



The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

Vol. No. VI ■ Issue No. 106 ■ RNI-ASSEN/2014/58385 | GUWAHATI ■ TUESDAY ■ JUNE 01, 2021 | PAGES 8 ■ PRICE RS. 7.00

If Nifty holds above 15,500, it may hit 15,800; Bank Nifty...

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Robson-Kanu left out of Wales squad for Euro 2020 but ...



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NEWS IN BRIEF

website to help Covid patients

Guwahati, May 31 : In a joint initiative by the Upper Assam Chamber of Commerce and the Jorhat district administration, an auto ambulance service was launched on Monday to bring Covid-19 positive people from various testing centres in the district. The district administration has also created a website, covid19.jorhat.in, from where one can call ambulances, get admitted to the nearest hospital depending upon bed availability, see where the nearest centres are for testing and vaccination or buy essential commodities from a list of telephone numbers of grocers, vegetable sellers, etc. The auto-rickshaw ambulance service was jointly launched by Jorhat MLA Hitendranath Goswami and Rajya Sabha MP from Jorhat Kamakhya Prasad Tasa at the deputy commissioner's office.

Ganja seized

Guwahati, May 31 : The Kokrajhar Police has recovered and seized a massive consignment of ganja (cannabis). Over 570 kilograms of ganja has been recovered and seized by the police in Kokrajhar, Assam. The seized consignment of 572.80 kgs of ganja is worth Rs 1 crore. Also read: Assam: Woman raped while on her way back home, 2 arrested. This massive consignment of ganja was seized by the police at Srirampur in Kokrajhar during a routine frisking of vehicles. The consignment was recovered from the "secret compartment" in the driver's cabin of a truck. Two persons have also been arrested by the police in connection with the recovery. "A truck was intercepted at Srirampur & 51 Pkts of Ganja, weighing 572.800kgs worth 1 Cr recovered & two arrested. The secret compartment in driver's cabin couldn't save the carriers," the Kokrajhar Police said.

Earthquake hits Assam

Guwahati, May 31 : An earthquake of magnitude 3.8 on the Richter Scale jolted Assam at 9:50 am on Monday. This has been confirmed by the National Center for Seismology (NCS). This is the second earthquake reported in Assam within 24 hours. According to the National Center for Seismology, the earthquake (Lat: 26.69 & Long: 92.35) occurred at a depth of 24 km. The epicentre of the earthquake is located at 44 km west of Tezpur in Assam's Sonitpur district. "Earthquake of Magnitude: 3.8, Occurred on 31-05-2021, 09:50:50 IST, Lat: 26.69 & Long: 92.35, Depth: 24 Km. Location: 44 km W of Tezpur, Assam," NCS tweeted. No damage or casualty has been reported from any part of Assam so far.

Dhubri DSP arrested for alleged nexus with drugs smugglers

Cash amounting to Rs 4.77 lakh has been recovered.

Guwahati, May 31 : Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) of Dhubri district in Assam - Jatin Chandra Das has been arrested. Dhubri DSP - Jatin Chandra Das has been arrested for his alleged nexus with drugs smugglers. DSP Jatin Chandra Das was arrested after Dhubri police conducted raid at his residence late Sunday night. Cash amounting to Rs 4.77 lakh has been recovered from the residence of Jatin Chandra Das during the raid. A drugs smuggler named - Rafikul Paramanik has also been arrested along with the



accused DSP. "Based on credible information about the alleged nexus of

the accused Jatin Chandra Das, DySP (B) Dhubri with smugglers, several raids have been conducted yesterday night by Dhubri Police and seized unaccounted cash 4 lakh 77 thousand," the Assam Police said in a statement. "Accused Jatin Das APS, DSP (B) have been arrested along with one smuggler Rafikul Paramanik @Opi," the Assam Police added. A case has also been registered at the Dhubri Police Station under section 120B/409 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 7A/12 of Prevention of Corruption Act.

Single COVID-19 vaccine dose enough for recovered patients: BHU researchers



New Delhi: Researchers at Banaras Hindu University have made a startling claim that those people who have recovered from COVID-19 may only require a single dose of the vaccine. The

BHU researchers conducted a study on people who have recovered from the infection and those who had not contracted the disease. It showed that COVID-recovered patients developed antibodies faster. "We studied the effect of vaccines on COVID recovered and non-infected people. Antibodies

in recovered people developed in the first week," Prof. Gyaneshwer Chaubey, Zoology Department, BHU, was quoted. "While only 90% of non-infected people developed antibodies after 3-4 weeks, recovered people developed antibodies after the first dose," Chaubey added. The professor said that the findings can help solve the issue of vaccine shortage and that they have written *Contd...Page 6*

North Korea condemns US termination of South Korean missile range guidelines, calls it hostile act

Seoul, May 31 : The US termination of a guideline that limits the range of South Korean missiles to 800 kilometers (450 miles) demonstrates Washington's hostile policy towards Pyongyang and aims at triggering an arms race on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea's international affairs

critic, Kim Myong Chol was quoted as saying by the state media. Last week, South Korean President Moon Jae-in and US President Joe Biden agreed during a meeting in Washington to end the flight range guidelines that were issued in 1979, when South Korea was given US technologies and components for developing its own missiles. As a result of two revisions in 2001 and 2012, the permitted range of South Korean missiles was *Contd...Page 6*



strates Washington's hostile policy towards Pyongyang and aims at triggering an arms race on the Korean Peninsula, North Korea's international affairs

Delhi will receive first batch of Russia's Sputnik V anti-COVID vaccine after June 20 : CM Arvind Kejriwal



New Delhi, May 31 : Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said that the national capital will get the first batch of Russia's anti-COVID vaccine, Sputnik V, after June 20. The chief minister further said that the makers of the Sputnik vaccine have assured to send a consignment to the national capital

China lifts cap on births per family, announces families can have three children

BEIJING, May 31 : China said on Monday (May 31, 2021) that married couples may have up to three children, a major policy shift from the existing limit of two after recent data showed a dramatic decline in births in the world's most populous country. Beijing scrapped its decades-old

one-child policy in 2016, replacing it with a two-child limit that failed to result in a sustained surge in births given the high cost of raising children in Chinese cities - a challenge that remains. "To further optimise the birth policy, (China) will implement a one-married-couple *Contd...Page 6*



COVID-19 curfew to be relaxed in 61 districts of Uttar Pradesh from June 1

Lucknow, May 31 : The Uttar Pradesh government on Monday extended the relaxations announced in the coronavirus curfew to six more districts from June 1, allowing shops and markets outside the containment

der for the time being. "The relaxations were announced in 55 districts on Sunday, which has now been increased to 61 (of the state's 75 districts). According to the latest reports, the active caseload has fallen below



zones to open for five days a week. The relaxations will be applicable to a total of 61 districts from Tuesday, while 14 districts with an active COVID-19 caseload of over 600 have been kept outside the purview of the or

600 in Sonbhadra, Deoria, Baghpat, Prayagraj, Bijnore and Moradabad, and the relaxations will be applicable in these six districts as well," an official spokesperson said here. Curfew restrictions have been *Contd...Page 6*

'Policy must change as per ground situation': Supreme Court on mandatory CoWin registration for Covid-19 vaccine

Observing that policy makers must have an ear to the ground, a special bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud, L N Rao and S Ravindrabhat said asked the Centre as to how it plans to address the issue of digital divide since it has made CoWin registration for vaccination mandatory

New Delhi, May 31 : The Centre found itself in a difficult spot when the Supreme Court, on Monday, flagged "various flaws" in its vaccination policy, including the need of making CoWin registration mandatory without keeping India's "digital divide" in mind. Observing that policy makers must have an ear on



the ground, a special bench of Justices D Y Chandrachud, L N Rao and S Ravindrabhat asked the Centre as to how it plans to address the issue of digital divide since it has made CoWin registration for vaccination mandatory. "You keep on saying the situation is dynamic but policy makers must have their ears

on ground. You keep on saying digital India, but the situation is actually different in rural areas. How will an illiterate labourer from Jharkhand get registered in Rajasthan? Tell us how you will address this digital divide," the bench sought to know from Solicitor General Tushar Mehta. It *Contd...Page 6*

WHO honours Dr Harsh Vardhan for his efforts in tobacco control

Geneva, May 31 : World Health Organisation (WHO) has awarded Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan with 'WHO Director-General Special Recognition Award' for his accomplishments in the area of tobacco control. Every year, WHO recognises individuals or organisations in each of the six WHO Re-

gions for their accomplishments in the area of tobacco

control. This recognition takes the form of the WHO



Director-General Special Recognition Award and World No Tobacco Day Awards. On the occasion, WHO Chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said Vardhan's leadership was instrumental in the 2019 national legislation to ban E-cigarettes and heated tobacco products. "Pleased to award @drharshvardhan, Indian Health Minister, with

the special recognition for tobacco control. His leadership was instrumental in the 2019 national legislation to ban E-cigarettes and heated tobacco products. Thank you, Minister," Tedros tweeted. Meanwhile, the Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare today chaired an event to mark World No Tobacco Day and *Contd...Page 6*

TMC rebel Dipendu Biswas writes apology letter to Mamata, says 'joining BJP was bad decision'

Kolkata, May 31 : The West Bengal assembly elections were no less than a big battle for the

(TMC) to Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In one such incident, TMC leader Dipendu Biswas



state. We have seen many politicians jumping from Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress

has written a letter to TMC supreme Mamata Banerjee seeking her forgiveness *Contd...Page 6*



Today, on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day, Dr. B. Borooah Cancer Institute, Guwahati present Certificate of Appreciation to Consumers' Legal Protection Forum, Assam for its contribute towards Tobacco Control. "Advocate Ajoy Hazarika, Secretary, Consumers' Legal Protection Forum, Assam received the honour from Dr. A.C. Kataki, Director, BCCI in a small program held at BCCI's Auditorium.

329 fresh cases recorded, one more dies of COVID 19 in Nagaon dist

NAGAON, May 31: 329 more fresh cases were recorded today, taking the total cumulative active COVID positive cases in the district to 4667 while one woman who was undergoing treatment in hospital, died of COVID 19 today. Including the death of the woman, total 63 people have died of COVID 19 in the district till the time of filing of this report, sources said. Meanwhile 463 people who were undergoing treatment in hospital as well as at their homes after being affected by the virus, have been recovered too from infection of the virus today. Sources claimed that among those who tested positive today, 106 were immediately

admitted to COVID hospital as well as to other COVID Care Centres set up at various places in the district while the rest were put in home isolation. Rapid Antigen Test was conducted on 5032 people today while RT-PCR test was conducted on 253 swab samples, sources further added. Significantly, due to rapid spreading of the virus among the people at Kampur Garjapam, Kacharigaon, 2 no ward of Kampur town under Kampur revenue circle and Darangial village under Nagaon Sadar revenue circle, the district administration has declared all these areas today as containment zones in the district.

Minister Suklabaidya inspects Borjelenga Mini PHC

Guwahati, May 31: Minister for Environment and Forest, Fisheries and Excise, Parimal Suklabaidya inspected the Borjelenga Mini

Primary Health Centre in Dholai's Cachar district on Monday to take stock of the institution's preparedness to tackle COVID-19 pandemic situation. Minister Suklabaidya while interacting with the health functionaries and nurses asked them to gear up fully to deal with the pandemic situation. He asked them to step up testing and vaccination to contain the disease. Expressing indebtedness to the health functionaries and health workers for rendering yeoman service to the COVID afflicted persons under Borjelenga block, Minister Suklabaidya asked them to focus on tea garden areas where positive caseload is high. The Minister queried about the status of COVID isolation wards under Borjelenga block. Officials apprised the Minister about their targeted testing and also about the status of isolation wards in tea gardens under this block. The Minister went round the wards of the mini health centre and also exchanged pleasantries with the health workers to boost their morale amid the pandemic times. Later Suklabaidya visited the Palanghat Bazaar and distributed masks to the people. He also visited Borjelenga mandal areas to offer condolences to the bereaved families who lost their near and dear ones to COVID-19 disease.



Employees of M/s P M B Indane gas agency, Satgaon greet its owner Mr Parash Chandra Das on the completion of 5 years of the organisation

Minister Suklabaidya urges plantation workers to adhere to COVID protocols to keep virus at bay

Guwahati, May 31: Minister for Environment and Forest, Fisheries and Excise, Parimal Suklabaidya urged the tea garden workers to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols to keep coronavirus away.

Suklabaidya said this while visiting Derby tea garden in Cachar district to take stock of the COVID-19 preparedness for the tea garden workers on Sunday. The Minister said that the government is working day in and day out to inoculate the tea garden workers, setting up vaccination centres and COVID Care Centres within the garden premises. He urged the plantation workers to wear mask, maintain social distance and to wash hands with soap and water frequently to keep the virus at bay. Citing researchers, Suklabaidya advised the tea garden workers to take steam inhalation over 50° centigrade at least two-three times a day to minimise the risk of infection. He called upon the tea garden management to step up COVID awareness programme. Suklabaidya, who is incharge of COVID-19 management for Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of South Assam's Barak Valley, called upon everyone to rise in unison to make the state and the country COVID free. The Minister also gave away fogging machines, hand sanitisers and masks to the management committee of Derby tea estate for distribution among the plantation workers. President, BJP Borjelenga Mandal, Sushil Ranjan Dhar, Manager, Derby tea estate, S.Singh, Member, Zilla Parishad, L.Bani Yadav, GP President, Pradip Kanu, among others. Meanwhile, the Assam Government on Saturday decided to facilitate COVID-19 vaccination in tea garden areas through onsite registration following spike in COVID positive cases among the plantation workers. Assam has 803 large estates and more than 1.5 lakh small tea gardens with a strong workforce of 10 lakh people.

Wanted dacoit and drugs mafia injured with bullets in gun fight at Juria

NAGAON, May 31: In an encounter, Nagaon police led by Additional Superintendent of Police (HQ) shot at and injured a wanted drugs mafia as well as notorious dacoits at Juria Kodomoni Bepari Basti area under Juria PS last night. Police immediately arrested him and subsequently recovered one 7.65 pistol and other ammunitions on spot from his possession. The drugs dealer as well as the wanted dacoit has been identified as Jaitul Kobir (35) of the same Bepari Basti area, sources said adding that the injured dacoit was admitted to Juria MPHC for immediate treatment. Sources claimed that based on inputs, a sleuth of Narcotics Squad from Nagaon Police led by ASP Dhruba Bora arrived at the house of Jaitul Kobir. When police asked him to come out from his house, he opened the door and drawing out one 7.65 pistol, he tried to fire at the police personnel. Fortunately his pistol misfired and jammed up and in retaliatory firing from police, he was shot on his both legs, sources said adding further that a case was registered in this regard in Juria PS.

