goods. Such levels of inequality are not sustainable and will lead to breakdown of social and political order. And endanger public health. Vaccine inequality is a case in point. Surprisingly, there is no public outrage against the stark vaccine inequality and shortage that we are witnessing in times when we are aware that the Covid vaccine is our only hope against the pandemic. The Covid pandemic is being perpetuated by a "scandalous inequity" in vaccine distribution, the head of the World Health Organization (WHO) recently said. As I had pointed out in my Scroll article, "rich countries representing just 16% of the world's population have secured half of the leading vaccines. Of the 383 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines administered globally till April, nearly 50% went to just the US, EU, and UK, which together represent only 11% of the world's population." Reports suggest that the US, UK, Australia and Canada have enough vaccines to inoculate their entire population two to three times. It is ironic that India, known as the pharmacy to the world, is now struggling with acute vaccine shortage and so far, has been able to vaccinate only 3 per cent of the population with both the shots. This vaccine crisis and inequality is the result of vaccines being covered under patents and the intellectual property rights regime. It is important to welcome the role of India in this context and underscore that the initial proposal for a patent waiver was made by the Indian and South African governments at the World Trade Organization (WTO). The US and more than 100 other countries have also now backed the waiver of intellectual property protections for COVID-19 vaccines as an important step in the right direction. However, the path ahead with winding WTO negotiations is going to be long and arduous, and millions of lives will continue to be at stake. History will judge us during this unprecedented humanitarian crisis not by the scale of devastation caused by the virus or the fact that the country was literally gasping for oxygen, but by the lives lost due to the moral ambiguity of our economic and political choices - the choice of defining public goods and public interests as subservient and secondary to the idea of private profit. Alternatively, we could use this crisis as a watershed moment to reboot into a new equal, just and sustainable world.

India risks becoming Latin America on the 'Great Gatsby Curve', must manage its fisc better

Economists have been moderating their growth forecasts as the second phase of Covid has been running its course. Most commentators are agreed that the economy should be back at year-end to where it was two years ago. The question is what will happen beyond that. Should one expect a return to rapid economic growth, or is the country headed for medium-term disappointment? For an answer, one has to dig under recent growth rates. First, as is known, the system was slowing even before Covid hit, growth having halved from 8 per cent in the peak of the Modi years to barely 4 per cent in 2019-20. Second, growth in the last three years has been propped up by government consumption - which has grown 30 per cent in this period compared to 2.1 per cent for private consumption. Investment in fixed capi-

tal has done much worse, shrinking by 8.7 per cent compared to the level three years earlier. It is understandable (even required) in a recession that the government become the primary engine of growth, but that position cannot be sustained without risk - not when public debt has already climbed from two-thirds of GDP to 90 per cent. Third, and most important, the trends in declining employment and growing inequality make it hard for private consumption to recover quickly. The size of the population that is willing to work has shrunk. Within that shrinking number, unemployment has grown sharply. And of those who are actually working, those engaged in agriculture (ie low-wage employment) have grown in number, while millions of industrial and service sector jobs have disappeared. In these circum-

stances, the majority will find it a challenge to maintain their current level of spending. If consumption grows only slowly, today's low levels of capacity utilisation will take two to three years to reach the level required for investment in new capacity to kick in. With little investment growth in the interim, rapid overall growth is unlikely. Unless of course you can use export demand to make up for the lack of domestic demand. This is possible today since the world economy is recovering momentum, trade is growing well, and the western economies want to diversify supply lines away from China. But policies have to help exporters cash in on the opportunity, and it is not clear that the atmanirbhar campaign fits the bill. Still, the domestic market too has to grow. What no one wants is to become like Latin America, whose

extreme levels of inequality India now comes close to matching, and whose contrasts of rich and poor are mirrored increasingly in the divergent fortunes of the well-off and the rest in India. A buoyant stock market fuelled by a small vibrant set of large companies is good optics, but contrasts with the morass trapping the rest of the system. Sharp inequality of the Latin American variety, especially when the majority is still poorly educated and simply not fit for high-productivity employment, constricts domestic demand and constrains growth. Policymakers should look at what is called the Great Gatsby Curve - named after the Scott Fitzgerald novel (and subsequent movie) that addressed American inequality and class distinctions in a period of soaring excess. The Curve tracks the intersection of two measures.

Animals are our overlooked allies in the fight against Covid



A few weeks ago, I received my first shot of a vaccine against Covid-19. As the newly vaccinated exited the clinic, there was a mix of relief and elation on people's faces. We exchanged little smiles of solidarity. If we could have burst into spontaneous applause, I'm sure we would have done. Recently, the lead scientist for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, Prof Sarah Gilbert, was honoured with the RSA Albert Medal. There are rumours that Gilbert's team, along with the pioneers of the mRNA vaccines, are up for a Nobel prize. It is quite right that gratitude should follow their gamechanging achievement. But the success of the vaccines offers an opportunity to acknowledge a different constituency. If we think back to clap for carers, the ritual of recognition that marked those grim weeks of Britain's first lockdown, its value was in shining a light on the keyworkers who are kept from view by circumstances and sometimes snobbery. For 10 weeks of the pandemic, we reflected on those otherwise invisible individuals on whom society depends. Yet in every stage of our journey to create vaccines, we've had a large number of assistants we've neither appreciated nor applauded. Millions of animals have been a part of our rigorous process of drug safety and efficacy testing. The main reason we don't honour them is that they possess an uncertain moral status in our eyes. That may be uncomfortable, but does that mean that the role of animals should be ignored? To take a few examples: Limulus ameocyte lysate tests, the standard for screening vaccines for dangerous bacteria, are manufactured using the neon-blue blood of horseshoe crabs. Pretty much any vaccine you've had will have been safety-tested using this because it's chock-full of immune cells that are super-sensitive to bacteria. Acquiring this blood is not a pretty business. The crabs are harvested, often by fishers, and then strapped in rows and bled. And these spectacular creatures are already under threat due to fisheries and habitat loss. In the US, manufacturers are care-

ful to try to secure the wellbeing and release of the crabs. Only about 15% die. But in China, where the regional species is endangered, nearly all will be killed in the process. There are synthetic versions of the test, but they haven't been taken up by many pharmaceutical companies at present and the US is yet to give regulatory approval. When it comes to preclinical trials of vaccine candidates (trials that aren't ethically permitted on humans), mice are the most popular animal. Early in the pandemic, scientists discovered that wild lab mice are largely unaffected by this coronavirus. So transgenic mice have been bred, genetically engineered to simulate our immune response. And ferrets, which do show a similar progression of disease to ours, have also been used in early trials. Some of these animals will play a role in the development of the antiviral treatments the UK government hopes patients may be taking by this autumn. In Britain, the bar for using primates in biomedical research is very high. But scientists working on Covid-19 vaccines have used both rhesus and crab-eating macaques, along with common marmosets, especially for efficacy testing. Animal testing is largely justified by the idea of some hard moral border between us and other species. Using animals within our own order unsettles us: scientists choose primates precisely because they're genetically

similar to us, but that closeness is disquieting. Primates have rich and complex social lives. They also experience their pain and captivity, and their inability to consent creates rather than resolves the ethical problems. Yet we are rarely given the chance to reflect on all this. The trouble is we often hide animal testing from public view. That is broadly true of the infrastructure that enables us to eat and wear ani-

Melanie Challenger

mals, too. Many labs that run animal experiments are highly secretive because of the considerable threats they face from activists. And scientists and companies are also sensitive to the fact that public opinion is on the move. Before the pandemic, public acceptance of animal testing in biomedical research had been consistently trending downwards for decades. For now, the UK's Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986 is the strictest law governing research animals anywhere in the world. That is something to be proud of. Most research is conducted using the "three Rs". These principles of "reduction", "refinement" and "replacement" were initiated in 1959 by two British scientists, William Russell and Rex Burch. They have become the standard for minimising the use of animals and any associated suffering. Still, animal research is actually growing rather than declining.

New gene-editing technologies allow us to modify an animal's immune system so that it is more like ours, making it a better research model than it would be naturally. That has undermined the move towards replacement. And this pandemic has also intensified demand. There are some new initiatives, such as the Center for Contemporary Sciences, spearheaded by scientists Aysha Akhtar and Jarrod Bailey, set up to explore cutting-edge human-based methods: the "human-on-a-chip" model, for example. In essence, a human organ is used to produce a micro-version of itself on which tests can be conducted. This is exciting technology, but we're not yet at the point of substitution. This moment in history has prompted a reassessment of our relationship to the rest of nature, not least because the origins of this pandemic, in one way or another, lie in our invasive use of other animals and their habitats. At the same time, throughout the past century, the use of animals in biomedical tests has hugely reduced deaths from disease outbreaks. Forty years' worth of research using monkeys, rats and mice led to the polio vaccine in the 1950s, which saved millions of lives. Then there was the TB vaccine. The flu vaccine. To put it bluntly, countless animals have given their lives to save ours. On 12 May, the UK government launched its action plan to "reinforce its position as a global champion of animal rights". Key to this is the recognition by law of the sentience of other animals. It's a positive move. But the current plan is uneven in its rationale and silent on a number of fronts, including animal testing. Acknowledging the animals that have had a role in life-saving vaccines and treatments for Covid-19 is not to take a position for or against their continued use in research. It is instead to accept that there is something wrong in obscuring or forgetting their part and the price they pay. Supporters just as much as opponents of animal testing should recognise the magnitude of their role. It would be the mark of a conscientious - and grateful - society.

