

The Assam Rising

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NEWS IN BRIEF

ULFA (I) denies extortion reports

Guwahati, June 08 : The ULFA (I) has denied media reports that the outfit continued to engage in massive extortion drive despite a unilateral declaration of ceasefire last month. "Since we declared a unilateral ceasefire on May 15 this year, none of our units have collected any money from businessmen, citizens, or anybody else. All allegations to this effect are false and malicious," ULFA (I) publicity wing member "Lieutenant" Rumel Asom said in a statement on Tuesday. He said that the Indian Army and Assam Police were responsible for spreading such rumors. "Our leadership unilaterally declared the ceasefire because they wanted to create a climate of peace and trust," said Rumel Asom.

50 oxygen concentrators

Imphal, June 08 : Manipur on Tuesday received 50 oxygen concentrators from the Union Ministry of Health and family welfare. Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh said in a tweet that these oxygen concentrators will immensely facilitate in the treatment of Covid-19 patients, who may require oxygen. The concentrators have been donated by the Indian Red Cross Society, New Delhi. The Manipur government has been setting up Covid Care Centres in different parts of the state to accommodate the rising number of patients testing positive for Covid-19 in the past few days. A total of 748 people have tested positive for Covid-19 in Manipur in the past 24 hours. The virus has claimed 12 more lives in the state, taking the total death toll to 908. The total number of positive cases in the state is 56,578. The Centre also provided equipment for installation of two oxygen plants in two districts of Manipur in May this year.

Fire breaks out at Vaishno Devi shrine

Jammu, June 08 : A fire broke out at Mata Vaishno Devi shrine in Katra, today. Visuals from the scene showed thick smoke billowing out of the building as firefighters worked to douse the flames. Fire fighting squad of the shrine immediately swung into action after CRPF personnel raised an alarm, the officials said. Some cash and records were gutted in the fire, the officials said. Union Minister of State Jitendra Singh said he had spoken to the Reasi District Collector and been told the situation was being resolved.

Assam minority group wants MHA action against NRC Coordinator



Guwahati, June 08 : A minority organisation has asked the Ministry of Home Affairs to take action against Hitesh Dev Sarma, Assam's Coordinator for the National Register of Citizens (NRC) for "biased activities" and failure to

issue rejection orders to those excluded from the updated list of citizens. In a letter to the MHA Secretary on June 7, the All Assam Minority Students' Union (AAMSU) said bias had prompted the NRC Coordinator to

Photographs of President, PM and first CM Gopinath Bordoloi to be displayed in Assam govt offices

Guwahati, June 08 : The Assam government has decided that in all government offices in the state, the photographs of the President, Prime Minister and Assam's first chief minister Gopinath Bordoloi will be displayed. It was decided in a cabinet meeting at Dispur on Tuesday, which was chaired by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. The Cabinet further decided to allot 35 bighas of additional land for the smooth implementation of the Batadrava Than Cultural and Tourism Project in Central Assam's Nagaon district. Assam cultural



minister Bimal Bora will visit and review the status of the project every month. The Cabinet approved the simplification of flood damage assessment and repairing of infrastructure. The district magistrates have been authorized to take necessary

Guwahati, June 08 : The Assam government has announced that the High School Leaving Certification Examination (HSLC or Class 10) and Higher Secondary (Class 12) examinations in the state will be held. Students will be given the choice of papers and they would not have to appear for all papers, Assam education minister Ranaj Pegu said adding that all exam invigilators and staff members will be vaccinated. The examination process will get over by August 15, the minister said. HSLC or Class 10 Board exams are con-

ducted by the Board of Secondary Education Assam (SEBA) and HS Board exam are held under the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC). Education Minister Dr Ranaj Pegu today called a meeting with all stakeholders including students unions and teachers to decide on the issue of pending board exams. Assam Education Minister Dr Ranaj Pegu had on Monday hinted that the exams will be held in the state. As the number of Covid cases is on the decline in the state, Dr Ranaj Pegu



79% decline in COVID cases since May 7, overall recovery rate at 94.3%: Health Ministry

NEW DELHI, June 08 : The Union Health Ministry on Tuesday said that the COVID-19 situation across the country is fast improving and the ongoing mass vaccination drive has led to a drastic fall in daily new cases of coronavirus

infections and fatalities. Addressing a press briefing, Luv Aggarwal, Joint Secretary, Health Ministry, said, "There has been a decline in daily cases in the past one month. Luv Aggarwal said, "The overall recovery rate has increased to 94.3% (both