BJP Yuva Morcha's Sanitization Drive

Hojai, May 31: In the wake of increasing Covid 19 positive cases, BJP Yuva Morcha Hojai South Mandal and East Mandal jointly took out a Sanitization Drive in the public places of all the 19 municipal wards of Hojai town on Sunday. Talking to this Correspondent, Abhijit Paul, President South Mandal said, "We have taken out this program seeing the surge in the cases of deadly virus. He said it is very important to keep the public gathering places regularly sanitized and clean that's why Yuva Morcha took this initiative. "Total thirty volunteers of BJP Yuva Morcha are indulged in this program, which kicked off from Hojai Civil Hospital.", said Rohit Dutta, President East Mandal.



Community Engagement in COVID 19 Response

NSS Volunteers are geared up to fight against COVID19 in Assam

Guwahati, May 31: An innovative and unique initiative to building capacity and engaging NSS volunteers on COVID 19 response program in Assam was successfully launched today, organised by LEHS/WISH in collaboration with National Health Mission (NHM) Assam, Directorate of Health Services (Family Welfare) Government of Assam and Ramaiah University. The objective of this initiative was to build capacity of NSS Volunteers on varied facet of COVID 19 prevention and management and to facilitate initiation of a community-based participatory health and wellness action plan in Assam. Through the intervention, it is intended to enhance community engagement in sustainable health & wellness programs and reinforce access to quality health care services, thereby contributing to the COVID care management and response. With the role of community volunteers being central to community mobilisation, it is necessary to build the capacity of youth volunteers and front-line workers to engage them in a greater and more meaningful manner at every point in the care cascade. Specific modules and innovative course for COVID 19 response and management by community volunteers has been developed by Ramaiah International Centre for Public Health Innovations in collaboration with LEHS/WISH for capacity building of NSS volunteers, which will empower them to render better services to the needy community. Systematic and structured engagement of the trained NSS volunteers will strengthen Assam's response to COVID 19. This programme also aims to strengthen the grassroots response to COVID 19. Through this initiative around 400 National Scheme Service (NSS) volunteers from various Colleges of Gauhati University in the state if Assam are all set to render services in their locations to fight against COVID 19 as warrior. Presenting introductory remarks Dr Arup Jyoti Kalita, Senior manager, LEHS/WISH explained the objectives of engaging NSS volunteers in COVID 19 response program and capacity building programs. He said, this initiative is an effort to enable all the volunteers with important information on health and wellness particularly on COVID 19 response programs. It is expected that information cascades down to peer groups, people from the communities and families, which would also mean reaching out to the most vulnerable people. Ms Pomi Baruah ACS, OSD NHM Assam, addressed the launching program and said that community-led response is one of key strategies to reach the un-reached and to support COVID 19 affected people and generate IEC/SBCC among masses. "I hope this initiative undertaken by LEHS/WISH along with relevant partners (NSS, GU, RICPHI) in the form of a training course and the deliberation is an effort to enable all with important and helpful information and community action and mobilization in COVID 19 response in the state. I earnestly request NSS volunteers to cascade down this information to your friends, people from the communities and families,

which would also mean reaching out to the most vulnerable people and outreach community including those who are home isolation. This will help strengthen the fight against the COVID 19 pandemic", she said. Speaking at the workshop, Dr Ranjan Kumar Kakati, Director of Students' Welfare and in-charge of NSS Cell, Gauhati University, said that NSS community has been extending remarkable service during the trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Volunteers are also engaging in outreach and COVID care activities in their areas. This capacity building of volunteers and program officers will empower them to render better services to the needy community. Welcoming the participants, Raju Tamang, State Head, LEHS/WISH, said that NSS volunteers are known all over as selfless, sensible and socially-oriented individuals. He told NSS volunteers, "You are the most elite people as you are already part of the community and helping people. They can act as change agents in transforming the health scenario of the society particularly in COVID 19 response programs." Dr Nayanjeet Choudhury, Director RICPHI, offered key note address and said that it has been a privilege to be part of this great initiative of contributing to the community engagement program for COVID response in Assam. In his inaugural address, Mr Munindra Nath Ngatey, Director of Health Services (Family Welfare), Government of Assam, urged that NSS volunteers are doing wonderful service to the health awareness programs and should come forward and help them to reach the community. He said, "Volunteers can build and enhance their strength and capacity for the services to the community on COVID 19 care and awareness through the knowledge and information of this innovative COVID 19 training course". We look forward to NSS volunteers sustained engagement in COVID 19 vaccination camps also". He added. The technical sessions were attended by Dr Mousumi Krishnatraya, Associate Professor, Gauhati Medical College, Prof Bellur Prabhakar of University of Illinois, USA, Dr Ananth Ram and Ms Shailee Shah as resource persons.

Minister Pijush Hazarika for early completion of Lakhimpur flood and erosion projects

North Lakhimpur, May 31: State Water Resources Minister Pijush Hazarika, accompanied by Lakhimpur MP Pradan Baruah, Tezpur MP Pallab Lochan Das, Lakhimpur MLA Manab Deka, Bihpuria MLA Amiya Kumar Bhuyan, Lakhimpur DC Amit Sattawan, Lakhimpur SP Bedanta Madhab Rajkhowa and Chief Executive Engineer and other officials of

Water Resources, visited flood and erosion-affected areas and the embankments in Lakhimpur district on Saturday and reviewed the flood and erosion preparedness in the district from the Water Resources officials. The minister and his team, at first, visited the erosion-prone sites at Kadak, Darge, Ghunastuti, Acherakata, N-Ali, Maralia Khabalu, Badhakara, Khaga, Ghagar, Bhimpara etc. in Lakhimpur Legislative Assembly boat. He started his boat journey from Chawul Dhuwa Ghat of the Subansiri river. The minister and his team later visited the progress of Bahguri-Dhunaguri dyke being constructed and the riverbank erosion at the Dhalpur-Jamuguri dyke, besides several erosion-hit areas in Bihpuria Legislative Assembly. During his visit, the minister directed the concerned officials to conduct the ongoing flood and erosion protection activities on a war footing and complete these projects before the onset of monsoon.

Sanitization drive at Sootea

Biswanath chariali, May 31: As a part of second year completion of BJP led central government for the second term, the Sootea branch Yuva Morcha along with Biswanath district committee of the young brigade of BJP had carried out a sanitization drive in various public places of Sootea on Sunday. Notably, the greater area of

Sootea centre was declared completely closed due community spread of Covid recently. The sanitization drive was carried out in the bank premises of the three banks located at Sootea along with other business establishments and public places. The public health and engineering department and the medical department

also extended helping hand in this programme. The sanitization drive was also attended by Biswanath MLA Pramod Borthakur, state BJP executive member Parash Borkakaty, Ishwar Timsina, Mandal BJP president, Diganta Saikia, Utpal katey, Udai Shankar Saikia, GP president of No. 3 Sootea GP along with others.



DR APON JYOTI DAS Superintending Medical Officer, Oil India Limited Felicitation of CM and CM relief fund (Cheque Donation --Rs 31,000)

Israeli opposition figures reach deal aimed at ousting Netanyahu

EU Commission calls on UK to ditch ideology over Northern Ireland protocol

Jerusalem, May 31 : The far-right Israeli politician Naftali Bennett and opposition leader Yair Lapid have agreed to forge a coalition government that would oust Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from his 12 straight years in power. "It's my intention to do my utmost in order to form a national unity government along with my friend Yair Lapid, so that, God willing, together we can save the country from a tailspin and return Israel to its course," said Bennett, a former settler leader and religious nationalist, in a televised address. While further political negotiations are expected, the move by Bennett served a massive blow to Israel's longest-serving leader, who is famed for his political wizardry and has survived repeated attempts to end his career. Minutes after the speech ended, a stern-looking Netanyahu went on air to rail against Bennett. "He's committed the scam of the century," Netanyahu said of his former ally and senior aide, accusing him of abandoning rightwing voters. Bennett, who wants to annex most of the occupied West Bank, is much closer ideologically to Netanyahu than Lapid, a former TV news anchor popular with the country's secular middle class, who has been deep in negotiations to form a government before a Wednesday deadline. According to local media reports on the deal, Bennett, the 49-year-old tech millionaire who previously headed the defence and education ministries, would become prime minister for the first two years of a term, with Lapid, 57, replacing him for the final two. If Lapid can get an assortment of other parties to agree in the next three days - which is still not guaranteed - he could inform the country's president, Reuven Rivlin, that he believes he can form a government, which would then go to parliament, the Knesset, for a vote. The swearing-in of the new



government, and with it Netanyahu's relinquishing of high office, could happen within a week. Opponents of Netanyahu, who is on trial on corruption charges that he denies, have accused the 71-year-old of divisiveness and prioritising his hold on power above all else. Despite their vast differences, many have rallied behind the idea of what they call a "government of change". "We need a government

proclaimed centrist and "security hawk", has sought to forge tricky alliances with parties from across the political spectrum. He plans to bring together the establishment Labor and anti-occupation Meretz parties with their traditional enemies. They include Bennett but also Avigdor Lieberman, who once suggested that "disloyal" members of the country's Arab minority, who make up about 20% of its population of 9 million, should be

beheaded. The diverse group may require outside backing by Arab members of parliament, including Islamists, who would help Lapid clinch a 61-seat majority and dethrone Netanyahu. However, their ideological differences are too great to be full coalition members, meaning Lapid would probably form a minority government. With such significant political differences, an anti-Netanyahu coalition could be liable to break apart. To prevent that from happening, it is expected to focus on the economy and the pandemic while avoiding big issues and keeping the status quo for millions of Palestinians living under occupation. Mossi Raz, a Meretz parliamentarian, told Israel public radio that the proposed the government "will do a lot of good things. I'm not sure a peace agreement will be one of them." If the deal is successful, it could end both a political deadlock that has brought four snap elections since

2019 and Netanyahu's 12-year historic stretch as prime minister. Indicted in three separate corruption cases, including on charges of bribery and fraud, Netanyahu faces more than a decade in prison if convicted. Unlike one of his predecessors, Ehud Olmert, who stepped down after it appeared he would be indicted, Netanyahu has refused to leave power, and critics have accused him of a conflict of interests by remaining in the powerful position of prime minister. Netanyahu had earlier on Sunday fuelled speculation that his term was about to end by offering a last-ditch offer to Bennett and another rightwing party head, Gideon Saar. Under the deal, seen as the most generous to date from Netanyahu, the three men would each "rotate" the role of prime minister. However, Saar, a former Netanyahu protégé-turned-opponent, rejected the advance. "Our position and commitment was and remains to change the Netanyahu regime," Saar tweeted. Lapid took the role of head of the opposition from Benny Gantz, a former army chief who fought Netanyahu during the past three elections but who lost support after he made a power-sharing deal with the prime minister that ultimately collapsed. If Lapid fails to announce a government by Wednesday, a fifth Israeli election later this year is a possible outcome.

Cyprus election: far-right party linked to Greek neo-Nazis doubles vote share



London, May 31 : A far-right party with links to Greece's defunct neo-Nazi Golden Dawn has doubled its support in Cyprus after widespread disaffection over corruption scandals dominated elections for a new parliament on Sunday. The National Popular Front (Elam) garnered 6.8% of the vote, narrowly replacing the Movement of Social Democrats (Edek) as the fourth biggest political force in the island's Greek Cypriot party system for the first time in 45 years. "A neo-Nazi party is the clear winner of today's election, securing two more seats in the 56-member house," said Christophoros Christophorou, an analyst specialising in electoral behaviour. "It has benefited from a xenophobic climate exacerbated by the high rate of arrivals of undocumented migrants and a government that has often adopted its own racist narrative." The EU's most easterly member state, Cyprus has the highest per capita number of first-time asylum seekers in the 27-member bloc. The vote had been contested by 659 candidates from a record 15 political groups as anger mounted among Greek Cypriots over revelations of malpractice in the highest echelons of power. "Corruption has led to an unprecedented alienation of

London, May 31 : A senior European Commission figure has defended the Northern Ireland protocol, calling on the UK government to ditch ideology in favour of pragmatism in order to transform problems arising from the Brexit deal. Maroš Šefčovič said he was looking at "solutions" to iron out disruption to businesses caused by the protocol, a key part of the Brexit agreement designed to protect the bloc's single market at its frontier with the UK on the island of Ireland, without a return to a hard border. It means Northern Ireland has in effect stayed within the EU's single market for goods, and a customs border was enforced on goods crossing the Irish sea. The resulting checks at the ports of Belfast and Larne have angered unionists and loyalists, who feel the region is being separated from the rest of the UK, and this anger has escalated into threats, violence and rioting. Edwin Poots, who earlier this month succeeded Arlene Foster as the leader of the Democratic Unionist party, claimed on the BBC's Andrew Marr show on Sunday that the EU Commission "don't seem to care for the peace process in Northern Ireland and that really needs to change". The DUP is calling for the protocol to be scrapped, and Poots told Marr the checks were "doing demonstrable harm to every individual in Northern Ireland" and "having a devastating impact", agreeing the violence could get worse as summer and the perennially tense marching season approaches. Šefčovič, who is in charge from Brussels' side of leading talks with the UK's Michael Gove and David Frost to adapt the protocol, later defended the arrangement, saying it presented "opportunity" and



would take care of daily problems in Northern Ireland. He said he was investigating how to address issues arising from the protocol, but insisted it would be wrong to scrap it completely. In response to Poots' accusation that Brussels was treating Northern Ireland as a "plaything", Šefčovič said there was "plenty of opportunity" to transform the protocol into "something positive, good for the future which would guarantee the peace, stability and prosperity for all". He promised to take soundings from the DUP and other political parties in Northern Ireland before his next meeting with Frost in London, expected to take place in several weeks. Recalling his talks with Gove last December, when the post-Brexit trade deal was signed, Šefčovič said he had offered Swiss-style transition agreements on matters such as veterinary issues, which would prevent someone with guide dogs needing a certificate proving they were free of rabies to take the animals from Great Britain into Northern Ireland.