'Keep quiet, I'm talking' - Dr Jayesh Lele, IMA head who took on Ramdev in Covid fight

Meet Dr Jayesh Lele, general secretary of the country's largest lobby of allopathic doctors, the Indian Medical Association, or IMA. This week, a clip of him shouting at yoga guru-turned-entrepreneur Ramdev during a television debate over the latter's comments against allopathy went viral on social media. Dr Lele questioned the credibility of Patanjali's Coronil - a controversial Ayurvedic drug manufactured by Ramdev-owned Patanjali, which he promotes as an effective medicine against Covid-19. Social media erupted and cheered Lele, calling his response a "befitting reply" to Ramdev. "What do you know about allopathy? Have you ever studied it?" Dr Lele, in a sarcastic tone, questioned Ramdev during a show aired on news channel Aaj Tak on 24 May. "Keep quiet, I am talking," screamed the medico in a debate show that was broadcast a day after Ramdev withdrew his statements questioning the efficacy of allopathy medicines. Lele asked Ramdev to "just shut

up" and remove the pictures and products of Coronil from the TV screen, accusing him of promoting the herbal concoction. The controversy surrounding a series of unfounded claims by Ramdev followed by hard-hitting actions of the IMA with Dr Lele leading from the front makes him ThePrint's Newsmaker of the Week. The IMA, which is an apex body representing more than three lakh allopathic doctors in India, had last week said criticised Ramdev's claims that allopathy

Himani Chandna

is a "stupid science" and medicines such as remdesivir, ivermectin, fabiflu and other drugs have failed to treat Covid-19 patients. The IMA quoted Ramdev as saying that "lakhs of patients have died after taking allopathic medicines." In a hard-hitting letter, jointly written by Dr Lele and national president of the IMA, Dr J.A. Jayalal, the association said, "Besides being an internationally adorned yoga guru, he is a corporate giant of a pharma-



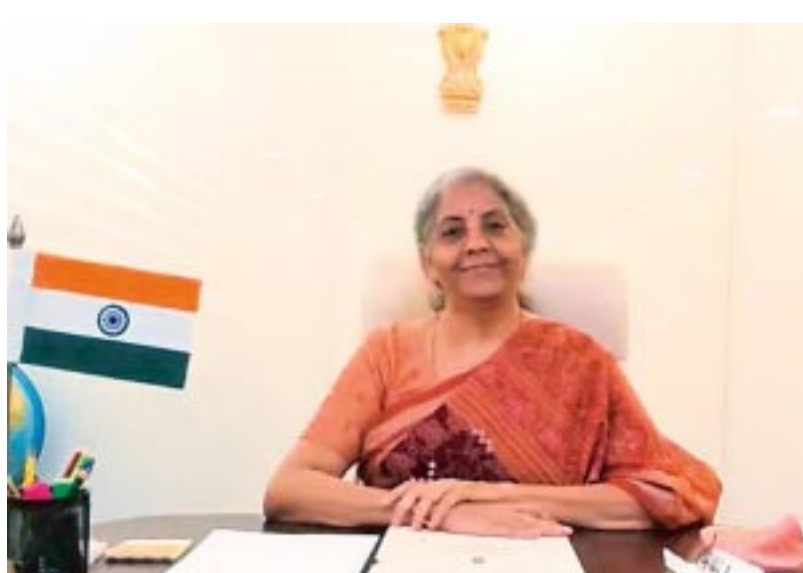
ceutical unit, and has made several false acquisitions about his company's products time and again to mislead the public." It said that if the health ministry doesn't take any action, the IMA will "knock on the doors of the judiciary." However, following the protests from the doctors across states, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan asked Ramdev to withdraw his statement, which the latter did. But Ramdev also posed 25 questions to the IMA in an 'open letter' on Twitter, asking if allopathy offered permanent relief for ailments such as hypertension and type-1 and type-2 diabetes. He questioned if allopathy offered "permanent relief" for diseases including hypertension and diabetes. In another letter on Ramdev's comments on doctors dying despite taking vaccines, this one addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lele and Jayalal wrote, "Such persons should be booked immediately, without any delay, under the charges of sedition and all other applicable provisions of law. We appeal to you to take strict action to ensure that the modern medicine doctors who are risking their lives on a daily basis to treat and help the COVID-19 patients - do not lose their morale or motivation on account of such false and scurrilous statements made in the public domain." The IMA Thursday lodged a police complaint seeking an FIR against saffron-clad Ramdev, over his "dishonest and wrongful representations" on modern medicines. The complaint accuses Ramdev of "wilfully and



deliberately spread[ing] false, baseless and malicious information." IMA's Uttarakhand unit has also served a defamation notice on Ramdev for his remarks, demanding an apology from him within 15 days, failing which it said it will demand a compensation of Rs 1,000 crore from the yoga guru. According to one of his friends and colleagues at the IMA, Dr Lele is an "extremely fearless" man. "His reaction on Ramdev's issue has brought out the original Lele. He belongs to Kolhapur, a place which has a long history of wrestling and has produced many noted wrestlers. He is a fearless man with an innate fighter spirit," said Dr Ravi Wankhedkar, former chief of the IMA. "He has risen from the scratch. He knows everything in great detail about IMA, its role and its objectives. His past has been crystal clear, so he has no fear of anyone raising questions over his morals and ethics," Wankhedkar added. Doctor of general medicine, Lele practises in his clinic based in Mumbai's West Malad. He has been practising medicine since 1978. He is a family physician - a doctor of general medicine for adults as well as for children (paediatrics). In 1972, he cleared his secondary schooling from Mithibai College in Mumbai and in 1978 completed his MBBS from KEM Hospital's Seth Gordhandas Sunderdas Medical College. He is known as one of the most active members of the medical fraternity who has held various positions in several medical associations.

Covid will not affect reform roadmap Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

London, May 30 : Prior to the pandemic, between June 2019 and till the budget was presented in February 2021, there was certainly a slowdown, a shortage of liquidity, and therefore, when people needed money, they couldn't get it; we undertook a lot of measures to ensure that liquidity reaches people. In fact, much before the festive season in India, between September and October, we had ensured that banks, NBFCs and others reached out with liquidity. So that year we did have a specific problem of banks not being able to extend credit, which was sorted out and in early 2021, we saw clear signs of recovery. With that, we presented a budget in February 2021. But, of course, within weeks after presenting the budget, there was Covid-19. While the second wave is challenging us on several grounds - supply of critical medicines, supply of required quantities of oxygen - the government has been rapidly taking a lot of measures, inclusive of where necessary to import medical quality oxygen. As regards critical medicines, we have taken many steps to make sure that the issues related to supply are addressed. I'm very happy that the Prime Minister had mentioned it in so many words that there shall not be a countrywide lockdown comparable to the one which we had in 2020. The reason for that is in 2020, we did not have adequate PPE kits, and we ramped up the production of PPEs and ventila-



tors, and testing labs have been set up all over the country. The situation today is very different. We have two vaccines already. So we don't think there is a need for across-the-board lockdown. Nirmala Sitharaman, India SME Forum, GST Council, MSME, input Tax Credit, Goods and Services Tax, Covid19 pandemic, Covid19, pandemic, Sushma Morthania, Director General, India SME Forum, Sushma Morthania Director General, Sushma Morthania India SME Forum, CGST Act India SME Forum writes to GST Council seeking concessions for the MSME sector. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman SWAMIH Fund for stalled housing projects to benefit 1.16 lakh home buyers: FM

Sitharaman. My day starts with a meeting with the secretaries of my ministry and the secretaries of Corporate Affairs, which is also something I look after. The way we have planned for disinvestment, setting up the DFI (Development Finance Institution), looking at asset-reconstruction companies, everything is on course. In fact, the message from the secretaries is that we are going as smoothly as before. Therefore, we don't suspect that will be affected. I have spent quite some time looking at the recent tariff issues. The items on which the hikes have happened are very consistent with what we have laid before ourselves in the name of Atmanirbhar Bharat. If they

are end-consumer products which we manufacture in this country, we would rather have our capacities strengthened. But we have not raised any tariffs on inputs of raw materials or intermediary goods. So we don't intend at being regressive. Secondly, on the issue of (disputes with) Vodafone and Cairn, I've recently had a meeting with a representative of Cairn, and we are talking. The Prime Minister clearly said we don't believe in retrospective taxation. However, the international arbitrations questioning India's sovereign right to tax is a matter of concern, and to that limited extent, we are worried that it sets a wrong precedent. If you tell me that they could be contradictory, maybe to an extent they are. Indian manufacturing has been hurt on many grounds, particularly on matters which have bulk usage in this country, not those specified things which we don't have the wherewithal to produce, like high-end technology, but even basic goods. We've been flooded by unjustified dumping. As a result, many of our small and medium manufacturing units are not able to survive and the Indian economy depends largely on our MSMEs. As a government, we have taken a call that MSMEs need some support, particularly if they are producing consumer items. When we say atmanirbhar, we're not shutting the Indian economy, we are saying that we have to play on our strengths.

Possibility of India-UK FTA higher now than ever : Lord Gerry Grimstone, UK Minister for Investment

Mumbai, May 30 : Despite the huge amount we do with India, there has been a bit of unfulfilled promise. We've got 850 Indian companies in the UK and these employ over 116,000 employees, so there's a huge amount of activity that goes on between India and the UK. Having said that, there are barriers in our trade, but I'm sure that with goodwill on both sides, if we move down the path of a free trade agreement, the mere act of removing some of those barriers will no doubt impact trade. Sabharwal felt that India had seized the policy window and pushed some ambitious reforms in the last 14 months. If we give responsibility to govt, accountability also lies with them: Shobana Kamineni, executive vice chairperson, Apollo Hospitals. He said, "We're going back to what my friend (economist) Raj Krishna called

when the time is right. Liberalising trade will benefit both our economies and how we go about these things, as you know, we do a deep consultation with UK business before we look to negotiations; once we get insights from UK businesses, that's when we'll put together our negotiating strategy. India is a complicated country. It's a country where you need to understand it to make an impression on it. I think the growth of e-commerce in India has played to certain methods; SMEs in England, branded goods, brands that might have found it much easier to access the Indian market. I've always felt with India, the British companies who know it and operate there do well out of it. Companies who don't know it, don't do business there. Part of the advantage of moving down the track we are, it's opening people's eyes



the Hindu rate of growth, which is 3-4 per cent. That will be a catastrophe because that's a per-capita growth of 2 per cent and then India's catch-up story would end. India needs policy-change reforms: Martin Wolf, Chief Economics Commentator, Financial Times. A modern comprehensive free trade agreement involves much more than movement of goods - they cover services, they cover digital business, they cover SMEs. So there's a huge amount of content in a free trade agreement. EU has tried unsuccessfully to negotiate a free trade agreement with India over the last 10-15 years. I'm very hopeful now that we're an independent trading nation, we could do things ourselves, we'll be able to move on with this when the time is right. The possibility of a UK-India Free Trade Agreement is higher now than it ever has been. We know India is interested in expanding its access to the UK market in a number of sectors, including agri food, pharmaceuticals; we can see great opportunities for services in India, for some of our professional qualifications to be valid in India, a number of other matters. I think it will progress

to what the possibilities are in India. I always say that free trade agreements in themselves are fine but what you really have to do is to operationalise them, to bring home to British businesses, large, medium and small, how can they use these agreements to export more to India. We thought it would give rise to some very interesting discussions, having India present. I see it as something in a way that is no more no less than a manifestation of a very strong partnership that we have with India, they are a natural country for us to invite. I think the Indo-Pacific region is becoming increasingly important. India is exerting itself more on the international stage. We welcome that. For the first time at the G7 we are going to have a trade pact associated with the G7. Trade Secretary Elizabeth Truss will be holding meetings with the G7 trade ministers. Trade policy and attracting investors have become two very important things in the UK, it is part of what we see as the economic bounce back after Covid. I want us to be much more muscular and entrepreneurial.

India needs policy-change reforms: Martin Wolf

Mumbai, May 30 : He cautioned, "India is de-globalising, not back to what it was before but more than the world is; owing to policy choices: increased protection and decreased attention to export competitiveness." He said, "We're going back to what my friend (economist) Raj Krishna called the Hindu rate of growth, which is 3-4 per cent. That will be a catastrophe because that's a per-capita growth of 2 per cent and then India's catch-up story would end." He said, "We're going back to what my friend (economist) Raj Krishna called the Hindu rate of growth, which is 3-4 per cent. That will be a catastrophe because that's a per-capita growth of 2 per cent and then India's catch-up story would end." The Indian economy has been slowing, now at 5-6 percent range, and will need quite a bit of policy-change reforms, in a difficult world environment, to be successful in the decade ahead," said Martin Wolf, Chief Economics Commentator, Financial Times. He was in conversation with Anil Sasi, National Business Editor, The Indian Express. Observing the country since his early days as a World Bank economist in the '70s, he called India's economic reform policy "inconsistent, not sufficiently positive", and its three engines - trade, credit and government-spending - "pretty weak". He said, "We're going back to

what my friend (economist) Raj Krishna called the Hindu rate of growth, which is 3-4 per cent. That will be a catastrophe because that's a per-capita growth of 2 per cent and then India's catch-up story would end." He said, "We're going back to what my friend (economist) Raj Krishna called the Hindu rate of growth, which is 3-4 per cent. That will be a catastrophe because that's a per-capita growth of 2 per cent and then India's catch-up story would end." The Indian economy has been slowing, now at 5-6 percent range, and will need quite a bit of policy-change reforms, in a difficult world environment, to be successful in the decade ahead," said Martin Wolf, Chief Economics Commentator, Financial Times. He was in conversation with Anil Sasi, National Business Editor, The Indian Express. Observing the country since his early days as a World Bank economist in the '70s, he called India's economic reform policy "inconsistent, not sufficiently positive", and its three engines - trade, credit and government-spending - "pretty weak". He said, "We're going back to



lar 5 per cent (1990) to 35 per cent (2025) growth story". India's "steady growth" (6 per cent a year) peaked at "close to 9 per cent in the early 2000s" but saw "a real collapse" last year. "Among the developing countries, India had a really, really bad negative hit (Bangladesh did astonishingly well)," he stated. With the US-China relationship deteriorating, India should "seize opportunity" and "reopen the economy", become a trade-growth hub, raise international competitiveness, start green revolution, reform education, labour markets and financial sector to be the "fastest-growing economy, at 8-plus per cent, in 20 years".

Firm Initiatives : Corporates show big heart with Covid-19 care

Mumbai, May 30 : The ed-tech firm has also tweaked its leave policy to incorporate additional Covid privilege leave (paid leave). Employees can avail the same in case they or their immediate family members are impacted. Byju's is also working to enable vaccination support for its staff. The firm has enabled employees to seek an advance on their salaries to address medical emergencies or any unexpected expenses on an urgent basis. At a time when the country is in the grip of a deadly second wave of the pandemic that continues to claim thousands of lives on

a daily basis and people are struggling to maintain sanity, Indian companies have extended a helping hand to their employees. Firms are rejigging work calendars, making schedules more flexible and devising generous leave policies. Workplaces are also leveraging

their salaries to address medical emergencies or any unexpected expenses on an urgent basis. Flipkart said it will cover 100% vaccination cost for all its employees, including five dependents each. Besides partnering with hospitals to facilitate vaccination camps at its offices,



their network and partnerships to provide medical and other emergency services to their staff besides offering financial support. OYO, oyo news, oyo updates, oyo hotels, oyo loan OYO to raise over Rs 4,300 crore from US institutional investors to service its existing loans. Biggest deal in Edtech sector! Byju's to acquire Aakash Educational Services for \$1 billion. Flipkart, for instance, has introduced a Covid care leave policy that allows employees to take up to 28 calendar days of paid leave for self-care and healing. The company's staff can also apply for bereavement leave under its time away from work policy. The firm has enabled employees to seek an advance on

the company is also working closely with partners to offer a range of services to its corporate and supply chain staff, including support in finding hospital beds, arranging Covid tests and isolation facilities in hotels. Byju's has set up a Rs 20-crore CEO's fund to cover Covid-related medical expenses for employees and their dependents. Employees can apply for reimbursement from this fund to cover hospitalisation costs for themselves as well as their families. The ed-tech firm has also tweaked its leave policy to incorporate additional Covid privilege leave (paid leave). Employees can avail the same in case they or their immediate family members are impacted. Byju's is also working to enable

vaccination support for its staff. Swiggy has implemented a four-day work week for the month of May. The startup has also launched a Swiggy shield app and employee support hotline to help staff members access hospital beds, ICUs, oxygen cylinders, ambulance and other related services. Earlier this month, the company started Covid vaccination drive in Bengaluru for its delivery partners and frontline staff from its grocery delivery service Instamart and its brand kitchens. Swiggy said it will cover the loss of pay for the period the delivery partner spends in getting both the doses. If partners choose to get vaccinated at a government facility, the firm will continue to cover the loss of pay for that period, it claimed. In a similar move, Oyo Hotels & Homes has shifted to a four-day work week for the months of May and June while also launching a policy of no questions asked flexible infinite paid leave. "Covid continues to test our physical and mental well-being. One thing that truly matters is having more time for our loved ones and ourselves," said founder & CEO Ritesh Agarwal. The firm recently concluded a Covid vaccination drive in partnership with Max Healthcare for Delhi-NCR covering over 500 members (including their families). UpGrad has procured oxygen concentrators in Mumbai, NCR, Bengaluru (to be extended to more cities) which they are distributing among employees and their family members pan-India as per need. "One can take as much leave as they want as our utmost priority is their health and well-being.