Uganda police killings reconstructed using mobile phone footage

London, May 31 : A single truck carrying eight police officers was responsible for a mass shooting in the centre of the Ugandan capital, Kampala, in November last year in which at least four people died and many more were injured, an investigation by BBC Africa Eye has found. The shootings were part of a crackdown on protests in Kampala following the arrest of opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi, a singer

'Gunmen in Nigeria abduct about 150 students from Islamic school

London, May 31 : One person shot dead after armed gang on motorcycles attack town in north-central Nigeria, 'shooting indiscriminately' Relatives of students abducted in March 2021 hold a demonstration. An armed gang has abducted students from an Islamic school in the north-central Nigerian state of Niger. The school's owner, Abubakar Tegina, told Reuters he witnessed the attack and estimated about 150 students had been taken. "I personally saw between 20 and 25 motorcycles with heavily armed people. They entered the school and went away with about 150 or more of the students," said Tegina, who lives around 150 metres from the school. "We can't be exact because most of them have not reported to the school as at that time." A spokesman for Niger's state police said in a statement gunmen on motorcycles attacked the town of Tegina at around 3pm on Sunday. He said the attackers were "shooting indiscriminately and abducted a yet-to-be-ascertained number of children at Salihu Tanko Islamic school". Tegina said around 300 pupils attend the school, and are aged between seven and 15. He said pupils live at home and only attend classes at the site. One person was shot dead during the attack and a second person was seriously injured, the state governor's spokeswoman said. She said 11 of the children taken were released by the gunmen because they were "too small and couldn't walk". A group of bus passengers were also abducted, she said. Armed groups carrying out kidnapping for ransom are being blamed for a series of raids on schools and universities in northern Nigeria in recent months, abducting more than 700 students for ransom since December. Sunday's attack in Niger took place the day after the release of the remaining 14 students of a group abducted last month from a university in neighbouring Kaduna state.



turned politician known as Bobi Wine, who was campaigning as a candidate for presidential elections held two months later. More than 50 people were killed and hundreds hurt by security forces and police over two days in the capital and elsewhere. President Yoweri Museveni won a sixth term in office in the polls, which opposition politicians said were fraudulent. Officials initially said that any casualties had been criminals and violent rioters, before admitting that some innocent people had died after being hit by "stray bullets". Images posted on social media showed police in Kampala firing indiscriminately at people in buildings overlooking the protests and unidentifiable men in plainclothes, believed to be security personnel, firing automatic weapons. More than 350 people were arrested, police said. The BBC Africa Eye investigation, which will be released on Monday, reconstructs the killing of four people on Kampala Road as well as the death of a 15-year-old boy and the serious wounding of two women elsewhere in the capital. The analysis of more than 300 video clips from mobile phones and interviews with more than 30 witnesses strongly suggests that all were shot by police or soldiers and that none were engaged in any criminal activity or protest. Authorities in Uganda admitted the vehicle identified in the investigation was a police patrol car, but said they had no information linking it to indiscriminate shooting. Mobile phone videos and photographs show the patrol truck passing within metres of Kamuyat Ngobi, a 28-year-old mother of four, who collapsed and died with a single bullet in the head seconds later.

London, May 31 : Boris Johnson and Carrie Symonds have opted not to take an immediate honeymoon, as congratulations flowed in following their secret wedding on Saturday. The couple are instead expected to take time off and celebrate their marriage with a larger group of family and friends next summer, after a surprise ceremony in Westminster Cathedral and a low-key Downing Street garden reception. In the first picture released of the newlyweds on Sunday, Johnson was seen in a suit and bright blue tie with a white rose on his lapel, with his wife, who wore a white embroidered dress and headband of flowers. It has been confirmed she will take his last name and be known as Carrie Johnson. They got engaged on the island of Mustique in late 2019 and

had a son, Wilfred, in April 2020 - just weeks after the prime minister left hospital after being treated for Covid in intensive care. Plans to tie the knot were put on hold during the pandemic, with the wedding industry one of the hardest hit by curbs on the number of people allowed to socialise and restrictions other aspects such as singing and dancing. It was reported earlier this week in the Sun that the couple had sent save-the-date invites to "celebrate their wedding" on Saturday 30 July 2022, fuelling speculation they would wait until next year. But reports surfaced on Saturday evening that they had been married earlier that day at the Roman Catholic cathedral just over a mile from their home. Shortly after 1.30pm, the cathedral was apparently cleared

of visitors, with staff saying it was going into lockdown, followed by the bride arriving half an hour later in a limousine, sweeping into the piazza outside the main west door. Johnson's father, Stanley, had earlier been spotted in smart attire on the steps of No 10, while a band was also seen exiting Downing Street that evening. The ceremony was reportedly carried out by Father Daniel Humphreys, who had given the couple pre-marriage instructions and baptised Wilfred last year, and makes Johnson the first prime minister to marry in office since Lord Liverpool wedded Mary Chester in 1822.

voters," Christophorou added. "Fifteen percent of the electorate will not be represented because they voted for smaller parties that failed to cross the threshold and enter parliament." At 66%, voter turnout was also low, a sign of the apathy that many had predicted would also prevail as a result of disillusionment with mainstream parties. Elam's showing marked a clear victory for a party whose affiliation with the now outlawed Golden Dawn had done little to dent its appeal for a nationalist-minded constituency also enraged by reports of corruption among elected officials. In power since 2013, President Nicos Anastasiades' administration has been badly hit by allegations of corruption linked mostly to a controversial cash-for-passports scheme that has helped transform the seashore city of Limassol with gargantuan apartment blocks built with the sole purpose of luring investors. In a rare display of public opprobrium that has not gone unnoticed by Turkish Cypriots in the island's breakaway north, Greek Cypriots have held mass demonstrations to deplore corruption and demand a solution to Cyprus's division. The 74-year-old president has robustly rejected any accusations of wrongdoing. With almost 100% of the

vote counted, Anastasiades' rightwing Democratic Rally (DYSI) clinched 27.8% of the vote, followed by the leftwing Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL), polling at 22.3%; the Democratic party (Diko) at 11.3%; and Edek at 6.7%. Democratic Front (DIPA), a group of Diko dissidents, also managed to enter the house after winning 6.1% of the vote. The Green party, which had been predicted to improve its performance, won 4.4% of the vote, a drop of 0.4 percentage points on 2016. Elam's ability to emerge as an anti-establishment force despite Cyprus's mainstream DYSI and AKEL parties retaining their position as the island's two largest political groups is likely to make the quest to end the country's division harder. The nationalists reject any notion of reunifying Cyprus - split along ethnic lines since a coup aimed at union with Greece prompted Turkey to invade in 1974 - as a bizonal, bicomunal federation, the position long held by the Greek Cypriot side. Anastasiades has also faced criticism from those who want a settlement, with many accusing him of missing the opportunity to come to an agreement when the pro-solution Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akıncı was in power. The moderate was ousted by a hardliner last year who may well exploit Sunday's electoral result to press the case for a two-state solution. Nicos Trimikliniotis, professor of sociology at the University of Nicosia, said Elam's rise was testimony to the tolerance the extremists had been granted by an administration that often needed the party's support to pass legislation. "By allowing the neo-Nazi Elam to operate as a reserve force, the government has helped undermine the democratic fabric of society and trust in institutions," he said. "Elam has played a destructive role in shifting the rhetoric more to the right and enabling public discourse to become more racist and anti-immigrant at a time when ever more asylum seekers are arriving on Cyprus." The party is led by Christos Christou, a 40-year-old former bouncer who previously lived in Athens, where he was a member of Golden Dawn and had close ties to its now imprisoned chief, Nikos Michaloliakos. Unlike the mainland Greek group, however, whose entire leadership was jailed after it was judged to be a criminal organisation last year, Elam has not been accused of attacking migrants or embracing tactics of blind violence.

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THE ASSAM RISING

VOL. NO. VI, ISSUE NO. 106 TUESDAY, JUNE 01, 2021

New Covid variant

The UK's fine performance in sequencing Sars-CoV-2 genomes allows Public Health England to publish detailed analyses on the progress of variants and the latest report represents the changing of the guard. The B.1.1.7 lineage, first identified in Kent, had been dominant in the UK, but the B.1.617.2 lineage, first identified in India, comprised 58% of the most recent sequences, up from 44% the week before. There are strong regional differences, with under 10% of cases in Yorkshire and the Humber being the Indian-identified variant, while in north-west England that share is over 60%. The main concern is about increased risk of transmission and reports also include estimates of what is known as the "secondary attack rate" (SAR), which simply means the proportion of an infected person's contacts who also get infected. Using NHS test-and-trace data for recent non-travel cases, the estimated SAR for the B.1.1.7 variant was 8.1% (+/- 0.2%), while for the variant identified in India it was substantially higher at 13.5% (+/- 1.0%) - although these are likely to understate the true values due to the limitations of contact tracing. Between January and March 2021, it was estimated that, of contacts of a non-traveller infected with the B.1.1.7 variant, around one in 10 got infected. This is an average of a very widely dispersed distribution: most cases do not infect anyone else, while at the opposite end of the spectrum there can be "super-spreader" events, often in prolonged indoor gatherings with poor ventilation. It is increasingly accepted that viral spread is mainly airborne rather than by droplets and "fresh air" has finally been added to the "hands, face, space" mantra. Nearly 7 million contacts in England have been legally obliged to self-isolate for at least 10 days. Even if the proportion of contacts infected were as high as 20%, it would still mean that over 5 million of these were not infected and yet were unable to shorten their isolation by testing. Where are we now? Confirmed cases are rising, with the virus in a race against the vaccines and the prospects are extremely uncertain. As Covid-19 spreads through a population, it undergoes similar changes, or "mutations". Every time a new virus is built, errors are made when its genome is copied, just like with the whispered message. This has led to Covid-19 variants popping up all over the globe: in the UK, Brazil, the US and now India. Detecting these variants and monitoring their spread is crucial to protect people from being put at risk, and helps inform public health decisions. Which is why we so enthusiastically welcome the news of the Global Pandemic Radar, a pathogen surveillance network that will track developments in the Covid-19 virus. It will also ensure a global infrastructure is in place to better help humanity understand and protect itself from future pathogens. Molecular epidemiology is a cutting-edge area of research in which scientists examine the genomes of viruses to understand their patterns of spread. The overwhelming majority of mutations have no effect on how the virus behaves, but the trail of mutations that accumulate in viruses as they are transmitted are signatures that allow us to retrace the virus's steps. One signature might say "I am part of a local outbreak" while another could indicate an import from a specific region or country. We can't tell who infected whom from virus genomes, but we can get a peek into where a virus has been and how it is moving through the population. We can answer questions such as: "When did this variant emerge?", "How fast is it spreading?" and "Are current restrictions sufficient?" Some mutations endow the new virus with a specific advantage, making it more transmissible, or allow it to hide from the immune system. We name mutations such as this "variants of concern". The results from molecular epidemiology can be used to deploy public health resources effectively, for example by blocking variants of concern before they cause large outbreaks - and tweaking vaccines to better protect us. The scale of genetic sequencing during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the efforts to share those data, are unprecedented. Sars-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, has rapidly become the most sequenced pathogen in all of history - a position previously held by HIV. More than 1.5 million Covid-19 patients globally have had their virus sequenced and the data shared publicly through GISAID, a database launched in 2008 following the first global outbreak of bird flu to log variants of influenza. In the same way as the second world war spurred on the development of technologies such as radar, the pandemic has led to astounding advances in how scientists generate, share and analyse virus data. In the UK, sequencing efforts are coordinated at the national level through the Covid-19 Genomics UK (Cog-UK) consortium. Cog-UK was conceptualised in March 2020, when fewer than 100 Covid-19 cases had been diagnosed in the UK. Because molecular epidemiology played such an important part in mapping the spread of Ebola in west Africa in 2013-2016, and it was clear to scientists that genomic surveillance viruses should be a keystone of the UK Covid-19 response. At least 10% of Covid-19 positive samples are collected by Cog-UK from testing sites, hospitals and care facilities. Sequencing is then conducted in hubs across the UK. This systematic approach can reveal the genetic makeup of viruses circulating around the country. When UK cases surged in November 2020, despite lockdown restrictions, we rapidly pinned down the highly transmissible Kent variant (B.1.1.7) as the cause. Some countries, such as the US and India, also initiated national Covid-19 genomic surveillance programmes. The Indian variant (B.1.617) was first identified through the Indian genomic surveillance system, Insacog, in October 2020. B.1.617 has mutations that increase transmissibility, and that may help it evade the immune system. Because of this, the WHO classified it as a variant of concern on 10 May. But it remains difficult to calculate its relative transmissibility and contribution to the current onslaught of infections in India, because sequencing has been patchy. In most countries, sequencing efforts are even less systematic, and led mainly by labs that happened to be set up for pathogen sequencing prior to the pandemic. Academic institutions and hospitals are independently sequencing samples from their local areas, usually obtained from hospitals. In many lower- and middle-income countries, the only sequencing facility is in the capital and this means that only individuals living in the capital, or travelling there for treatment, ever get their virus sequenced. The UK has sequenced 50 out of every 1,000 diagnosed cases, compared with fewer than 1 in 1,000 in India. Eighty countries have submitted fewer than 100 sequences, which is insufficient for tracking variants.