Made seminal changes to the way we think about the economy: CEA KV Subramanian

Mumbai, May 30 : The pandemic hit last March and all high frequency indicators (nearly 60 of them) were peaking before that, till February. If the pandemic had, counterfactually, hit in April, our growth would have reached 6 per cent... India is the only country to have changed its narrative and brought in seminal changes to the way we think about the economy," said KV Subramanian, Chief Economic Advisor, Government of India. He was on a panel that discussed 'India's economy: How it can regain sustained growth'. Amy Kazmin, South Asia Bureau Chief, Financial Times, who moderated the conversation, also had on board P Anbalagan, CEO, Maharashtra Industrial Development Corporation; Jahangir Aziz, Head Economist, Emerging Mar-

kets, JP Morgan; Rohini Malkani, Senior Vice President, Credit Ratings, Global Sovereign Ratings, DBRS Morningstar. Covid will not affect reform roadmap: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. GoM set up to examine need for exempting/cutting GST on Covid essentials; to submit report by June 8. The panelists discussed the role of the state and investment cli-



mate for businesses, what an Atmanirbhar Bharat meant, what factors contributed to the slowing down of the economy, where the fault lines are and how the second wave of Covid-19 will impact growth. Speaking about investment opportunities in Maharashtra, Anbalagan highlighted the efficient way the state had maintained supply chains, so that industries and businesses were not disrupted. Aziz spoke of India's dependence on globalisation and how a decline in global trade affected the country's GDP. "India lost that driver of its growth. It hasn't recovered over the last 10 years through reforms or policy changes... Together with demonetisation, GST and liquidity shocks, the situation has worsened," said Aziz.

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CAA rules on hold, Centre opens

listed in the notification are: Morbi, Rajkot, Patan and Vadodara (Gujarat); Durg and Balodabazar (Chhattisgarh); Jalore, Udaipur, Pali, Barmer and Sirohi (Rajasthan); Faridabad (Haryana); and, Jalandhar (Punjab). It also granted similar powers to the Home Secretaries of Haryana and Punjab, except for Faridabad and Jalandhar. "The verification of the application is done simultaneously by the Collector or the Secretary, as the case may be, at the district level and the state level and the application and the reports thereon shall be made accessible simultaneously to the Central Government on online portal," the order said. "The Collector or the Secretary, as the case may be, on being satisfied with the suitability of the applicant, grants him the citizenship of India by registration or naturalisation and issues a certificate of registration or naturalisation, as the case may be, duly printed from online portal and signed by the Collector or the Secretary, as the case may be, in the Form as prescribed in the said rules," the notification said. It has asked the Collector and Secretary to maintain an online as well as physical register, containing details of the person registered or naturalised as a citizen of India and furnish a copy to the Central Government within seven days of registration or naturalisation. In 2018, the Government had granted similar powers to Collectors and Home Secretaries of states such as Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Delhi with regard to certain districts. In December 2019, the Parliament amended the Citizenship Act granting citizenship to illegal immigrants belonging to Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Parsi, Christian and Buddhist communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan - but not Muslims. The legislation was passed amid strong criticism from the Opposition, which called it discriminatory, and triggered massive nationwide protests. The MHA has been deliberating on framing the CAA rules for over a year without any headway, sources said. "The rules are essential for implementation of the Act. The rules are supposed to specify the kind of documents that would be needed to prove whether the applicant came from these countries to India before the cut off date (December 31, 2014) or not. Most illegal immigrants have entered the country without any travel documents," sources said.

Woman raped while returning

travel the 25 km distance to their home. But the hospital allegedly denied it and both the mother and daughter eventually decided to walk the distance. Congress MLA narrowly escapes firing along Assam-Nagaland border amid dispute. When they reached the Dhudarai area at around 7 pm, two miscreants had allegedly chased them and caught the woman and raped her. The victim's daughter managed to flee from the area and informed nearby villagers and police about the incident. Later, local villagers and police rescued the woman in critical condition and admitted her to a nearby hospital. Local MLA Dharmeswar Konwar, who visited the victim's home on Sunday, said that it was Sapekhati Model Hospital's negligence that led to the incident. "The entire world is now suffering from Covid-19 and at this time of crisis, the hospital authorities should have helped the victim and her daughter, but they didn't. In what circumstances they had denied to help them, it should be probed. The culprits should be booked as soon as possible and they should be punished as per law," MLA Dharmeswar Konwar said. Meanwhile, Charaidoo district police have launched an operation to arrest the culprits.

Human Rights Council ready to

negotiate with the government (Govt. of Assam and Central Govt.) to bring an end, the differences between you and your contemporary," the letter to Paresh Baruah said. Stating that the IHRC believes "the decision to sit and negotiate is the very foundation" towards progress, the letter said: "The past 4 decades have been devastating and countless brave soldiers have sacrificed their lives from both the sides bringing pain and misery for the family members." International Human Rights Council ready to mediate between Centre & ULFA (I), writes to Paresh Baruah. Unfortunately in such conflicts even innocent public had to lose their lives as well. "So, we appeal Paresh Barua, Commander-in-Chief of the United Liberation Front of Assam-Independent (ULFA-I), Government of Assam, headed by honourable Chief Minister Shri Himanta Biswa Sarma and Government of India, headed by the honourable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji to come to a conclusion and end this long confrontation by bringing peace and neutrality, not only in Assam but to the whole of North-East and India in general," the letter said. "We have faith that today's action shall have a fruitful outcome tomorrow. The IHRC is willing to act as an mediator between the two parties if needed, for we see great prospect and bright future in this talk," the letter further said.

NLFB cadre, disguised as Rapido

hails from Goreswar in Assam's Baksa district, and was staying in Guwahati for the last three months. Also read: Assam: Pall of gloom descends upon Jorhat following demise of Samiran Bordoloi. Dipak Choudhury was arrested by the crime branch of Guwahati Police. Choudhury, during his stay in Guwahati, disguised himself as a Rapido rider. Following the raid, several live rounds of a 9mm pistol, a motor-cycle bearing registration number - AS 01 EK 1531 were seized from his possession. Moreover, several incriminating documents of the banned outfit were also recovered during the raid.

Mehul Choksi repatriation

back in his country and he wants him to be repatriated straight to India where he is wanted. Dominica court, however, has put a stay on his deportation. The case will be heard again on June 2. Going by Antiguan PM's indication, the Indian government may present some document during the hearing. India does not have a repatriation agreement with Dominica and hence whether he will be deported to India will depend on the government's decision. Dominica's acting police chief Lincoln Corbette earlier said that he will be deported to Antigua and not to India. Choksi's legal team in Dominica, comprising Julian Prevost, Wayne Norde, Cara Shillingford-Marsh, and Wayne Marsh, filed a habeas corpus petition in the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court on Friday highlighting that he should be given access to his lawyers, which the court granted. It is not yet clear how Choksi landed at Dominica, 188 km from Antigua, while his car in which he was last seen was found in Antigua. His lawyers have claimed that he was abducted and was severely beaten up. The episode has kicked up a storm in Antigua's internal politics as the prime minister accused the opposition party of receiving funds from Choksi.

CM visits GMCH and reviews

additional 200 ICU beds unit coming up at GMCH with the hospital authorities and senior doctors. Coming up of additional 500 ICU beds in Guwahati would greatly strengthen the Covid treatment system and posting doctors at the facilities remain a top priority for ensuring quality treatment, he said. Informing that Assam would receive 7 lakh doses of Covid vaccine in June, the Chief Minister said that inoculation drive of 18-44 age group people would speed up in the state after receiving the doses and exuded confidence that a sizeable portion of state's population would be provided jabs by August 15. He also said there is strong possibility of Covid positivity and mortality rates coming down rapidly in the state by June 7 and the state government is leaving no stone unturned to control the pandemic. The Chief Minister said that GMCH has started administering DRDO's 2-DG anti-Covid drug on 13 patients at the hospital while options are also being explored to use other such breakthrough drugs to reduce the hospital stay period of Covid patients. He also thanked the people and organisations for contributing wholeheartedly to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund to make the vaccination drive truly a jana andolan (mass movement). Chief Minister Dr Sarma also enquired with the doctors about the health condition of Rajya Sabha MP Ripun Bora and MLA Pradipt Hazarika, who are undergoing treatment for Covid at GMCH. Principal and Chief Superintendent of GMCH Dr. Achyut Baishya, Superintendent GMCH Dr. Abhijit Sarma and other senior doctors were present on the occasion.

India followed 'sabka saath, sabka

Baat' & also marks the completion of 7 years of the govt. Over these years, the country has followed mantra of 'Sabka-Saath, Sabka-Vikas, Sabka-Vishwas'. All of us have worked every moment with dedication in the service of the country," said PM Modi in the 77th edition of Mann Ki Baat. "There have been many moments of national pride in this period... Apart from many successes, there were some stern tests as well", he said, referring to the pandemic. The nation fought its first wave with courage, and this too will be defeated, PM asserted. Additionally, while speaking on the completion of seven years of Modi government, BJP President, JP Nadda said that the path of self-reliant India was made under the guidance of the Prime Minister. "Under Prime Minister's leadership, we'll celebrate this day as 'Seva Diwas'. BJP workers will serve in 1 lakh villages. PM had called upon govt orgs & others to help needy during COVID. BJP has extended help to many under 'Seva Hi Sangathan'", said BJP President. Prime Minister also spoke about the various natural disasters that the country has faced in the past years and highlighted that more lives were saved compared to the past because of combined efforts put forward by the Centre and states. "Coronavirus has been the biggest pandemic in 100 years, India faced many natural disasters in the form of Cyclone Tauktae and Cyclone Yaas during this pandemic... In these times of disasters, the people of Cyclone-affected states showed courage & fought with patience & discipline. I want to humbly acknowledge their efforts to those who actively participated in the relief and rescue operations. I salute them all," said PM Modi. PM Modi also spoke with a liquid oxygen tanker driver, a woman railway driver and an air force officer involved in the transportation of oxygen and related equipment to drive home the point on how these people are working overtime to ensure oxygen reaches those in need. In normal times daily production of liquid medical oxygen was 900 MT, which has now risen over 10 times to nearly 9,500 MT, the prime minister noted. He said despite the pandemic, the farmers ensured record production of crops and the government also made record procurement.

IMD predicts heavy rainfall in

Manipur, Mizoram & Tripura on June 1. On June 2, the IMD has predicted that thunderstorm with lightning likely to hit isolated places over Sikkim, Assam and Meghalaya. It has also predicted heavy rainfall at isolated places likely over Assam & Meghalaya. On June 3, the IMD has predicted that heavy rainfall likely to hit isolated places over Assam & Meghalaya.

Can manufacture, supply 90-100 million Covishield doses in June: SII to govt

New Delhi, May 30 : The Serum Institute of India (SII) has said it will be able to manufacture and supply 90 to 100 million doses of Covishield, the vaccine against the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), next month, news agency PTI reported on Sunday citing a letter by a senior company official. "We are pleased to inform that in the month of June we will be able to manufacture and supply nine to 10 crore doses of our Covishield vaccine to the country as compared to our production capacity of 6.5 crore doses in May," Prakash Kumar Singh, the director of government and regulatory affairs at SII, said in the letter to Union home minister Amit Shah. Singh's letter comes as several states have complained about the shortage of the anti-coronavirus disease jabs and said that they have been forced to shut down over the last few days

due to a country-wide shortage. Several states, including Punjab, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Karnataka, among others, have floated global tenders for Covid-19 vaccines. SII said its employees have been working round the clock in spite of various challenges because of the coronavirus pandemic. "Serum Institute of India has always been sincerely concerned about the protection of the citizens of our country and world at large from Covid-19. Under the leadership of our CEO, Adar C Poonawalla, our team have been working relentlessly shoulder to shoulder with our government to fight the Covid-19 pandemic," he said in the letter. "We assure you that with the support of the Government of India and under your kind guidance, we are trying our best by utilising all of our resources to increase our production capacity

Odisha to include disaster, pandemic management in high school and college curriculums

Bhubaneswar, May 30 : The Odisha government on Saturday decided to include disaster and pandemic management in high school and college curriculums. A resolution in this regard was passed at a meeting of the Council of Ministers, chaired by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik. The Council of Ministers said it felt that everyone in the state should be well prepared to face the challenges posed by disasters such as frequent cyclones, and also the pandemic. There was a time when Odisha was the subject of pity for facing calamities and losing lives to disasters but today, the Odisha model of disaster management draws global admiration, the resolution said. The centre of this transformation is the state's deep conviction, and the disaster preparedness is rooted in community involvement, it said. "The time has come for us to create a massive knowledge infrastructure in the state that will make everyone a warrior. Today, we are taking a futuristic decision. We will train our people at large on how to deal with known emergencies and how to respond to situations where the outcome cannot be

predicted," the chief minister said. From now on, every high school and college student will learn about disaster and pandemic management as part of the curriculum, he said. The state will also train its employee on the fundamental nature of different kinds of disaster and pandemic management. Disaster and pandemic management will be in the government recruitment syllabus as well, Patnaik said. Elected representatives will be trained on disaster and pandemic management, he said. Besides, the government will train members of Mission Shakti groups, Vana Suraksha Samitis, and other community-based organisations and equip them with the knowledge required to manage disasters and pandemics, he said. The Council of Ministers has resolved to make Odisha a leading state in disaster preparedness, ready to tackle any disaster -- whether it is biological or climatic, Patnaik said. "Basically the objective is to have a 'Yodha' (warrior) in every home of Odisha," the chief minister said. A task force will be formed to carry forward this mission of building a disaster and pandemic resilient Odisha, he said.

Centre to provide over 12 crore doses for national COVID-19 vaccination programme in June

New Delhi, May 30 : The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on Sunday (May 30, 2021) informed that the Central Government will provide over 12 crore doses for the national COVID-19 vaccination programme in the month of June. "6.09 crore (6,09,60,000) doses of COVID-19 vaccines will be supplied to the States and UTs for vaccination of priority group of Health Care Workers (HCWs), Front-Line Workers (FLWs) and people aged 45 years + and above as free supply from Government of India," the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare stated. They further said, "In addition, more than 5.86 crore (5,86,10,000) doses will be available for direct procurement by the state/UTs and private hospitals. Therefore, in June, close to 12 crore (11,95,70,000) doses will be available for the national COVID vaccination programme." They said that the delivery schedule for this allocation will be shared in advance and that the states have been requested to direct the concerned officials to ensure rational and judicious utilization of allocated doses and minimize the vaccine wastage. This is to be noted that in May, a total number of 7,94,05,200 doses were available for the national COVID-19 vaccination programme. India has so far administered 21.20 crore COVID-19 vaccine doses through 30,07,831 sessions, as per the data available on Sunday morning (7 AM). Meanwhile, the country recorded 1.65 lakh new COVID-19 cases and 3,460 deaths in the last 24 hours. There were 1,65,553 fresh infections that took India's total caseload to 2,78,94,800. There are now 21,14,508 active cases across the country. India has so far witnessed over 2.54 crore recoveries besides 3.25 lakh coronavirus-related fatalities.

Minister Suklabaidya takes part in Seva Hi Sangathan programmes at Dholai



Guwahati, May 30 : As part of Seva Hi Sangathan programme on the completion of two years of Modi Government's second term, Forest and Environment, Fisheries and Excise Minister, Parimal Suklabaidya took part in a series of programmes at his Dholai constituency in Cachar district on Sunday. Minister Suklabaidya said due to COVID-19 pandemic situation prevailing in the country, this time it was decided to celebrate the completion of seven years of Narendra Modi Government as Sewa Diwas during which programmes have been taken up to

reach out to people with the pledge to serve the poor and downtrodden - the mantra of the government. Observing the Seva Hi Sangathan programmes in a low key affair adhering to COVID-19 protocols, Minister Suklabaidya distributed masks in different areas of his Dholai constituency. He also visited the Hawaihang Forest Reserve Office and planted saplings to mark the momentous occasion. Earlier, the Minister gave away fogging machines, hand sanitisers and masks to the Derby tea estate management for distribution among the plantation workers.

of Covishield in the coming month also. "The Pune-based company informed the Centre earlier in May that the production of Covishield would be ramped up to 65 million in June, 70 million in July and 100 million each in August and September. India is currently using SII's Covishield and Covaxin of Bharat Biotech in its immunisation programme. The Russian-made Sputnik V is the third vaccine to get approval from the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI) for emergency use and is being used in a few private hospitals. According to the Union ministry of health and family welfare on Sunday, 212 million vaccine doses have been administered across the county since the Centre's vaccination drive on began on January 16 and more than 18.3 million people in age group of 18-44 years have been given the jab in ongoing third phase so far.