Four indicators that will help you analyse India's \$3-trillion market cap cheer



The stock markets are as much a function of society as of citizens, as much an expression of the collective as of the individual, as much a signature of earnings as of speculations, and as much a paradox as an indicator. So, when you look at the market capitalisation-the combined market value of all listed companies-on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) crossing the US \$3 trillion mark for the first time on 24 May 2021, examine all these components while evaluating the event. BSE CEO Ashish Chauhan captures the statistics: 69 million registered investors, 1,400 brokers, 69,000 mutual fund distributors and 4,700 companies have come together to converge around the INR 219 lakh crore number, he wrote. For context, India's GDP (gross domestic product, defined as "the sum of gross value added by all resident producers in the economy plus any product taxes and minus any subsidies not included in the value of the products") is estimated to be INR 196 lakh crore. The market capitalisation to GDP ratio, therefore, stands at 112 percent. Growing steadily over the past 15 years, barring the 2010 jump to 97 percent, India's market

capitalisation to GDP ratio **Gautam Chikermane** has crossed 100. Second, has fluctuated around the 70 percent mark. During this time, both the economy as well as the markets have grown steadily, at their own paces. At 112 percent today, this ratio is the highest ever. Against the world average of 129 percent, this number is lower than the US (222 percent), Canada (180 percent), South Korea (136 percent), Japan (133 percent) and the UK (131 percent). But it is higher than China's 79 percent. Of course, all these markets have hit their highs over the past year. At 85 percent, the absolute (not adjusted for currency) 12-month returns from India are the world's highest, followed by South Korea (81 percent), Canada (63 percent), the US (51 percent), the UK (48 percent) and Germany (46 percent). But you don't assess or analyse a market based on such short-term movements. Over the past two decades, the market capitalisation of Indian markets has increased at a compounded annual growth rate of 18.2 percent. This growth can be seen in several ways. First, the denominator-GDP growth. From the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank,

to other multilateral institutions and large private brokerages, India is among the fastest-growing (if not the fastest-growing), economies of the world. The IMF April 2021 World Economic Outlook forecasts that India will grow by 12.5 percent in 2021 and 6.9 percent in 2022-the highest among large economies. The Asian Development Bank April 2021 Outlook forecasts India's growth rates at 11.0 percent in 2021 and 7.0 percent in 2022, again the highest among large economies. If the underlying growth is high, markets will follow. At the moment, the rise in markets is higher than that of the economy; hence, the market capitalisation to GDP ratio point to point returns. Over the past 30 years, the Sensex has risen from less than 1,000 to more than 50,000, a CAGR of 14.9 percent. The number is 13.4 percent for the past 20 years, 11.9 percent over the past 10 years, and 14.6 percent over the past five years. These returns are among the highest in markets that have a current capitalisation of more than US \$2 trillion. For the past 30, 20, 10 and five years, the returns from the US markets, for instance, are 8.6 percent, 6.1 percent, 11.2 percent, and 14.6 percent. Those from Hong Kong are 7.0 percent, 4.8 percent, 4.0 percent, and 11.7 percent. A liquidity surplus is pushing stock price values higher globally. In India, it is being accentuated by domestic investors that have been investing in equity mutual funds. Third, with the rise in stock prices and market capitalisations comes a commensurate increase in valuations, leading some analysts to say that the Indian market, like several others, is overvalued. At 31 times, India's price to earnings multiple is among the highest. A one-time high is not the problem; a sustained high PE multiple could be. But

the high PE multiple today is possibly factoring in the past track record of economic growth and the expectations of growth to continue into the future. As a result, the country, and through it, the underlying companies that are growing faster than the economy, gets a premium. This could change overnight, of course. Also read: Hail the rise of a 100 Indian unicorns, and no, Ambani or Adani have nothing to do with these. And fourth, a large base of consumers and a high scale of industrial and services activity combined with a rising entrepreneurial zeal does wonders. Is Indian business at that take-off point? We cannot be sure-a US \$2.7 trillion economy, the world's fifth largest after the US, China, Japan and Germany, India is expected to be the world's third-largest economy within this decade. This GDP will ride companies. The Made in China COVID-19 virus notwithstanding, global and Indian investors are seeing that story play out. The US \$3 trillion market capitalisation of Indian companies shows the scale of its institutionalisation with a larger number of direct investors and through intermediaries such as mutual funds, insurance and even provident funds entering it. The paradox, if any, is not the brute force of these investments that have taken valuations higher, but the strengthening of the underlying companies that will catch up with the valuations. The mean reversion, a theory that says markets may fluctuate in the short term but revert to a long-run mean in the long term, will definitely come over the next decade. But this revert, again in the long term, will happen more because earnings of companies will grow rather than their market values fall. Markets are moody creatures in the short term but consistent deliverers in the long term. And despite a great story, things could go wrong.

When it comes to social care, voters are miles ahead of politicians

Here's a secret about modern Britain. For all the thousands of words spouted by pundits and the endless melodrama of Westminster, how we live is governed by a remarkably small set of rules from which the country rarely diverges. We might call it political Groundhog Day, where the same old, broken ideas are accepted as gospel by politicians and the public is forced to relive the fall-out over and over again. Take the most basic job for any government: whether the average citizen can make ends meet. A record 2.5m food parcels have been given out by the Trussell Trust during the last year, as one in eight workers languish in poverty. An entire generation of young people have almost no chance of affording a secure home, while deprived infants are left to die in mouldy and crumbling homes. We are told this is just how a modern economy works, as if this state of affairs is entirely normal in one of the richest nations on Earth. Or look at care for older and disabled people. It is almost two years since Boris Johnson stood outside Downing Street and promised he had a "clear plan" for fixing the social care system. And yet we are no closer to any semblance of one. Indeed, last week's Queen's speech gave the issue the grand sum of nine words. An estimated 1.5 million people are suffering without sufficient care, and our leaders appear in no rush to ease their situation. Forget a Beveridge-style NHS innovation - ministers can't muster a plan to help disabled people to the toilet. If the post-1945 era offered the hope of transformative politics, the last few decades have offered stagnation and pessimism. This is the era in which everything happens and nothing happens, in which seismic events - be it Brexit or the pandemic - take place at a relentless rate but society has rarely felt more stuck. We have a government overseeing calamities of growing poverty and crumbling public services but which is more interested in manufacturing culture wars, and an opposition with neither the imagination nor the will to offer an alternative. Or to put it another way: the biggest problem facing Britain today isn't so much the crises themselves but that the political class appears to have no real solutions to them. A new report by the Resolution Foundation thinktank and the London School of Economics warns that the next decade is going to be crucial as the country faces multiple challenges - from demographic changes and Brexit to the aftermath of Covid. Without change, it

warns, the British economy could resemble Italy's soon, with similarly plummeting living standards. It doesn't have to be this way. Away from Westminster, others are thinking big. A growing number of local authorities are trialling universal basic income (UBI) in their area, and the Welsh government has just launched a groundbreaking pilot scheme. Go to Norwich, and you'll see new social homes, rented from the council on secure tenancies, which are also the most energy-efficient housing ever built in the UK. Or visit Preston city council, which runs the "real wage initiative" and works to increase the number of employers in the city paying staff a fair income. The received wisdom is that such ideals are not "electable" - that word

Frances Ryan



ers want a solution to social care and are that acts as a gatekeeper to any change that could actually make ordinary people's lives better. But this month's local elections show many voters are keen for fresh ideas. Where Labour did well - Wales, Greater Manchester, the Liverpool city region - they had promoted a positive and bold vision, just as politicians across the board who backed UBI pilots in their areas enjoyed election success. It is not a coincidence that the 2017 Labour party manifesto that was greeted with genuine excitement by the electorate was the only one in decades to offer real economic change. Similarly, many vot-

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Why are Palestinians protesting? Because we want to live

I started going to demonstrations when I was 17. At first, I went to protests against Israel's military occupation. Then we also began to protest against the authoritarianism of the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, and the sickening rivalry between Palestinian political factions. For Palestinians, protest has become a way of life - a way to be steadfast, to persevere. Over the past decade, much of this burden of protest has been borne by individual Palestinian families facing expulsion or violence at the hands of soldiers and settlers. The threat of evictions or demolitions will spark a local protest, in the hope of preventing this or that particular outrage. But right now the attention of the world is on us not as individuals, but as a collective, as Palestinians. It is not only about one village or one family or "only those in the West Bank" or "only those in

Jerusalem". What we are in the streets protesting about now is not one killing or one violent raid, but a whole regime of oppression that destroys our bodies, our homes, our communities, our hopes - just as the protests for Black lives that spread across the US last year were not only about George Floyd or Breonna Taylor or any one killing. This is what colonialism does: it suffocates every part of your life, and then it finishes by burying you. It is a strategic, deliberate process, and it is only obstructed or delayed because oppressors are almost always confronted and challenged by those under their rule. In the end, who wants to be chained down for being born who they are? Last week, I was near the illegal settlement of Beit El by Ramallah in the West Bank as the Israeli army sent

jeeps rushing towards demonstrators, journalists and medical staff, firing high-velocity teargas canisters directly at the crowd. The sound of those canisters spiralling towards us in the dozens still makes me tremble. It reminds me of the day in December 2011, in the village of Nabi Saleh, when an Israeli soldier fired a teargas canister, from close range, directly at the face of 28-year-old Palestinian stone-thrower Mustafa Tamimi, who died as a result of the injury. I remember the face of then six-year-old Janna Tamimi, his cousin, as she screamed in her fragile voice: "Why did you kill my best friend?" Behind her was the illegal settlement of Haramish. Mustafa's protest was against the settlement expansion and the impunity of settler violence as he and his community were imprisoned in the village, with no access to water springs or public services.

If Nifty holds above 15,500, it may hit 15,800; Bank Nifty looks positive; RIL, SBI stocks in focus this week



Mumbai, May 31 : The chart pattern suggests that if Nifty crosses and sustains above 15500 level it would witness buying which would lead the index towards 15650-15800 levels. The chart pattern suggests that if Bank Nifty crosses and sustains above 35500 level it would witness buying which would lead the index towards 36500-36800 levels. Nifty closed at 15,436 with a gain of 260 points on a weekly basis. On the weekly chart the index has formed a long bullish candle forming higher High-low compared to previous week and has closed above previous week's high indicating positive bias. The index is moving in a Higher Top and Higher Bottom formation on the weekly chart indicating positive bias. The chart pattern suggests that if Nifty crosses and sustains above 15500 level it would witness profit booking which would take the index towards 15200-15100. Bharti Airtel, SBI, Coal India, Aurobindo Pharma, Glenmark Pharma, BoB stocks in focus. Bharti Airtel, SBI, Coal India, Aurobindo Pharma, Glenmark Pharma, BoB stocks in focus. Share Market Today, Share Market Live. Share Market LIVE: Sensex surges 250 points to top 51,650 in pre-opening session; GDP data in focus. Nifty is trading above 20 and 50 day SMA's which are important short term moving averages, indicating positive bias in the short term. Nifty continues to remain in an uptrend in the medium term, so buying on dips continues to be our preferred strategy. For the week, we expect Nifty to trade in the range of 15800-15300 with a positive bias. The weekly strength indicator RSI and momentum oscillator Stochastic have both turned positive and are above their respective reference lines indicating positive bias. In May series Nifty witnessed a rollover of 77.28% compared to 66.28%, adding 2.35Lac shares with price gains of 2.97% and started June series with OI of 104.73Lac shares compared to 102.38Lac shares in May expiry. Nifty futures on Friday closed at 15463.85 on a positive note with price gains of 0.50% (compared to previous day) and 5.33% increase in open interest adding 5.26Lac shares indicating Long Build Up. The sentiment indicator PC Ratio is currently trading at 1.32 although well above the median line but in a comfortable zone indicating a positive bias in the market. In Nifty the high OI on the CALL side in the weekly expiry scheduled 03rd June is at 15,500(27.03L), 15,600(23.29L) & 16,000(40.62L), with 15,500 & 15,600 acting as a resistance wherein there has been writing of 12.61Lac shares & 11.43 Lac

shares respectively. The high OI on the PUT side is at 15,300(25.64L) - 15,000(23.64L) & 14,700(23.73L) strike, with 15,400 acting as a strong pivotal level as there has been writing of 16.63Lac shares. So as per the options data the important range indicated is 15,400 to 15,600 and any sustained move above or below this range will indicate the direction of market trend. Bank Nifty started the week on a flat note and buying momentum for most part of the week led it to close on a positive note. Bank Nifty closed at 35141 with a gain of 535 points on a weekly basis. On the weekly chart the index has formed a small Bullish candle forming higher High-low compared to previous week and has closed above previous week's high indicating positive bias. The index is moving in a Higher Top and Higher Bottom formation on the daily chart indicating sustained up trend on long term charts. The chart pattern suggests that if Bank Nifty crosses and sustains above 35500 level it would witness buying which would lead the index towards 36500-36800 levels. However if index breaks below 34500 level it would witness selling which would take the index towards 34000-33000. Bank Nifty is trading above 20, 50 and 100 day SMA's which is important short term moving average, indicating positive bias in the short term. Bank Nifty continues to remain in an uptrend in the medium term, so buying on dips continues to be our preferred strategy. For the week, we expect Bank Nifty to trade in the range of 36800-34500 with a positive bias. The weekly strength indicator RSI and momentum oscillator Stochastic have both turned positive and are above their respective reference lines indicating positive bias. Bank Nifty witnessed a rollover of 80.76% compared to 64.60%, adding 3.74Lac shares with price gains of 4.09% and started June series with OI of 17.70Lac shares compared to 13.97Lac shares in May expiry. Bank Nifty futures on Friday closed at 35321.80 on a positive note with marginal price gains of 0.04% (compared to previous day) and 1.62% increase in open interest adding 0.28Lac shares indicating Long Build Up. In Bank Nifty the high OI on the CALL side in the weekly expiry scheduled 03rd June is at 35,500(9.37L), 36,000(9.11L) & 37,000(8.24L), with 36,000 acting as a strong resistance wherein there has been writing of 4.13Lac shares. The high OI on the PUT side is at 35, 000(8.92L), 34,500(7.52L) & 34,000(6.29L) strikes, with 35,000 & 34,500 acting as a strong support level as there has been writing of 4.13Lac & 2.74Lac shares respectively. The tentative range for the current week is likely to be between 34,000 to 36,000. India Vix is currently at 17.40 % and has been in downward trajectory after making a recent high of 21.32% suggesting confidence and stability in current market trend and further descend from these levels will further augment for more uptrend in market. We expect Banking, Financial, IT, Pharma, FMCG, Oil & Gas, and Consumer Durable sectors to do well in the near term. One can focus on stocks like State Bank of India (SBI), Punjab National Bank (PNB), Cipla, Reliance Industries Ltd (RIL), Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone, Just Dial, Wipro, Piramal Enterprises Ltd (PEL), Minda Industries, Colgate-Palmolive (India), REC Ltd, for the near-term bullish trend.

Sensex turns positive, Nifty nears 15,450; RIL, Bharti Airtel stocks jump over 1% each

Mumbai, May 31 : Share Market News Today | Sensex, Nifty, Share Prices LIVE: Domestic equity market benchmarks BSE Sensex and Nifty 50 fell in Monday's session, on the back of weak Asian cues. BSE Sensex was hovering around 51,450, while the Nifty 50 index was above 15,400. ITC, Asian Paints, Bharti Airtel, ICICI Bank, Dr Reddy's, RIL were among top Sensex gainers. Mahindra & Mahindra was the worst performer on Sensex, followed by Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC), Infosys, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra. The Nifty sectoral indices were mixed, with Nifty Auto index, down 1.4 per cent. While Nifty Pharma and Nifty Metal indices gained 0.7 per cent, each. The National Statistical Office (NSO) will release the GDP growth estimates for the January-March quarter of FY21, and the provisional annual estimates for the year 2020-21 on May 31, 2021. The May 20-27 poll conducted by news agency Reuters with 29 economists showed that the economic outlook was lowered to 21.6 per cent annually, and to 9.8 per cent on average for this fiscal year, down from 23 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively a month ago. The index has a minor resistance between 15450-15485. If we can cross this hurdle, the markets should be able to conquer 15600-15700. The support for the Nifty has been upgraded to 15300-15350 and as long as we are able to hold this level on a closing basis, we are in bullish territory and minor dips or mild corrections can be utilized to buy into this market. Manish Hathiramani, proprietary index trader and technical analyst, Deen Dayal Investments COMEX gold trades marginally higher by 0.35% near \$1912/oz after a 0.4% gain on Friday. Gold continues to

hold above \$1900/oz as Fed and other central banks emphasize on continuing with loose monetary policy. However, ETF outflows and weaker demand in India amid continuing virus related restrictions might cap the gains. Gold has continued to hold above \$1900/oz however any sustained rise may be challenged by pause in US dollar index fall. Ravindra Rao, CMT,

monetary policy committee (MPC) meeting scheduled for Friday, June 4 with expectations that RBI will maintain its accommodative stance considering the impact of the second covid wave on the economy. The continued trend of falling cases has raised investors' hopes of unlocking the economy sooner. On the other hand, any intervention by RBI shall cap sharp gains in the



EPAT, VP- Head Commodity Research at Kotak Securities The Indian economy's resilience will be tested by its ability to overcome a devastating outbreak of Covid-19, although no one's yet doubting its potential to pull off the world's fastest pace of growth among major economies this year. The economy is on track to grow 10% in the year that began April 1, according to the median of 12 estimates compiled by Bloomberg News. That's after several economists downgraded their forecasts in recent weeks to factor in local curbs on activity, including in India's political and commercial hubs. On the domestic front, all eyes move to GDP data for the March quarter, and infrastructure output slated to be out today. Also, the next focus remains on the RBI

rupee. Technically, the USDINR pair gains strong support near 72.30 levels. On the north side, it is facing strong resistance near 72.70 and 73.20 levels. Amit Pabari, managing director, CR Forex Advisors Mahindra & Mahindra was the worst performer on Sensex, followed by Housing Development Finance Corporation (HDFC), Infosys, IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra. Nifty resolved higher and surpassed the lifetime high of 15400. The weekly price action formed a significant bull candle carrying higher high-low, indicating acceleration of upward momentum. We expect, Nifty to resolve higher and head towards our revised target of 15700 in June, as it is 123.6% external retracement of February-April correction (15432-14151). The

index is moving in a Higher Top and Higher Bottom formation on the weekly chart indicating positive bias. The chart pattern suggests that if Nifty crosses and sustains above 15500 level it would witness buying which would lead the index towards 15650-15800 levels. However if the index breaks below 15300 level it would witness profit booking which would take the index towards 15200-15100. Commodity prices traded higher during the week passed by with Bullion prices extended weekly gains after witnessing a minor correction in mid-week. Base metals complex edged higher recovering from recent lows on higher demand optimism. Crude oil prices rallied by more than 4% following strong US economic data. BSE-listed companies such as Chemcon Speciality Chemicals, Aurobindo Pharma, Honeywell Automation India, Jamma Auto Industries, JBF Industries, Kolte-Patil Developers, Lloyds Steels Industries, Magma Fincorp, Man Industries, Marksans Pharma, Narayana Hrudayalaya, Prakash Industries, Rupa & Company, Shilpa Medicare, Uttam Galva Steels, Vascon Engineers, and Venus Remedies, among others will release their Jan-Mar quarter earnings on May 31. Foreign portfolio investors (FPI) turned out to be net sellers for second month in a row by taking out nearly Rs 1,730 crore from Indian markets in May as second wave of the coronavirus pandemic spooked investor sentiment. US stocks climbed on Friday as both the Dow and S&P 500 indexes clinched their first weekly gain in the past three weeks. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.19 per cent, the S&P 500 gained 0.08 per cent, and the Nasdaq Composite added 0.09 per cent.

New National Campaign Encourages People to Quit Tobacco Use on World No Tobacco Day and During the Pandemic

India, May 31: India is in the midst of a virulent second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent World Health Organization (WHO) and Government of India guidance states that tobacco use puts people with chronic conditions including lung disease, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cancer at a higher risk for developing severe illness or death when affected by COVID-19. Tobacco use is the leading preventable killer in the world, and in India it is responsible for around 1 million deaths annually. 5.3% of total public and private health expenditure is used for treating tobacco related diseases alone. During this critical moment in public health and to mark World No Tobacco Day (31 May 2021), global health organization Vital Strategies and the World Health Organization (WHO) today launched a national mass media campaign to encourage tobacco users to quit. The campaign, "When You Quit" explains how smoking cigarettes or bidi can cause heart attack and may also increase the risk of severe COVID-19. The public service announcement (PSA) also depicts the health benefits tobacco users experience when they quit. The PSA aligns with this year's World No Tobacco Day theme "Commit to Quit" and urges people to quit tobacco using the National Tobacco Quitline (1800-11-2356) for resources and help. WHO is supporting the "When You Quit" campaign developed in multiple Indian languages and to be aired across 15 states covering 169 districts with high burden of tobacco use through All India Radio, MY FM & Radio City. Additionally, Vital Strategies will augment the amplification of the message through major online streaming platforms - Facebook, Hotstar, Voot, Zee5, Sony Liv



and MX Player. Dr. Roderico H Ofri, WHO Representative to India said, "Given the correlation between the severity of COVID-19 and tobacco, the need to create awareness about ending tobacco use has never been more critical. World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is an opportunity to raise awareness on the harmful and deadly effects of tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure, and to discourage the use of tobacco in any form. This year's theme for WNTD "Commit to Quit" aims to support 100 million people worldwide in their attempts to give up tobacco through various initiatives. We all must help create healthier environments that are conducive to quitting tobacco use." Vaishakhi Mallik, Associate Director, Vital Strategies said, "We're proud to collaborate with the WHO in scaling up the

fight against the tobacco epidemic with the Government of India through the launch of this campaign. "When You Quit" comes at a pivotal moment of the pandemic in India as cases continue to surge across the country and people with underlying health conditions remain at an increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. Public education campaigns like "When You Quit" are a critical tactic to highlight the health harms of tobacco use, support cessation efforts and address the tobacco epidemic." "When You Quit" was developed and rigorously pretested by Vital Strategies. Respondents found the PSA easy to understand, reported that they were more likely to try to quit smoking after viewing it and more clearly understood how quitting smoking will gradually benefit their health.

S D Shibulal buys Infosys shares worth Rs 100 cr from wife Kumari Shibulal

London, May 31 : Post the transaction, S D Shibulal's stake in Infosys has gone up to 0.10 per cent, while Kumari Shibulal's stake stands at 0.16 per cent. Infosys co-founder S D Shibulal has bought shares worth Rs 100 crore of the IT major from wife Kumari Shibulal through an open market transaction. "... We are hereby informing you about the sale of 7,45,150 equity shares (representing 0.02 per cent) of Infosys to S D Shibulal by way of block sale on the platform of the stock exchange on May 24, 2021," Kumari Shibulal said in a regulatory filing. As per the filing, Shibulal bought over 7.45 lakh shares at an average price of Rs 1,342.05 per share, valuing the transaction at Rs 100 crore. Gold Rate Today, Gold Price Today in India. Gold price today, 25 May 2021: Yellow metal falls on weak global cues; if gold holds 49,000, it may hit 50,500. Petrol and Diesel Price in India, Petrol and Die-

sel Rate Today in India. Petrol and diesel price today 25 May 2021: Rates hiked 13th time this month; check price in Delhi, Mumbai here. Post the transaction, S D Shibulal's stake in Infosys has gone up to 0.10 per cent, while Kumari Shibulal's stake stands at 0.16 per cent. Prior to this, S D Shibulal had purchased the firm's scrips worth Rs 100 crore on



IIFL Finance launches "Gold Loan Refer & Win" scheme

Guwahati, May 31 : IIFL Finance, one of India's leading non-banking financial companies has launched 'Gold Loan Refer & Win' scheme. Existing customers of IIFL Finance across the country can benefit from the 'Refer & Win' scheme under which they can recommend friends, colleagues, and family members for IIFL Gold Loan and can win 10-gram 24 Karat gold coins, iPhone 11 and more than 6000 attractive gifts as lucky draw prizes. Mr. Saurabh Kumar, Business Head - Gold Loans, IIFL Finance said: "Three out of every four IIFL Gold Loan customers come back to us. They prefer us because we do Seedhi Baat. That is, we are



completely honest and transparent in our dealings, besides offering interest rate as low as 0.79% per month. The Refer & Win scheme is an opportunity for our customers to refer their friends and family members to IIFL and help them in realising their dreams by getting easy finance." IIFL Finance offers Gold Loan at attractive interest rates, with a commitment of quick processing of loan in

just 5 minutes, maximum loan value and easy digital payment options. Mr. Saurabh Kumar said, "During this lockdown, gold jewellery has proved to be a boon to the common man. We have businessmen, professionals, housewives and farmers availing gold loan and recommending it to others." Benefits of taking a gold loan go beyond just low interest rate and quick disbursement of funds.

With gold prices rising again, Gold Loan has now become one of the most favoured ways of raising funds and fulfilling dreams. IIFL Finance said that it has seen a considerable growth in gold loans. IIFL Finance, through its subsidiaries, offers a wide spectrum of products such as Home loan, Gold loan, Business loan, Microfinance, Capital Market finance and Developer & Construction finance to a vast base of about 30 lakh customers both retail and corporate clients. IIFL Finance has widened its pan India reach through an extensive network of 2,563 branches across 600+ locations and various digital channels.

Contd. From Page 1

Indian economy contracts 7.3%

contributed to the 0.4 percent growth in the third quarter of FY21. In 2020-21, the Indian economy contracted by 7.3 percent against a 4 percent expansion in 2019-20, showing the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The NSO had projected a GDP contraction of 7.7 percent in 2020-21 in its first advance estimates of national accounts released in January this year. The NSO, in its second revised estimates, had projected a contraction of 8 percent for 2020-21. China has recorded an 18.3 percent growth in January-March 2021.

Single COVID-19 vaccine dose

to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in this regard. "By giving single-dose to recovered people we can overcome vaccine shortage. We've also written a letter to PM in this regard," Chaubey said.

China lifts cap on births

-can-have-three-children policy," the official Xinhua news agency said in a report following a Politburo meeting chaired by President Xi Jinping. The policy change will come with "supportive measures, which will be conducive to improving our country's population structure, fulfilling the country's strategy of actively coping with an ageing population and maintaining the advantage, endowment of human resources", Xinhua said. It did not specify the support measures. "People are held back not by the two-children limit, but by the incredibly high costs of raising children in today's China. Housing, extracurricular activities, food, trips, and everything else add up quickly," Yifei Li, a sociologist at NYU Shanghai, told. "Raising the limit itself is unlikely to tilt anyone's calculus in a meaningful way, in my view," he said. In a poll on Xinhua's Weibo account asking #AreYouReady for the three-child policy, about 29,000 of 31,000 respondents said they would "never think of it" while the remainder chose among the options: "I'm ready and very eager to do so", "it's on my agenda", or "I'm hesitating and there's a lot to consider". The poll was later removed. "I am willing to have three children if you give me 5 million yuan (\$785,650)," one user posted. Shares in birth- and fertility-related companies surged. Early this month, China's once-in-a-decade census showed that the population grew at its slowest rate during the last decade since the 1950s, to 1.41 billion. Data also showed a fertility rate of just 1.3 children per woman for 2020 alone, on a par with ageing societies like Japan and Italy. China's politburo also said it would phase in delays in retirement ages, but did not provide any details. Fines of 130,000 yuan (\$20,440) were being imposed on people for having a third child as of late last year. "I'm super happy," said Su Meizhen, a human resources manager in Beijing, who is pregnant with her third child. "We won't have to pay the fine and we'll be able to get a hukou," she said, referring to the urban residence permit that enables families to receive benefits including sending their children to local public schools.

COVID-19 curfew to be relaxed

relaxed in Bijnor, Moradabad, Deoria, Baghpat, Prayagraj and Sonbhadra from today as the total #COVID19 cases were reported below 600 in these districts: CMO Uttar Pradesh The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with senior officials, he added. The 14 districts where there would be no relaxation are Meerut, Lucknow, Saharanpur, Varanasi, Ghaziabad, Gorakhpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bareilly, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahr, Jhansi, Lakhimpur-Khiri, Jaunpur and Ghazipur, the spokesperson said. In the remaining 61 districts, shops and markets outside the COVID-19 containment zones will be allowed to remain open from 7 am to 7 pm from Monday to Friday, he said. Eateries on highways and vendors will also be allowed to operate, according to a statement issued by the state government. The night curfew will remain in place from 7 pm to 7 am and weekend restrictions or the "corona curfew" will also be in place on Saturdays and Sundays. Instructions were issued that over the weekend, cleanliness, sanitisation and fogging campaigns will be carried out. Shopkeepers and their employees will have to wear masks, maintain a two-yard distance with each other and customers, and ensure the arrangement of a hand sanitiser. These rules will also be applicable to the customers. While there would be full attendance for the frontline workers, for the rest of the government employees, there would be 50 per cent attendance on rotation. A COVID help desk must also be established at all offices. The private sector has been asked to encourage the employees to work from home. According to the statement, industrial units will stay open while vegetable markets in the densely-populated areas will function in open places. At railway stations, airports and bus stands, all Covid protocols have to be followed. Screening of passengers and antigen tests have to be conducted. The roadways buses have been allowed to operate within the state. Schools, colleges and educational institutes will remain closed while teachers and other staff have been allowed to come to school for administrative work. Not more than five devotees will be allowed inside a religious place at a time. Coaching centres, cinema halls, gymnasiums, swimming pools, clubs and shopping malls will remain closed, the statement said. A maximum of 20 people will be allowed at a funeral procession, it added. The government has also decided to conduct a detailed study on coronavirus mutation. "It has been directed by the chief minister to do genome sequencing of the virus with the help of the Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI). In the future, it will help in dealing with the virus," the spokesperson said.

Delhi will receive first batch

reporters. It may be recalled that Russia's Sputnik V got approval from the Subject expert committee (SEC) for Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA), making it the third COVID-19 vaccine to get clearance in India. Sputnik V has been imported to India by Dr Reddy's Laboratories and will be manufactured locally by the pharmaceutical major in the coming months. The Delhi Government has been in talks with Dr Reddy's Laboratories for the supply of the 'Sputnik V' vaccine. According to sources, Chief Minister Kejriwal wrote to the pharmaceutical major on May 15 for the supply of the vaccine to Delhi. The vaccination drive in Delhi had started on a large scale on May 3, however, vaccination for the 18-44 age group has been halted in the national capital as it has run out of vaccines. Asked about the challenges faced by his government in the ongoing Covid vaccination drive, the chief minister apprised about certain problems in the online portal, which he said will be fixed soon. He said the government will also begin working on feedback provided by the public. Kejriwal also appealed to the Centre to work with states to unitedly fight against Covid-19. "This is not the time to fight with states. It is time to help them... It is time to fight COVID. I appeal to Centre to unite with states and fight COVID as team India," Kejriwal said. The Delhi Chief Minister earlier today inaugurated a free vaccination facility for journalists and their family members. "We have started this facility to vaccinate journalists and their family members for both above 45 years and 18-44 years age categories," Kejriwal said. Elaborating on the facility, Dr Tanisha Negi said, "This centre has been opened for media personnel and their families. We have two sites, one for the 18-44 years age bracket and the other for the above 45 years category. This way the entire family can be covered. The beneficiaries need to register with Aadhar cards and Press IDs." Negi also specified that Serum Institute's Covishield vaccine will be provided at the facility and a second dose will be given after three months. "We have all healthcare facility available here. There will be nurses and I will be present. We have one ambulance to take care of any emergency if arises," she added.