Goa announces Rs 2 lakh compensation for COVID-orphan, increases age limit in childcare institutions

Panaji, May 30 : The Goa government on Sunday (May 30, 2021) announced a compensation of Rs 2 lakh each for the kin of COVID-19 victims who were either breadwinners of the family or hailed from poor backgrounds. Making the announcement in his Statehood Day address, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant also said another scheme, called 'Mukhyamantri Anath Aadhar Yojana', will be launched, under which orphaned children will get monthly financial aid. The age limit for inmates in childcare institutions has been raised to 21, he said, and orphans, irrespective of whether their parents succumbed to the coronavirus infection, who are in Class X will be provided free laptops by the state government. CM Sawant said his government was trying its best to tackle the outbreak and the positivity rate of the infection was steadily declining in the state. The second phase of the vaccination drive for those in the 18-44 age group will begin from

June 3, the CM said. Couples with children below the age of two, people with comorbidities, rickshaw-taxi drivers, seafarers, differently-abled persons etc would be given priority in vaccination, Sawant informed in his address to the state. He thanked previous governments for their efforts that helped shape the progress of the state and also hailed the Narendra Modi government at the Centre for its help in the past seven years, and more significantly during the coronavirus outbreak. Announcing an administrative decision, the CM said some legal documents, which still carry 'Goa, Daman and Diu' will now just have the word Goa, and the state law department has been asked to do the needful. He also said panchayats in a financially weak position would be given a fund of Rs 50,000 to tackle damages from the recent cyclone or the COVID-19 outbreak, and the amount would be transferred by Monday or Tuesday.

Telangana revokes licence of private hospitals over violation of COVID treatment norms

Hyderabad, May 30 : Telangana has taken stern action against private hospitals for violating COVID treatment norms and so far 10 hospitals have been barred from treating patients infected with coronavirus. The Office of Director of Public Health and Family Welfare of Telangana on Saturday (May 29) revoked permissions for treating COVID Patients after receiving complaints against these private hospitals regarding lack of proper attention to the patients by the management and excess and irrelevant charging in addition to the set norms. As of May 29, (Saturday) 10 Hospitals, (5 hospitals on May 28 and 5 hospitals on May 29) were barred from treating COVID patients after completing the treatment and discharge of patients under their care. Earlier till May 26, at least 88 complaints have been received against 64 hospitals. But as of May 29, a total of 115 complaints have been received against 79 hospitals. All the 79 hospitals have been issued show cause notices. As many as 2,982 new COVID-19 cases were registered in the last 24 hours, taking the active caseload to 36,917 in Telangana, informed the state health department on Saturday. According to the State Health Department at 5.30 pm May 29, the total count of COVID-19 positive cases in the state currently stands at 5,74,026 including 5,33,862 discharges and 3,247 deaths.

Tawanda Muyeye: asylum seeker who could become 'best cricketer in the world'

London, May 30 : Tawanda Muyeye is one of those cricketers you tend to hear stories about. From the thousand runs in a season at Eastbourne college that ended with the title of Wisden Schools Cricketer of the Year, to the dreamy third ball six over long-on in his first short-form game for Kent 2nd XI this week, a clip that has been doing the rounds on social media. Then there's the story Rob Ferley, his coach at Eastbourne, tells about training in the indoor school and cranking the bowling machine up steadily until it reached 99mph as



Muyeye calmly ran though his drills, hitting the ball to all areas, oblivious to the fact he was facing the robot version of Shoaib Akhtar. This was a schoolboy. Ferley went to fetch another teacher just to confirm what he was seeing. Ferley, who played for Kent and England Under-19s, describes himself as "another jaded ex-pro", and knows full well his fellow coaches might roll their eyes. But he is unequivocal in his assessment: "I genuinely think he could be the best player in the world". It is a deliberate hyperbole, based on talent, possibilities and the basic arc of what a 20-year-old can hope to achieve. And Muyeye has already come quite a long way. On a freezing Monday morning in the empty stands at the St Lawrence Ground he sounds reassuringly even-keeled after a fraught couple

of months. Since the start of March, Muyeye has turned 20, signed a contract at Kent, made his first-class debut and - oh yes - had his right to remain in the UK approved by the Home Office after a long and anxious wait. "I'm an asylum seeker," he says. "My family are refugees, my mum is a refugee, I am a refugee. This is due to the human rights violations in Zimbabwe. For as long as it goes on I will speak up about it. I think it's very wrong." My mum was political, she supported the opposition party [the Movement



for Democratic Change]. We had to leave home and come and seek asylum as she felt very threatened and unsafe. "Luckily England has been really good to us and she has been able to settle down here. To have the freedom and live in a place where you don't feel threatened, to raise a family here. I'm just so glad she's safe and we're all safe. "Muyeye has been granted the right to remain indefinitely ("It means I'm basically treated as an English citizen") and this is home now. "I want to play for England. Obviously there is a huge amount to learn before it's a possibility. But that's my ambition. I want to play Test cricket for England." Muyeye is well aware he is the greenest of newbie pros, learning from observing the likes of Zak Crawley ("Times it so well it's unreal"); Joe Denly ("Something to watch in the

nets") and, of course, Darren Stevens ("Phenomenal. He knows so much about cricket"). It will be six years before Muyeye can qualify for England. Before then he will face the usual uneasy intersection of obvious talent and the step into professional sport, with its intangibles, its difficulty levels, its grind. Three weeks ago, he made his first-class debut against Sussex, with little cricket of any kind behind him. He lasted eight balls in the first innings, pinned by Ollie Robinson in the middle of a high-class spell. "I was feeling fresh and really excited. It's a massive moment that I've been thinking about for so long. Ever since I was young in Zim, I've wanted to play cricket in England. The game started and Jofra [Archer] was on a roll, Ollie Robinson was on a roll, it was pretty cool, you know, the chance to face two guys who are going to play Test cricket for England." Muyeye spent the winter training at Sussex with Robinson, who he rates as "maybe the best bowler in England right now". "I do think he turned it up a notch when I was out there. It was pretty good, he gave me a bit of a send-off, but it was all in the spirit of the game, and I spoke to him afterwards. Hopefully I'll get to play him again." As the game meandered to a draw three days later there was a first small glimpse of that easy style, the flashing hands, and one vicious pull over midwicket. As Ferley says: "He's box office. Whenever he bats people will want to watch him." Muyeye mentions his cricketing heroes - Viv Richards, Kevin Pietersen - and talks with mild awe of watching Joe Root bat at Yorkshire this season. "It's like he's playing in slow motion, he's got so much time." "I'm pretty good with short stuff, I like facing quick bowling, I like getting into a battle with a fast bowler," he says. "I am looking forward to the white-ball stuff. But I've been a pro for six weeks, and the biggest challenge for me is trying to adapt my game to the longer format. I've been working with Mike Yardy on what to leave, he is phenomenal on the

mindset of batting." It is a style first glimpsed in tape ball games with his brother at the family home in Harare. In a fresh twist on the homespun origin story the young Muyeyes would break open roll-on deodorant dispensers and take the plastic ball out so they could play inside. Muyeye was nine and playing in his primary school team when he realised he was pretty good at this game. "I scored maybe eight hundreds." He also played rugby union, specialising in diving across the line like his hero Bryan Habana, and was good enough to represent Zimbabwe in both sports at under 16 level. The move to Eastbourne was a life-changing break. He wrote to schools across England looking for a chance to move in his A-level years. Eventually an email reached Ferley. "It was unusual," he says. "It went: 'Dear Sir. I've played in these matches where I scored 0, 0, 100, 24, 0, 0, 100.' I thought, that's interesting. Nobody puts their zeros in." Some video footage followed. "I watched three balls and thought, yeah." There were bleak times in the past year. The uncertainty of his situation meant not being able to work, play cricket or do much beyond relying on the kindness of friends during lockdown. "That was one of my lowest points in life, it was really tough. I just didn't know what I was going to do." He is hugely grateful to Kent, and Paul Downton in particular, for their help in that time. Ferley and James Tredwell, another strong influence, were a lifeline, and his agent, James, at Insignia gets a heartfelt name check. "It was ridiculous what he did helping me." The initial advice was the Home Office would make a decision on 1 March. Four days later, Muyeye was coming back from Nottingham, on the one hand weighing up an offer to play county cricket at Trent Bridge, on the other his future still completely up in the air. "I was on the train when I got the phone call. I couldn't even cry. I was just really excited and very, very relieved. My mum cried. She got my favourite cake from Waitrose." It doesn't get much more English than that. Now for the cricket.