TMC rebel Dipendu Biswas writes

on Monday (May 31). Dipendu Biswas is a lawmaker from the North 24 Parganas Basirhat Dakshin constituency. At the beginning of March 2021, he moved to BJP as he was not given an electoral ticket by Mamata Banerjee. The elections are over and TMC has come in power once again and looking at this, Dipendu Biswas is looking forward to joining the party again. He has written a letter to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee saying that he took a wrong decision by jumping the party and wants to return to the party. Apparently, nearly a dozen of ex-TMC leaders have recently had a change of heart and has written letters to Chief Minister and top party officials in a bid to return.

North Korea condemns US

increased from the initial 180 kilometers to 300 kilometers and then 800 kilometers. According to an article by Kim Myong Chol in KCNA, the scrapping is "apparently deliberate and hostile act," the latest in a series of steps by the US to revise missile guidelines, following the removal of the warhead weight limit, which "clearly shows who is behind the escalation of tension" in the region. The move also sparked "a disturbing opinion" that South Korea can now develop any type of missiles, even a hypersonic one, in the shortest possible period, the article said, adding that it will accelerate the arms race on the Korean peninsula and in its surrounding areas, as well as hinder North Korea's development. "Lots of countries now view the U.S. key DPRK policy, namely 'pragmatic approach' and 'maximum flexibility' produced by the Biden administration with much effort as just trickery," Kim Myong Chol noted. The article went on to say that while the US was branding the measures Pyongyang claims to take for self-defense as a violation of UN resolutions, it granted its allies unlimited right to missile development -- "a stark reminder of the U.S. hostile policy toward the DPRK and its shameful double-dealing." "The target of the DPRK is not the ROK army but the US," Kim Myong Chol said, adding that Washington only uses Seoul to attain its hegemonic purpose. The article also called on the international community to take note of Washington's grave and provocative acts against the DPRK just under its nose, "not just the US allegations concerning Pyongyang's violation of the UN resolutions.

'Policy must change as per ground

added, "You must smell the coffee and see what is happening across the country. You must know the ground situation and change the policy accordingly. If we had to do it, we would have done it 15-20 days back." Mehta replied that registration is mandatory as a person needs to be traced for a second dose and as far as rural areas are concerned, there are community centres where a person can get registered to get a shot. The bench then questioned Mehta whether the government thinks that this process is viable and asked him to place the policy document on record. The top court was hearing a suo motu case on management of Covid-19 situation in the country. The court was told that the government expects to vaccinate all of India by end-2021, to which it highlighted roadblocks, including discrepancy in vaccine supply for different age groups. "For the entire population above 45, the Centre is procuring (vaccines) but for 18-44 there is bifurcation of procurement - 50 per cent available to states by manufacturers and price is fixed by the Centre, and rest to be given to private hospitals. What is the (actual) basis for this?" the court had asked. It also asked the Centre about the vaccine procurement policy by referring to the fact that states like Punjab and Delhi are in the process of issuing global tenders to procure foreign vaccines. The bench said that even Municipal Corporations like Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation have received bids. "Is this the policy of the Central government that the state or municipal corporation can procure the vaccine or the Union Government is going to procure for them like a nodal agency? We want clarity on this and rationale behind this policy," the bench said. The court also asked why states had to pay more for the vaccines than the Centre. The Centre has been given two weeks to respond to these issues and concerns.

WHO honours Dr Harsh Vardhan

led the pledge by everyone present to abstain from tobacco. He expressed his satisfaction that with the persistent efforts of the Centre and State governments, the prevalence of tobacco use has decreased by six percentage points from 34.6 per cent in 2009-10 to 28.6 per cent in 2016-17. The 2021 theme and campaign of World No Tobacco Day is -- "Commit to Quit". Moreover, the WHO also honoured Tobacco Control Research Group, the University of Bath from the UK for its efforts in the area of tobacco control. "We are incredibly honoured to receive a special recognition award from the @WHO Director-General for the World No Tobacco Day 2021 awards. A huge thanks to WHO, to @PartnershipFree for nominating us and all who support our work," the group had said in a tweet last week after the award was announced.

Minister Suklabaidya urges plantation workers to adhere to COVID protocols to keep virus at bay

Guwahati, May 31: Minister for Environment and Forest, Fisheries and Excise, Parimal Suklabaidya urged the tea garden workers to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols to keep coronavirus away. Suklabaidya said this while visiting Derby tea garden in Cachar district to take stock of the COVID-19 preparedness for the tea garden workers on Sunday. The Minister said that the government is working day in and day out to inoculate the tea garden workers, setting up vaccination centres and COVID Care Centres within the garden premises. He urged the plantation workers to wear mask, maintain social distance and to wash hands with soap and water frequently to keep the virus at bay. Citing researchers, Suklabaidya advised the tea garden workers to take steam inhalation over 50° centigrade at least two-three times a day to minimise the risk of infection. He called upon the tea garden management to step up COVID awareness programme. Suklabaidya, who is in charge of COVID-19 management for Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of South Assam's Barak Valley, called upon everyone to rise in unison to make the state and the country COVID free. The Minister also gave away fogging machines, hand sanitisers and masks to the management committee of Derby tea estate for distribution among the plantation workers. President, BJP Borjalenga Mondal, Sushil Ranjan Dhar, Manager, Derby tea estate, S. Singh, Member, Zilla Parishad, L. Bani Yadav, GP President, Pradip Kanu, among others. Meanwhile, the Assam Government on Saturday decided to facilitate COVID-19 vaccination in tea garden areas through onsite registration following spike in COVID positive cases among the plantation workers. Assam has 803 large estates and more than 1.5 lakh small tea gardens with a strong workforce of 10 lakh people.

Elected Panchayat Officials from Congress Join the AGP

Golaghat, May 31: Several Panchayat officials and members who got elected representing the Congress party today formally joined Asom Gana Parishad. A ceremony was held today at the Asom Gana Parishad office in Golaghat where Padumoni Anchalik Panchayat President from Congress Anamika Bora Bailing, Athgaon Gaoon Panchayat President and Administrative Secretary of Padumoni Block Congress Pranob Gogoi along with several other Panchayat officials and ward members joined the AGP. Total forty five elected Panchayat officials and members joined Asom Gana Parishad. Asom Gana Parishad Golaghat District Unit Secretary Asikur Rahman conducted the joining ceremony where Central Committee Vice President Dr Nripen Baruah, President of Golaghat Bidhan Parishad Arun Mahanta, secretary Dilip Gogoi, Dilip Das, Uddipta Protim Dutta and Pranob Bora were present.

Drunken Man Created Panic : Hits Bus Carrying CISF Personnel

Golaghat, May 31: An alleged sand Mafia named Rohini Gogoi from Golaghat yesterday created a panic situation at Jamuguri area in Golaghat. According to the report Rohini Gogoi in a drunken state was recklessly driving his Mahindra THAR Jeep bearing registration number AS 05 J 5391 . On his way he hit a bus in which several CISF personnel were traveling near Oating area . Also drunken Rohini Gogoi with his THAR jeep hit cattle and a divider near Railway Crossing at Jamuguri. Later the CISF personnel along with local people informed the matter to the police and a police team reached the spot and nabbed the alleged sand Mafia. The police also seized a point two two pistol from his possession.

Social worker's death mourned

North Lakhimpur, May 31: Various persons and organisations have condoled the demise of eminent social worker of North Lakhimpur Asfiya Hussain (51) who passed away at Assam Medical College and Hospital (AMCH), Dibrugarh due to Covid-19 on May 28. Koch-Rajbonshi Sangram Sommittee (KRSS), Lakhimpur District Minority Development Committee spokesperson Sazad Hazarika, Lakhimpur District Jamiyat Ulama-E-Hind President Mufti Abdul Hasib, Lakhimpur Horijon Majdoor Union President Nandalal Basfor, North Lakhimpur Town Kendriya Idgah Committee General Secretary Akhtar Bin Siraj Ahmed, Officials and members of Lakhimpur Nagar Mahila Unnayan Sommittee and Ashroy Mahila Samaj have condoled her untimely death and have prayed for eternal peace of her departed soul. In a condolence message, KRSS Central Committee Vice-president Rupiyoti Dutta, All Lakhimpur District KRSS President (I/C) Bikash Dutta, Vice-president Hemanta Koch and Mintu Borah, General Secretary Nitul Saikia and Publicity Secretary Bhabananda Rajkhowa said the death of Asfiya Hussain, who was a well-wisher of KRSS, is an irreparable loss to the society. Late Asfiya Hussain leaves behind her husband, the former Lakhimpur District Judge Murtaz Ahmed Choudhury and a daughter. Both her mother and mother-in-law have died in Covid-19 a few days back.

A Covid positive mother gives birth at Biswanath

Biswanath Chariali, May 31: Amila Khatu (25), a Covid-19 positive patient and a resident of Japoriguri here gave birth to a baby girl at 11.37 am at Biswanath Civil Hospital. The weight of the baby at the time of birth was 2.8 kg. According to doctors, both the mother and baby are fine. Biswanath Deputy Commissioner, Pranab Kumar Sarmah, visited Civil hospital and enquired about the health of both mother and the baby. Congratulating the medical team on this success, he said, 'this is indeed an achievement of the medical team. In this hour of gloom due to Covid pandemic, such news brings positivity in the air and reaffirms that Covid is not invincible. Dedication of our medical staff will surely help us successfully come out of this trying time'.

Various Programmes Undertaken in Golaghat by the BJP

Golaghat, May 31: To mark the occasion of completion of second year of second tenure of Narendra Modi led BJP Government in the centre several programmes were undertaken by the BJP leaders and activists in Golaghat. Under the direction of the Finance Minister of Assam and Golaghat MLA Ajanta Neog BJP workers took various programs in 204 places of Golaghat assembly constituency. These included cleaning campaigns, mask distribution, awareness campaigns and other programs. Today Sarupathar BJP Mandal Yuva Morcha activists led by BJP MLA from Sarupathar Biswajit Phukan a Cleanliness drive was carried out in various places including banks, ATMs, Railway Station, Market Area. BJP's Gomari Mandal and under the leadership of former District president Debojit Bora awareness campaign was carried out at many places in the Nalini Pathar of Merapani. Also masks and Dettol soaps were distributed. Under the leadership of BJP's youth leader Akash Phukan of Bokakhat, grocery items were provided to people affected by Corona & presently residing in Home isolation in Dukhutimukh village. On the other hand under the leadership of Golaghat district BJP President Debo Pradeep Bora grocery items were provided to people in the home quarantine.

Awareness drive at Behali

Biswanath Chariali, May 31: The Green Ashiyana Welfare Society, a known social welfare society of the greater Biswanath area had carried out awareness drives in various tea gardens of Behali on Sunday. Kishor Hazarika, director of Green Ashiyana Welfare Society along with members of Behali ATSTA unit met tea labourers and discussed about Covid infection. The welfare society distributed face masks and sanitizers to the tea pluckers.

6 labourers from Assam suspected to be trapped in EJH mine

GUWAHATI, May 31: At least labourers from Assam were suspected to be trapped in a rat-hole coal mine in East Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya bordering South Assam. The Superintendent of Police of Cachar district in South Assam Vaibhab Nimbolkar Chandrakant informed they were awaiting confirmation about the suspected mine tragedy from Superintendent of Police, East Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya. Meanwhile, Meghalaya Police have tweeted, "Information has emanated from SP Silchar that 6 persons from Assam are trapped in a coal mine in EJ Hills." The mine has been identified at Sutunga interior, under umplemg AD camp and search operations are on. SP @ejhpolice and IG (L&O) are at the suspected PO."

3.1 Kilogram Cannabis (Ganja) seized

Hojai, May 31: Based on an secret input, Hojai Police successfully seized 3.1 Kg Cannabis (ganja) on Monday. As per information, Police team led by OC Gautam Kumar raided at two different locations in Hojai. At first, Police raided at a Vegetable shop at Barphukuri area, where they seized 2.6 Kg Cannabis and arrested duo father-son namely Mithun-Gopal Debnath. Then, the team launched the operation at Vidyanagar area and seized 500 gram Cannabis. Further investigation is going on.

World No Tobacco Day Observed

Golaghat, May 31: Today Golaghat District Health Society Tobacco Control Cell organised World No Tobacco Day amidst Corona pandemic. As such following all necessary Covid protocols awareness pamphlets distribution and oath taking ceremony was held at GDSA Sports complex among the local people who came to take Covid 19 Vaccine. The Incharge Officer Dr Sunita Ekka told that this year's theme is Commit to Quit.

Borpam VDP distributess alms

Biswanath chariali, May 31: As part of the fight against the Covid pandemic, the Village Defence Party (VDP), Borpam to the north of Sootea had distributed packets of necessary commodities to those families of Sapekhati, who are living in home isolation on Sunday. A team of Borpam VPD under guidance of Arun Bordoloi, secretary of Borpam VDP had also carried out a sanitization drive in various public places of Borpam including SBI service point, post office, sub-center and other business establishments and distributed face masks to the poor and needy families. It is to be noted here that Borpam VDP has played a distinguished role for strict implementation of SOP's issued by the state government in this area. Raju Kurmi, Dhruvajyoti Bodo, Manshunder Mahanta, pabitra Morom bora, Joon Tanti along with other youths had extended helpful hand in the programme.

3 succumb to virus in Lakhimpur district

North Lakhimpur, May 30: Three persons died of Covid-19 in Lakhimpur district today, while 40 fresh Covid positive cases were recorded, taking the total cumulative active Covid cases in the district to 3,290, out of which 1310 persons are undergoing treatment. After counting these three fatalities, a total of 44 people have so far died of Covid-19 in the district during the second wave till the time of filling this report. According to informed sources, a total of 60 people have been cured during the last 24 hours while the total number of persons recovered from the virus is 1936 till now.