'I have to change things, I have to imagine another Jo'

London, May 30 : As Jo Wilfried Tsonga speaks on the phone shortly after a first round loss in a small ATP tournament in Lyon, he laughs as he thinks of how differently he views the sport he loves now compared to during his youth. Tsonga grew up in Sarthe, a small country village near Le Mans, where life was quiet, simple and "far from the luxury things." As he rose up the tennis ladder, his success was as much an opportunity to simply see the world beyond those humble confines. "At the beginning, for me playing tennis was also the possibility to live," he says. "To be able to pay for a house, an apartment. To eat and do things, other activities. "After so long, though, Tsonga now views tennis through a more inwardly facing lens. "Now it's completely different because I play for 15 years now on the tour and now I'm playing because I always want to do better. I always want to prove to myself that I'm able to do things on the court." This year's Roland Garros will mark Tsonga's 12th appearance across 16 years of competing there. For most of his career, the 36-year-old has arrived at his home slam with the clear, unchanging goal of one day winning it all. This time, he will simply be hoping that his body will remain healthy enough to play with some freedom. After spending all but one week in the top 20 for a decade between 2008 and 2018, a series of serious injuries have led Tsonga to his current, grim ailment. Tsonga now suffers from a chronic



back condition stemming from calcified ligaments in his back, which ultimately causes inflammation and other issues. The injury cost Tsonga 14 months of his career between January 2020 and this March, a period during which he suffered for months and was unable to even carry his son or run alongside him. When he returned this year and won his second match back against the 39-year-old Feliciano López in Marseille, a player he holds a 6-0 record against in a tournament he has won three times, he called the victory one of the biggest wins of his career. "It was really difficult," he says. "I didn't do sports for eight months and, of course, I lost all my physical capacity so [it was a success] to come back and to show a little step forward in my condition. To feel a little better. Because at the beginning I

London, May 30 : Jimmy Anderson approaches the latest milestones of his record-breaking career with an acknowledgment of his good fortune regarding injury and an insistence that his preference has always been to do it the hard way. Anderson's 19th summer as a Test cricketer begins with him one cap from equalling Alastair Cook's England record of 161, while a further eight wickets would make him the first English seamer to reach 1,000 first-class wickets since Andy Caddick in 2005. Achieving both feats would further underline the 38-year-old's remarkable longevity even if, speaking at an event for series sponsors LV= before Wednesday's

first Test against New Zealand, he cannot quite believe it himself. "It does make me feel proud," said Anderson, when asked about the prospect of drawing level with Cook. "I never imagined in a million years I'd get to this point. Certainly for a bowler to play this amount of games is ... a bit mind-blowing, because I don't feel like I've played that many." My body doesn't feel old or tired, it's just incredible. I absolutely love Test cricket, I've got a huge passion for it. Growing up, all I wanted to do is play Test cricket for England and I'm honoured I've been able to do it for this long. "On reaching four figures in the

wickets column, he said: "[It] does seem like a lot. I've been so lucky with injuries when you look around cricketers in England and the people who get long lay-offs like Jofra [Archer] at the minute. I



Chelsea win Champions League after Kai Havertz stuns Manchester City

London, May 30 : When Thomas Tuchel was given the job of reviving Chelsea at the end of January, he wanted to return them to next season's Champions League via a top-four Premier League finish. The notion that he might actually win the thing for only the second time in the club's history was ludicrous. Not any more. On a night of glory for him and his team, the manager applied the final brush strokes to his renaissance masterpiece, out-manoeuvring his friend and rival, Pep Guardiola, and watching Kai Havertz score the decisive goal just before half-time. Chelsea defended like demons to snuff out Manchester City but this was a perfectly calibrated triumph, built upon a structured attacking approach, choosing the right moments to transition, and illuminated by the smoothness of Havertz's technique. At the end, after the seven minutes of stoppage time had expired, with Riyad Mahrez having lifted a shot just off target for City with practically the last kick, and as the players in dark blue were

whether he wins the Champions League. It is the trophy that Sheikh Mansour has craved since his takeover in 2008, since he started funnelling all that cash into the club - around £1.7bn on transfer fees alone. Was Guardiola influenced by what he saw from Tuchel's Chelsea in those defeats in the FA Cup semi-final and the league; by the need to try something surprising? He certainly did that. The pre-match expectation had been that he faced an either/or question between Fernandinho and Rodri in defensive midfield. In the event, he chose neither. And, in the expected absence of a recognised No 9, we had the full Pep - a lineup loaded with attacking midfielders and wingers. It was a battle to classify the City formation, particularly as Oleksandr Zinchenko stepped from left-back into midfield. Phil Foden buzzed around De Bruyne, who played up front, with Bernardo Silva asked to get up and down to the right of Ilkay Gündogan, the deepest sitting midfielder, and Mahrez and Raheem Sterling providing



overtaken by wide-eyed wonder, by the adrenaline main-lining their systems, Tuchel was relatively calm, trying to take it all in. At the end of last season, Tuchel had been on the losing side in Europe's showpiece final when his Paris Saint-Germain team were edged out by Bayern Munich. Perhaps the pain made this even sweeter. What is irrefutable is how virtually everything Tuchel has touched since taking over from Frank Lampard has turned to gold. There has been the successful switch to a back three, which was plotted on the flight over from Paris on the day before his first game - his team have kept 19 clean sheets in 30 matches in all competitions - and the rise up from ninth in the league to the goal of fourth. The one blot has been the FA Cup final loss to Leicester but that is old news, laid to rest by the delirium of all this. Tuchel remembers Chelsea's first Champions League victory as a "burglary" against Bayern in 2012. This was nothing of the sort and, after a third win in three against Guardiola's City, he can look forward to a lucrative new contract, replacing that one that will run out next summer. Havertz was the Chelsea hero, oozing class on the ball, looking every inch the high-end addition from last summer, but N'Golo Kanté ran him close, as he did everybody in a City shirt. The midfielder's reading of the game, coupled with his speed and decisiveness, was a joy to watch, while Antonio Rüdiger stood out in a defence that absorbed the 38th minute loss of Thiago Silva to injury. City's misery was reflected in the tears of their captain, Kevin De Bruyne, when he was forced off on 59 minutes after a cynical check by Rüdiger and the questions raged long into the night for Guardiola. Kai Havertz rounds Ederson to give Chelsea a first-half lead. The pressure had been on the manager because, whether he likes it or not, his tenure at City will be defined by

the width. It was a complicated gameplan and, for long spells, the players could not execute it. Cohesion eluded them and there were wobbles at the back early on. Chelsea found gaps and they would have led if Timo Werner had allied cutting edge to his dangerous movement. Werner air-kicked when gloriously placed from a Havertz cross and also lacked balance and conviction following a Ben Chilwell cut-back. It was startling to see how easily Chelsea played through them for the goal. The move started with Édouard Mendy and, when Mason Mount looked up after a Chilwell lay-off, the pass was on for Havertz. Werner's run had created the space and Havertz got there ahead of the onrushing Ederson, catching a little break off the goalkeeper before rolling it into the empty net. City's best moment of the first half came midway through it when De Bruyne fed Foden only for Rüdiger to stretch into a saving challenge. Sterling had almost got on to a long ball in the eighth minute only to take a poor touch and there were crosses that almost found their mark. Almost was the word. Guardiola introduced Gabriel Jesus for De Bruyne and later Sergio Agüero for Sterling. Now he had two strikers. He also brought on Fernandinho in defensive midfield. But Chelsea had the bit between their teeth; they put their bodies on the line, with the captain, César Azpilicueta, leading by example. They could even have sealed it on the counter when Havertz played in the substitute Christian Pulisic, only for him to dink wide. It was difficult to remember City truly quickening the pulse in front of goal after the interval - Mahrez's last-gasp attempt aside - and the pain was etched all over Guardiola. The law of this competition dictates that clubs must suffer before they finally win it. City are going through agonies.

Ashleigh Barty and Iga Swiatek ready to start new era of dominance on clay



London, May 30 : There will be two defending champions in the women's draw at the French Open this year. That is not normally how it works; when a player wins a title one year, they return to the scene of their success and try their hardest to hold on to it. Most fail. Last year, however, as uncertainty swirled during the first waves of the pandemic, the world No 1, Ashleigh Barty, opted not to travel due to safety concerns and because national border closures in Australia meant she was unable to train with her coach. Instead, as the 19-year-old Iga Swiatek demolished the field to win her first grand slam title, Barty spent her days cheering on her Aussie Rules football team, Richmond, with a beer in her hand. As both players return to Paris for the first time since they lifted the trophy, the perpetually unpredictable world of women's tennis has generated some order. Swiatek and Barty are the two clear favourites to win the French Open again. Before winning at Roland Garros, Swiatek had never crossed

the fourth round of a slam and she had contested only five major tournaments. Her victory was a startling rise to the occasion and one of the most dominant grand slam runs in recent memory. She did not lose a set, dropping 28 games in total. Even the scores, including her 6-1, 6-2 dismantling of Simona Halep in the fourth round, do not quite convey just how her level transcended that of her opponents. She already possesses a complete game: she owns perhaps the heaviest forehand, which can both tear through the court and spin up to shoulder height, but her backhand is even more reliable. She is an elite returner but her kick serve is already among the best. Her excellent athleticism is complemented with quality hand skills. For the past eight months she has been charged with coping with her newfound presence as a top player. She has talked about her struggles with the sudden rush of attention and obligations. And she has frequently had to bounce back from frustration and demon-