Slade and Vermeulen lead Exeter to 74-3 demolition of hapless Newcastle



London, May 31 : One or two other sides are finishing the regular season strongly but they still have to loosen the iron grip of last season's champions Exeter. Roared on by the first home fans to populate Sandy Park for five months the rampant Chiefs proved far too much for their under-strength visitors and are now just three points behind leaders Bristol with two rounds to play. The Chiefs also equalled their record tally for a Premiership match, matching the 74 points rattled up against London Welsh six years ago, with man-of-the-match Henry Slade and Jacques Vermeulen collecting two tries apiece. It has not been the greatest of months for Slade, unluckily omitted from the British & Irish Lions squad to tour South Africa, but the gifted centre enjoyed himself here in front of the watching England coach, Eddie Jones. With another pair of Lions, Jonny Hill and Stuart Hogg, given mere cameo roles off the bench and Jonny Gray not involved at all, the ominous message for their future opponents is that Exeter still have plenty left ahead of this season's lengthy run-in. They finished with 12 tries in total and Dean Richards, the Falcons' director of rugby, believes they will take some stopping in June. "I said before the game they're my tip to win the Premiership title and I still stand by that," said Richards, still hopeful his team can finish as high as eighth. "They're a top team." Along with many thousands of other Bank Holiday travellers Newcastle always knew this might not be the simplest weekend to visit Devon. If the traffic jams on the neighbouring M5 on Saturday were nightmarish they remain a relative joy compared to attempting to stop the power-stacked Chiefs' forward juggernaut from five metres out. If any club has been missing their vocal congregation, furthermore, it has been the Chiefs who had to celebrate both their successes last season behind closed doors. In that context the presence of 3,300 supporters on a gorgeous sunny day was as close to perfection for the locals as the ongoing Covid restrictions allow. From the moment Sam Skinner crashed over from close range in the third minute there was barely any respite for a Falcons side who blooded four Premiership debutants and left with just a solitary Toby Flood penalty to show for their 740-mile round trip. The pick of the Chiefs' dozen tries was the last, a beautiful flick from Slade sending the speedy Tom O'Flaherty diving into the left corner and prompting high praise for the former from his head coach, Ali Hephher. "Even when the pressure is on he's got one of the highest skillsets in world rugby," said Hephher. "His ability to play the ball, the space and what's in front of him is almost second to none and he defends exceptionally well on top of that. We're chuffed to have him and he performed fantastically well today." With the grounds increasingly firm and fast, Slade's ability to make others look good around him also dovetails perfectly with Exeter's forward grunt. The Chiefs had five tries in the bank before half-time and topped 70 points despite disallowed tries for the relentless Sam Simmonds and the under-rated Jack Maunder and Joe Simmonds missing five conversions. While the latest injury absence of Jack Nowell is also less than ideal - the management say he is "pushing hard" to be back for the play-offs - Exeter can still conjure up plenty of firepower out wide in Alex Cuthbert and the impressively consistent O'Flaherty. The latter is proving an increasingly valuable all-rounder, knocking Alex Tait back in the tackle before poaching a turnover seconds later as well as regularly leading the Chiefs' kick chase. With the newly bleach-blond Hogg also in effervescent mood after replacing Cuthbert, the only faint clouds on the Chiefs horizon were the premature departures of Luke Cowan-Dickie, Tomas Francis and Vermeulen. Cowan-Dickie was withdrawn at half-time with a sore back - Hephher suggested it was merely a precaution - while his fellow forwards needed treatment for hip and upper leg knocks respectively. Exeter may yet have to win their final two regular season games against Northampton and Sale to cement a home semi-final draw but, regardless of who they play, the force is currently with them.

Chelsea eye Romelu Lukaku as Tuchel targets Premier League title challenge

London, May 31 : Thomas Tuchel is planning a move for Romelu Lukaku as he considers how to build a dynasty at Chelsea and mould a side capable of challenging for the Premier League title next season after winning the Champions League on Saturday night. Chelsea became European champions for the second time after their 1-0 victory over Manchester City at the Estadio do Dragão and Tuchel, who is close to signing a new two-year deal, is already hungry for more success. The manager, who met the club's owner, Roman Abramovich, in person for the first time on Saturday, is targeting a maximum of three signings this summer and is keen to increase his options in attack, with Internazionale's Lukaku prominent in his thoughts. Inter will do all they can to keep Lukaku after signing him for £74m from Manchester United two years ago. The Italians will not want to make a loss on him and will first look to raise funds by selling the right-back Achraf Hakimi and the Argentina forward Lautaro Martínez. However, Chelsea have the financial means to test Inter's resolve and Tuchel, who had further talks with Abramovich on Sunday, is determined to fashion an all-conquering side. "We have to check with the owner if this is his plan," Tuchel said. "It's always possible. The belief is very strong. We have a group with a very strong bond. It's still a young squad. It's the challenge now to make this not too heavy for us, this huge success." It's like a

similar deal with Tom Brady when they ask him what is his favourite win and he says, 'the next one'. We have a Premier League to play from day one. We will be seen a bit differently as Champions League winners and this is where we have to step up. If we really want to build something, I'm all in. I'm happy to discuss it. If our beliefs match, we go from there." A new striker is a priority for Tuchel,

interested in Harry Kane, who wants to leave Tottenham. However, Spurs are unlikely to do business with them and it is also understood that Borussia Dortmund are determined not to lose Erling Haaland this summer. Dortmund would prefer to sell the England winger Jadon Sancho. Chelsea are keen to move for Declan Rice, who has become a key figure in midfield

the Serie A champions by mutual consent last week. Lukaku scored 24 goals in 36 appearances as Inter won the title for the first time since 2010. The 28-year-old's goalscoring pedigree is not in doubt and Conte was close to bringing him back to Chelsea four years ago, only for United to sign the forward for £75m from Everton. Tuchel has often played

also include Ross Barkley, Emerson Palmieri, Ruben Loftus-Cheek and Fikayo Tomori. Milan are expected to make Tomori's loan move permanent by signing the defender for £25m. Chelsea are expected to open talks with Antonio Rüdiger and Andreas Christensen before both defenders run out of contract next summer. Yet they could need a new centre-back if Kurt Zouma leaves. They have looked at Bayern Munich's Niklas Süle and Jérôme Boateng. Another midfielder is also a possibility. Tuchel has revived Chelsea's interest in Declan Rice, though there is no indication that West Ham are prepared to sell him. Other options include Benfica's Julian Weigl, Rennes' Eduardo Camavinga and Monaco's Aurélien Tchouaméni. Yet Tuchel, who is set to receive an increase on his £7m a year salary, does not believe that Chelsea need many signings after spending £220m on seven players last summer. "Two or three could be very, very good," he said. "We don't need another seven. But we have some ideas to make the group stronger." Tuchel, who has been living in a hotel since arriving at Chelsea, will be joined by his family in London this summer. "We will get a house in the middle of July," he said. "My family will come over in August. It felt like sacrifice. It was in some ways good to have the full concentration during this crazy time with corona and Brexit, and kids in school - that we don't have to balance everything. But it was a lot for them."



who is set to be handed a contract extension until 2023 with the option of a further year. Chelsea have lacked ruthlessness this season, with Timo Werner enduring a trying campaign, and will need a better cutting edge if they are to end City's domestic supremacy after finishing fourth this season. Chelsea, who could also strengthen in defence and midfield, are one of the clubs

for West Ham and England. That has left Chelsea considering a reunion with Lukaku. A move for the Belgium striker, who had a brief spell in west London before joining Everton in 2013, could be feasible because of Inter's financial difficulties. Inter need to sell players this summer and Lukaku is considering his future after seeing the former Chelsea manager Antonio Conte leave

without a traditional No 9 since replacing Frank Lampard on an initial 18-month deal in January. Olivier Giroud could leave on a free transfer and Chelsea, who are due to hand Thiago Silva a new one-year deal, could raise funds by selling Tammy Abraham, who was not on the bench against City. West Ham and Leicester are interested in Abraham. Other departures could

Robson-Kanu left out of Wales squad for Euro 2020 but Colwill called up

London, May 31 : Hal Robson-Kanu will not repeat his heroics at the European Championship this summer after being left out of the 26-man Wales squad for this summer's tournament, with Cardiff City's teenage midfielder Rubin Colwill a wildcard inclusion, alongside the captain Gareth Bale, Aaron Ramsey, and Joe Allen. Wales ramp up their preparations with a friendly against world champions France in Nice on Wednesday before hosting Albania in Cardiff on Saturday. Robson-Kanu scored a sensational goal to help Wales beat Belgium and reach the semi-finals at Euro 2016 but his international career appears to be over after he was omitted by interim manager Robert Page, who will lead the team in the continued absence of Ryan Giggs. Robson-Kanu, who received his last call-up against Mexico in March, was sent home from the last international camp after breaching a curfew at the team hotel and was not part of the Wales training camp in Portugal last week, for which Page named a 28-man squad. Tom Lawrence of Derby County and Rabbi Matondo of Schalke, who was also sent home in March, are among those included in the recent training camp but not retained for the delayed Euro 2020 campaign. Allen, who sustained calf and hamstring injuries on international duty in March, is one of eight survivors from Chris Coleman's squad that exceeded all expectations in France five years ago, alongside Bale, Ramsey, Ben Davies, Chris Gunter, Jonny Williams, Wayne Hennessey and Danny Ward. A calf injury has troubled the Tottenham

defender Davies since March but Page is optimistic both he and Allen will be fit for their Group A opener against Switzerland on 12 June. They then face Turkey on 16 June, also in Baku, before travelling to Rome to take on Italy at Stadio Olimpico four days later. Bale will captain Wales, while Aaron Ramsey's inclusion is a major boost given the Juventus midfielder has started just two of the country's past 21 matches. The Cardiff striker Kieffer Moore is the only bona fide No 9 in the squad, although Tyler Roberts and Harry Wilson can both play as forwards, with the latter operating as a false nine against Belgium in March. Colwill, who turned 19 and made his first Cardiff start in April, is a surprise inclusion. The youngsters Dylan Levitt, 20, and Matthew Smith, 21, of Manchester United and City respectively, have also been included, despite the former struggling for game time on loan at the Croatian side Istra 1961. There was no place for Brennan Johnson of Nottingham Forest, who has excelled on loan at Lincoln this season, or the Cardiff midfielder Will Vaulks. Colwill's call-up tops off a whirlwind few weeks for the player. He found out he was going to be included on Wales' training camp only a couple of days before they left Cardiff for the



Algarve last week. "I am pinching myself," Colwill said at a press conference on Wednesday. "I remember the last Euros, watching at home with my family when I was 14. It is the pinnacle of a player's career, the international game. It is what you dream of doing as a kid. To do it [be called up] for your country in such an unexpected way would be unbelievable." Colwill was born in Neath, near Swansea, and attended Ysgol Gyfun Ystalyfera, the same secondary school as Ben Davies. "All the way through school it was: 'Ben Davies is this and Ben Davies is that,'" Colwill said. "He is definitely a role model, to have played at the high level he has from school. I used to get 'Ben Davies was better at school than you' from all the teachers. I don't think I was quite as good as him at school."

Lancashire beat Yorkshire, Warks sink Notts: county cricket day four - as it happened

Lancashire, May 31 : With the final hour tapped on the umpire's watch, three games were still in the air: the Roses match, the Midlands derby and Leicestershire's quest for their first win of the season. A fortified display of Yorkshire stonewalling fell just short of denying Lancashire their first Roses win at Old Trafford for 21 years, in a slow-burner that built up to an electrifying final hour. Saqib Mahmood snaffled his first first-class five-fer, bowling with pace and verve, laying out the stumps of Will Fraine and Steven Patterson in the morning, with inswinger, then away-swing, before coming back at the last to take two more. There was fifty from Harry Brook and imaginative stoicism by 19-year-old Harry Duke, but Dom Bess was the linchpin, batting for over three-and-a-half hours for his 46 until, with just 40 balls left, he parried Matt Parkinson to slip. Lancashire are now the only unbeaten county in the Championship. Warwickshire threw a grenade into Group One by not only denying Nottinghamshire their run chase but bowling them out. Set 309 in 74 overs, Notts set off at a canter but slipped to 89 for five when Steven Mullaney was caught at deep square leg. Warwickshire needed to worm out the rest, which they did with eight overs to spare. Danny Briggs finished with four for 36. The Australian Marcus Harris inspired Leicestershire with a magnificent 185 that overwhelmed Middlesex. Harris and Colin Ackermann, who dabbled his first century for three years, put on 243 for the third wicket and the die was cast. Worcestershire's first victory of the season came with a gallop after they thrashed Derbyshire by an innings and 23 runs. Dillon Pennington pocketed five for 32. Amar Virdi took four wickets as Surrey zippered through the remainder of Gloucestershire's batting at the Oval to win by an innings.



Francesco Acerbi: the 'lion' who beat cancer to be a pillar in Italy's defence

London, May 31 : This article is part of the Guardian's Euro 2020 Experts' Network, a cooperation between some of the best media organisations from the 24 countries who qualified. theguardian.com is running previews from two countries each day in the run-up to the tournament kicking off on 11 June. Francesco Acerbi had to quit playing for Sassuolo and started chemo to fight testicular cancer in early 2014. He had a strange routine. Chemo in the morning while watching TV (his favourite program being House, the series with Hugh Laurie), some rest in the afternoon, clubbing at night, sometimes till 7 am. Definitely not a Cristiano Ronaldo-style approach to life. The pizza with tuna and onions was part of the routine, because chemo left Acerbi with no appetite for delicate flavours. "Sometimes I did not eat at all, nor did I sleep," he said. One day, a

year after the cancer diagnosis, Francesco woke up seized by terror. "All of a sudden, I started thinking about all the concerns I gave my parents, all the wasted opportunities and nights spent clubbing. That

morning I was afraid of my own shadow. I started seeing a therapist, who helped me a lot." Seven years later Acerbi is ready to play in his first European Championship. Now 33, he is one of the best central defenders in



Serie A and Italy's coach, Roberto Mancini, considers him a pillar of his defensive line. Left-footed and technically gifted, Acerbi is able to pair with Leonardo Bonucci, Giorgio Chiellini and Alessandro Bastoni to protect Italy's keeper Gianluigi Donnarumma. He is living the life he imagined but his journey has been a rollercoaster ride. Acerbi grew up near Milan loving football. "I was part of the Fossa dei Leoni, the Milan ultras group," he once said. At 14 he left Atletico Civesio, a small team, to play amateur football with his friends. But somehow he bounced back. At 20, he found a contract in Italy's fourth tier. At 22, he was in Serie B. At 23, he played his first Serie A game for Chievo. "I did it for my father, not for me," he recalled in 2016. "We had a love and hate relationship. He constantly challenged me. In 2011,

after signing for Genoa, I waved the signed contract in front of his face." Francesco's father, Roberto, had a weak heart. He survived seven strokes but died in 2012, four months before his son signed for Milan. "I missed his challenges," Acerbi said years later. "I was wearing Alessandro Nesta's No 13 but I was partying rather than training. I used to drink anything and I seriously considered quitting football. Cancer saved my life. I thank God for this." In July 2013, during a pre-season medical with Sassuolo, Acerbi was diagnosed with testicular cancer. The tumour was removed but soon afterwards showed up again, forcing Acerbi to undergo chemotherapy for three months. "Back then I had no fear. I just wondered why the cancer did not change me. Then, during a Sunday afternoon nap, I had a strange dream. It was like my father and God were the

same person, pushing me to improve. I cried and realised that cancer was an opportunity. I had something to fight against again." A new life began. All those nights out gave way to a regular lifestyle, training and calm evenings at home. No alcohol, only water, vegetables, fruit, rice and bresaola. Improvements followed. Acerbi, from October 2015 to January 2019, played 149 consecutive games, close to Javier Zanetti's record streak of 162. No rest, no suspension, not a single injury for more than three years. Leicester called but "Ace" said no. There was no hurry to leave Sassuolo, a family club that always stood by him. Acerbi started spending hours with disabled people and children with cancer. Almost every Thursday morning, you could find him in a work smock, assembling fishing floats and modelling clay with disabled workers.