strate her growth. So far, she has succeeded. Most recently, her return to her favourite surface was not going as she had planned. After losing in straight sets to Barty in Madrid, she found herself on her way out of the third round in Rome to the 38th-ranked Barbora Krejickova. Instead of panicking she saved two match points and survived in two hours 50 minutes. After moving into the final she then pulled off a win that most players can only dream of: 6-0, 6-0 in 46 minutes against the world No 9, Karolina Pliskova, for her first WTA 1000 title. Barty's relationship with clay is a clear point of contrast. Before the 2019 clay court seasons, she said she begins each year with a countdown until the grass season. Not even a French Open title has changed her perspective. After winning the Miami Open in March, with the clay season to come, she was clear: "Don't get me wrong, I'm still counting down the days to the grass season, without a doubt." Truth is embedded in her humour. Until 2019 Barty struggled to connect with clay, recording a 16-13 record on the surface between 2012 and 2018 without passing the second round of the French Open. Her game is built for the faster, lower-bouncing courts and it is in those conditions that she feels most free. At 5ft 5in, Barty owns arguably the best serve produced by a short player in the women's game and she leads the WTA this year for service games won at 81%. Barty's love of grass is also rooted in her preference for taking her forehand early, her low-bouncing slice and her affinity with the net. What allows her to play so well on clay is her tactical

flexibility and athleticism. Despite her preference for controlling her matches, she is willing to take a step back, to assume a more reactive role and use her excellent movement. She thrives at opening the court on clay with angled forehands and her backhand slice helpfully elongates points, shredding her opponents' patience on the slower surface. After snuffing out all the questions surrounding the validity of her No 1 ranking after nearly a year away with her Miami Open triumph, she has also done so on clay. She clinched her French Open title in 2019 with just one win over a top 20 player and so there were doubts whether her victory was a reflection of a supreme mental performance or if she really was an elite clay court player in the making. Last month, in her first red clay tournament since the French Open, she won the WTA 500 tournament Stuttgart with three wins over top 10 opponents. A thorough, clear answer. Barty has since reached the Madrid final, beating Swiatek in the third round, and she retired from her Rome quarter-final while leading 6-4, 2-1 against Coco Gauff, four games shy of another contest with a far more confident Swiatek. She has lost one completed match on red clay this year. Barty, the top seed, and Swiatek, ranked eighth, are drawn to face each other in the semi-final. Should they get there - and there is no guarantee that they will - the hope is that these are the makings of a new rivalry on this surface. The expectation is that regardless of how they fare this year their French Open titles will be the starting point for continued success on the surface for years to come.

Crazed conductor Pep Guardiola sees Champions League dream fall apart

Manchester, May 30 : At the final whistle in the Estádio do Dragão, as the air whooshed out through the stadium roof and the night sky crackled with a weird, irresistible energy, Pep Guardiola wandered off into a patch of green space and stood watching. He edged away from the capering figures skirting him tactfully like a hazard in a water course. He ran a hand over his gleaming skull, oddly tender in all that noise and light. Eventually he noticed Sergio Agüero standing on his own nearby and went in for a jittery hug. Oh, Pep. You do it to yourself. You do. And that's what really hurts. All glory to Chelsea, champions of Europe and a brilliantly managed half-season winning

Guardiola shrugged afterwards, of his rejig in the defensive pivot. Gündogan is a fine footballer. But the most recent occasion that springs to mind was in Germany's 6-0 defeat by Spain. There were 16,500 people inside the Estádio do Dragão at kick-off, but it felt like more, such was the delicious sensory shock at being there out in all that space and light and noise. It was a feeling that seemed to transmit to City's players. The midfield looked like a three at the start, then became a one with two in front for a while. It was fluid, it was loose, it was a whirl, the kind of rhythms that liberate players, but also make huge demands of their in-game intelligence, the ability to



machine. There will be time to unpack this 1-0 victory, and a moment of footballing ultimacy for Thomas Tuchel five months after his sacking by Paris Saint-Germain. But this was also, inevitably, a Pep joint. On a thrillingly boisterous summer night in the suburbs of Porto the defining tactical brain of the age sent out the strongest squad in Europe to face a team that had lost three of their last four games. And yet again he blinked. Manchester City have been irresistible for the past five months. Manchester City have found a shape, a set of rhythms that have carried them through the field without breaking stride. Default City, basic City momentum should, all things being equal, have presented their best chance of winning the Champions League final. At which point, welcome back, doubt, uncertainty, damaging obsession. I've been expecting you. When the City team dropped, 10 minutes before 7pm, there was a tremor of electricity around this vast, open concrete bowl. Was that a misprint? Guardiola didn't just take the handbrake off here, he sheared it off with an angle-grinder, and hurled it out of the passenger window. On paper there was only one real change, with Raheem Sterling in and Fernandinho and/or Rodri absent. But with that stroke Guardiola had removed an entire position from his team, choosing to go into a Champions League final without a single career defensive midfielder, with a defensive pivot who was also (there's a clue here) City's top goalscorer. It looked muddled, a City team that was all sauce, no linguine. What about things like balance and ballast? What about trying to win by winning, rather than win by some act of tactical messianism. And fine, if we're not playing by the rules, how about trying it out once or twice before the biggest game of your post-Barça career?" [Ilkay Gündogan has played there before,"

read the flow. For five minutes the prospect was raised of some devastating total midfield triumph. And then for a while City just kind of fell apart. Suddenly there were spaces, channels opening up in the backline. Three times Chelsea were able to carve a way through, let down on each occasion by Timo Werner's reverse-Terminator impression, the man who can't be called off, who will never stop, but who also refuses to kill you. Werner really should have scored twice and set the day decisively one way. Throughout all this Pep was on his feet in full crazed modernist conductor guise, whirling and lunging, doing rapid-fire double-handed midge-swats, pointing at things only he could see - objects, planes, holes, possibilities. Could Guardiola not see what was happening in front of him? Did he feel his fate set, Birnam Wood already marching up the hill? Why, to put it more practically, didn't he just stiffen up that midfield end allow this team to play as it has? As half-time approached Chelsea scored the goal they had almost but not quite been scoring for 42 minutes. It was startlingly easy, made by a single pass that cut through the heart of this City formation like a hot knife through butter made specifically, and to order, without any added Fernandinho. Mason Mount took the ball with so much time, too much time a hole in City's shared energy field, and sent a long pass into the path of Kai Havertz's run through the heart of the City midfield. The ball travelled 45 yards along the ground uninterrupted, straight into that rangy, eager stride, the stride of a Victorian housemaster completing a particularly rugged early-morning cross-country dash. There was no flesh, no obstacle, no parts of this City team to create resistance. Havertz rounded Ederson and rolled the ball into an empty net. As a goal against, it was an embarrassment, evidence of some basic malfunction in structure.

'No one can call it': Saracens and Harlequins brace for Premier 15s final

London, May 30 : The climax of the Premier 15s season is like no other and after seven months, 92 games and 4,314 points it will come to a close when the reigning champions, Saracens, play Harlequins on Sunday. The final is being broadcast on BT Sport, the first time a Premier 15s game has been shown live on television. After the most competitive season yet, Poppy Cleall, the Saracens and England No 8, believes it is what the competition deserves. "All the league has built up to this one game and if it wasn't [on TV] it would be such a missed opportunity," she says. "To get it live on TV is exciting. It is an opportunity that couldn't be missed, because the top two teams in the country are going head-to-head on a Sunday afternoon. "While the final can be viewed from home, a crowd of up to 3,276 will be at Gloucester's Kingsholm. Fans were allowed back for the semi-finals last Saturday when Saracens defeated Loughborough 28-24 and Quins beat Wasps 25-14. The return of supporters is something Cleall

says adds to her own rugby experience. "The sound that erupted at full time was amazing," she says. "We couldn't wait to have the fans back. I'm hoping we get close to sell-out again because they do make the dif-



ference. Even if they are Quins supporters. The noise they bring and the atmosphere, it is palpable. You can really feel it. Those are the games you want to play in. "Saracens have won the past two finals, beating

Quins on both occasions. While such familiarity may aid both teams, Cleall plays down that element. "We have experience from being in the final and being in knockout games, so that definitely helps us. Who we're playing

doesn't matter. Quins, Loughborough, Wasps, Exeter, they are all massive games with so many internationals in. "You have to be on your A-game to win those sorts of games and you have to work hard on

analysis to see what they're doing. "Quins are taking a similar approach as they aim to lift the trophy for the first time. Their England scrum-half Leanne Riley is convinced that it is her club's year. "Saracens are a tough team and previous finals we put our hands up and say we haven't had our best games. We haven't performed," she says. "As much as Sarries have done well in those finals and been able to punish us as such, it's been all down to us. "We have been building well over the last couple of weeks. We are really excited. It definitely feels like we are in a good position. "It is only down to us to go and put that performance out there. We can either win it or lose it for ourselves. "The final is likely to be a tense and tight affair, as it always is between the two. When they met this season, the game ended 17-17 and Riley is aware that predicting the outcome of the final would be a difficult call. "The game is not going to be won in the first five or 10 minutes, it is going to be won in the last five or 10 minutes," she says.

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