There's magic in the fingers of spin wizards **Moeen**, Leach and Bess

London, May 31 : Jack Leach (left) and Dom Bess (right) impressed in Sri Lanka in January, despite lacking match practice, while Moeen Ali (centre) has more Test wickets than all but three English spinners. In this extract from his new book, our former cricket correspondent argues the trio are the best England have to offer in Test cricket on turning pitches. Moeen Ali had never been Worcestershire's primary spinner when he was plucked out by England, although he had established himself as one of their best batsmen when he made his Test debut against Sri Lanka at Lord's in 2014. No wonder he would suffer from a few identity issues as a Test player. He is one of my favourite cricketers. Off the field Moeen has been one of England's most reliable men. They all say he is a rock-solid character, forever giving to the team, selfless, cheerful and mischievous, a constant benign influence in the dressing room. Out in the middle, reliability has seldom been the first word that springs to mind when he is at the centre of the action. He can bat beautifully, timing a cover drive like David Gower in his pomp, and in a perfect world he would have ended up batting somewhere in the top six for England and bowling when the occasion demanded. Yet that never happened. He was in the Test team - to his mild surprise - primarily for his bowling despite such limited experience, although there was obvious potential for Moeen the off-spinner. His stock delivery has all the

turned if Duncan Fletcher had stayed on longer), Moeen had to learn how to be a Test bowler on the job. Nor does he hint at any guile. The simple fact is that most spinners suggest a lot more guile than they actually possess. A smile, an exasperated glance or a knowing look might give the impression that the last boundary conceded was in fact all part of an elaborate, cunning plan. Such bluffing is an important element in the spinner's armoury. Given that he can't propel bouncers - although Phil Edmonds managed to deliver a few in his time - these mind games represent much-needed ammunition for the slow bowler. But Moeen does not indulge in such fancies because he never nurtured them in the anonymous nursery of county cricket. It looks as if he meanders up to the crease, gives it a rip and hopes for the best. And still, despite all that, only three English spinners have taken more than Moeen's 189 Test wickets: Derek Underwood, Swann and Jim Laker. Among those spinners who have taken 100 wickets for England only Swann can match Moeen's strike rate. Admittedly, Moeen concedes runs more quickly than all of them. Adil Rashid has been England's best wrist-spinner for more than half a century and yet his Test record is modest: 60 wickets at an average of just under 40. This is partly due to batsmen having changed their approach against spin, which results in runs and wickets coming more quickly, and partly because prolonged accuracy has never been one

of his obvious virtues. But look at the names of the spin bowlers behind him on the list: in descending order of wickets taken, they are Lock, Panesar, Titmus, Emburey, Verity, Giles, Rhodes, Edmonds, Allen, Illingworth, Tufnell, Wright, Wardle and Blythe. In that context, how is it that we quibble with Moeen so readily? I suppose it's because we never quite know what's coming. What is certain is that his spinning colleagues appreciate him hugely. Jack Leach and Dom Bess both speak of his generosity as a senior colleague, even though they are also

his rivals. They pool knowledge about bowling at international level and it is Moeen who has the most experience. Actually I'm a fan of all three. Leach has had to overcome so many hurdles in his career; they just keep coming, whether they relate to his health/fitness or his action, and still he perseveres. Nor has Bess's career been straightforward, even though he reached the pinnacle that is international cricket with amazing speed. I have a few similarities with Bess. We both bowled off-breaks that were not reckoned to be international class at Blundell's school in Tiverton, albeit over four decades apart. We both do as we're told when Mrs Amy Candler speaks - she was one of Dom's teachers and she is my daughter. And I guess we're both pragmatic rather than beautiful batsmen, who should probably score/have scored more runs. Yet there are considerable contrasts as well. Bess is infinitely the better fielder; he takes brilliant catches and conjures run-outs from direct hits, events that decorated my career with the frequency of an appearance by Halley's Comet. He also exhibits much greater confidence in his ability than I managed. He is manifestly up for any challenge. He first impressed the England set-up more with his energy and enthusiasm when participating in the early-morning football and subsequent fielding practice than with the outstanding quality of his off-breaks. They immediately liked his can-do attitude and his eagerness to learn and progress. He has already advanced as a bowler; he now propels the ball with more spin and speed and his accuracy is improving. I was thrilled to give him his first Test cap at Lord's when England were playing Pakistan in May 2018. It is a daunting occasion for the player - and for the person handing over the cap. I got the impression that I might have been more nervous than him. This was the third time I have had the privilege of handing over a cap to a debutant. The first was in Mumbai on 22 December 2012, right at the end of a tour to India. Joe Root was making his T20 debut and everyone else of importance had gone home to prepare for Christmas. So, by process of elimination, I was summoned by the England management to hand over his cap. After my encouragement, I note that England won and Root played a flawless game: he didn't actually have to bat or bowl but did take a catch in the second over. To hand over that first cap is quite a taxing undertaking but a welcome one for an old player. Obviously it is a great moment for the recipient and it is therefore important not to spoil it. You have a minute or so to balance congratulations with encouragement without being too pompous or out of touch. Probably best not to open up with the observation that quality finger-spinners were "10 a penny in my day". Besides, the role of the finger-spinner has changed a lot since then. I was most successful in one-day cricket at international level. I was accurate rather than penetrative, but batsmen might succumb as they tried to accelerate. Wrist-spinners were

deemed a luxury in the short form of the game; unless they were extraordinarily good like Shane Warne, Anil Kumble or Mushtaq Ahmed, they were thought too wayward and not worth the risk. In the 21st century the opposite is true: finger-spinners are now often reckoned to be too predictable with a white ball, especially in T20 cricket. The good-length delivery has lost its potency as batsmen - just about any batsman - are confident they can clear the boundary if the ball is "in the slot". In the 20th century, boundary fielders were reliable deterrents to the majority of players. Not any more. So wrist-spinners are deemed essential now; they can create uncertainty since the batsman cannot set himself so early if he does not know which way the ball is going to spin. Moreover, a lack of predictability in line and length can now be regarded as an asset rather than a flaw. Adil Rashid provides a good example of this trend. He has become one of the best slow bowlers in the world in white-ball cricket. He exudes confidence in these formats now; he remains unperturbed when one of his opponents has cleared the boundary; his googly can befuddle the best and he is not afraid to use it frequently. In Test cricket, he has been England's best wrist-spinner for more than half a century by a huge margin and yet, for all that, his record is modest (he has 60 Test wickets at an average of just under 40). Now it is the finger-spinner, bolstered by all those DRS lbws, who holds sway in the longest format. All this demonstrates a fascinating evolution of the game. The expectation was that, as games became shorter, the wrist-spinner, especially, would go out of business. But the opposite is true. Meanwhile, the likes of Leach and Bess, both of whom have advanced because of Somerset's decision to produce some turning pitches for Championship cricket, focus on Test selection. In January 2021 in Sri Lanka they played their first Test together and shared 14 wickets in the match with a few hiccups along the way. Both were short of practice, especially Leach, who for a variety of reasons had not played a Test for 14 months; in fact, he had barely played any cricket in that time. But in the end they combined well enough. It was reminiscent of this pair playing together at Taunton in recent years (though Bess has now signed for Yorkshire to guarantee a first-team place). The playing surface in Galle was not so different to a few of those at the County Ground in recent times, and gradually these two friends started to feel at home, both revelling in the other's success. England ended up winning the match by seven wickets. There is no doubt that Bess and Leach were enhanced by their experience of bowling together for Somerset in similar conditions - except for the temperature. However, at Taunton they are still awaiting an acknowledgment of the ECB's gratitude for bolstering England's meagre spinning stocks.

Naomi Osaka fined for media snub and threatened with French Open expulsion

London, May 31 : Naomi Osaka has been fined \$15,000 (£10,570) for her refusal to "honour her contractual media obligations" following her 6-4, 7-6 (4) victory over Patricia Maria Tig in her first-round match at Roland Garros on Sunday. In a lengthy and stern statement released shortly after her win, the four grand slam tournaments warned that should Osaka repeatedly violate the rules, she could be "exposing herself" to sanctions including being thrown out of the tournament and a major offence investigation that could lead to future grand slam suspensions. Osaka had announced on Wednesday that she would not take part in

numerous impediments for a big-hitting, fast-court player like Osaka. The surface blunts her power and lessens the effect of her serve. However, this encounter underlined that her own movement remains her main obstacle. Osaka opted for the one plan that protected her unsure movement: she took control every time she could. Osaka struck 39 winners. She finished with 89% of points won on her first serve despite serving only one ace, demonstrating how effective it is at setting up quick serve plus forehand combinations. As the match endured, however, her Romanian opponent began to impose herself. Tig took more



press conferences at Roland Garros due to their effects on her mental health. In a statement posted on her social media channels, she criticised press conferences as "kicking a person while they're down", with journalists asking questions that "bring doubt into our minds". While Osaka's announcement received significant coverage and support from prominent figures outside the sport, many of her peers said they respected her opinion but offered differing views. Osaka had also noted her expectation that she would be fined. With their 531-word statement, the grand slam tournaments obliged. They explained the Roland Garros organisation had "unsuccessfully" attempted to speak with her and check on her wellbeing. The grand slam tournaments' attempts to reach out to her, they said, met a similar ending. "We have advised Naomi Osaka that should she continue to ignore her media obligations during the tournament, she would be exposing herself to possible further Code of Conduct infringement consequences," they wrote. "As might be expected, repeat violations attract tougher sanctions including default from the tournament and the trigger of a major offence investigation that could lead to more substantial fines and future Grand Slam suspensions." Apparently in response to the criticism she had received, including from Piers Morgan who said she had played "the mental health card to avoid legitimate media scrutiny", Osaka tweeted: "Anger is a lack of understanding. Change makes people uncomfortable." Earlier, Osaka, the second seed, shrugged off an unsatisfactory start to her clay season by defeating Tig. While Osaka has won the last two grand slams she has entered, the US Open and Australian Open, and is a dominant 23-1 on hard courts since the pandemic hiatus, on clay she is just 2-2 and she has never passed the third round in Paris. Naomi Osaka will not attend press conferences this week but did speak to a court reporter after her game. Clay-court tennis produces

risks from the baseline, landed more blows and disrupted Osaka with ample drop shots. While Osaka entered the match attempting to slide, albeit awkwardly, into the majority of shots, the longer periods spent on the back foot exposed her lack of confidence in her movement. She slowly began to revert to taking inefficient steps each time she changed directions. She closed out the second set in the tie-break only because her serving and firepower was consistent enough to see her through. Although Osaka refused to take part in other media interviews, she spoke with the former player Fabrice Santoro during the on-court interview. He asked three questions: on Mother's day in France, on returning to Roland Garros and about how she adapts her game to clay. The third question was perhaps the type she had hoped to avoid and she evaded it well: "I'd say it is a work-in-progress. Hopefully the more I play the better I get," she said. That was all. Osaka will next face Ana Bogdan, another Romanian, in the second round on Tuesday. She will have two days to consider whether to double down on her decision not to speak with the press or to come up with an alternative solution. On the court, the biggest test for her could be Paula Badosa, the 23-year-old Spaniard who has recorded a 14-2 record on clay this year and looms in the third round. As one multiple grand slam champion moved into the second round, another was quietly brushed aside by an inexperienced challenger. Angelique Kerber, a three-times grand slam champion, has won the third highest number of majors over the past decade behind Serena Williams and Osaka. She is also in a slump and, at 33, it is difficult not to wonder if another revival will come. After being easily beaten 6-0, 6-4 by the world No 66 Bernarda Pera in the Australian Open first round this year, Kerber suffered her third consecutive grand slam first round exit as she lost 6-2 6-4 to the world No 139 Anhelina Kalinina.



right ingredients: it spins vigorously at a good pace and it often dips at the end of its flight path. But we are never quite sure how the ball will come out of Moeen's fingers. He is a self-effacing bowler partly because he was never accustomed to being Worcestershire's main spinner and so he has not always looked comfortable in his role for England when the ball is turning and he is expected to bowl out the opposition. We should not be so surprised by that. Unlike Graeme Swann, who was exiled from the England set-up for almost a decade (he would never have re-

turned if Duncan Fletcher had stayed on longer), Moeen had to learn how to be a Test bowler on the job. Nor does he hint at any guile. The simple fact is that most spinners suggest a lot more guile than they actually possess. A smile, an exasperated glance or a knowing look might give the impression that the last boundary conceded was in fact all part of an elaborate, cunning plan. Such bluffing is an important element in the spinner's armoury. Given that he can't propel bouncers - although Phil Edmonds managed to deliver a few in his time - these mind games represent much-needed ammunition for the slow bowler. But Moeen does not indulge in such fancies because he never nurtured them in the anonymous nursery of county cricket. It looks as if he meanders up to the crease, gives it a rip and hopes for the best. And still, despite all that, only three English spinners have taken more than Moeen's 189 Test wickets: Derek Underwood, Swann and Jim Laker. Among those spinners who have taken 100 wickets for England only Swann can match Moeen's strike rate. Admittedly, Moeen concedes runs more quickly than all of them. Adil Rashid has been England's best wrist-spinner for more than half a century and yet his Test record is modest: 60 wickets at an average of just under 40. This is partly due to batsmen having changed their approach against spin, which results in runs and wickets coming more quickly, and partly because prolonged accuracy has never been one

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