Assam CM directs to draft guideline for mission in agriculture sector

GUWAHATI, June 08 : Assam chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday reviewed the ac-

tivities of the agriculture department in a meeting held at his office in Janata Bhawan and made several directions to rejuvenate the agriculture sector in the state. The chief minister instructed the officials to draft a guideline for a mission to be launched in the agriculture sector similar to Sarva Shiksha Mission (SSA) or National Health Mission (NHM) with a view to give a renewed

Placed orders for 44 crore doses of Covishield and Covaxin after PM's announcement of new vaccine policy: Govt

New Delhi: The Centre on Tuesday said that it has placed orders for 44 crore doses of Covishield and Covaxin, a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the Centre would take over the state procurement quota and provide free jobs to state governments for inoculation of all above the age of 18. These 44 crore doses of COVID-19 vaccines will be delivered by their makers between August and December 2021, the Union Health Ministry said. "In immediate follow-up of the

Centre issues revised guidelines for vaccination drive, outlines criteria for supplying free vaccines to states, UTs



New Delhi, June 08 : The Centre on Tuesday released the revised guidelines for the national COVID vaccination programme under which the central government will procure 75 per cent of the vaccines being produced by the manufacturers in the country. According to the notification issued by the Centre, the revised guidelines will be implemented from June 21 and "will be reviewed from time to time". "The government of India will procure 75 per cent of the vaccines being

produced by the manufacturers in the country. The vaccines procured will continue to be provided free of cost to States/UTs as has been the case from the commencement of the National Vaccination Programme. These doses will be administered by the States/UTs free of cost to all citizens as per priority through Government Vaccination Centres," the notification said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had on Monday announced a centralised procurement system for Covid-19 vaccines, beginning from June 21, with 25 per cent of the procurement being made available for the private sector, as well as free vac-

Rights of Mehul Choksi will be respected, courts will decide future course: Dominic PM



New Delhi, June 08 : Dominic Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerit said the rights of "Indian citizen" Mehul Choksi will be respected and courts will de-

cide on the future course of action. In a first public statement since Choksi, wanted in a Rs 13,500-crore bank fraud case in India, was held in the Caribbean island country after his disappearance from Antigua and Barbuda on May 23, Skerit said, "The rights of Mehul Choksi will be respected." Read | Mehul Choksi's complaint: 'Barbara', 'brutal' abduction, 'blundered' plan by 'India' The statement reported by local media outlet 'natureisle' quoted the Prime Minister as saying that court will decide what happens to Choksi next. "The matter with this Indian

Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi reopens for devotees, negative COVID-19 RT-PCR report not mandatory now

New Delhi, June 08 : The Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi on Tuesday (June 8, 2021) reopened for devotees. The negative COVID-19 RT-PCR report is not mandatory for devotees now but they will have to follow social distancing and other COVID appropriate protocols. The general public, however, has not been allowed near the 'garbhagriha'. In view of the second wave of



coronavirus in the country, the entry of devotees in Kashi Vishwanath, which is one of the most famous Lord Shiva's temples across India, was prohibited in April. This is to be noted that the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions have been eased in Varanasi on Monday as the number of coronavirus cases are declining. Uttar Pradesh recorded 797 new COVID-19 infections in the past 24 hours and now has 14,000 active cases. The

positivity rate in the state stands at 0.2 per cent, while the recovery rate has improved to 97.9 per cent. Earlier in the last week of May, there were reports that the work on the prestigious Kashi Vishwanath Dham corridor project is likely to be delayed due to coronavirus. The project was initially slated to be completed by August, but will now be reportedly completed by November. The new

Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva University Donated rs. 5 lakhs to CM relief fund



At the directive of Environment & Forest Minister Captured egrets from Dora Beel released back into the wild

Guwahati, June 8: Following the capturing of egrets from Dora Beel at Rampur under Kukurmara Beat Office, Kuls Range of Kamrup (West) Division, Minister for Environment and Forest, Parimal Suklabaidya took up the matter with CCF, Hemkanta Talukdar and asked him to take immediate action. On being inquired into, the Divisional Forest Officer, Kamrup (West) Division, Ranjit Konwar informed that the local people saw two boys capturing egrets from Dora Beel on Monday and caught them red-handed and handed them over to the police. The police then handed over the two boys with 38 egrets to Kukurmara Beat Office under Kuls Range. The DFO informed that the egrets have been released at Dora Beel on Monday itself with the help of a local NGO. "As the boys are minors, the parents were summoned and after taking undertaking on bail bond and recording their statements, the accused were handed over to their parents," the DFO stated. The accused have been asked to appear before the authorities, as and when required.

RAT Testing Center to be Shifted from PoE Ruksin to Piyi Check Gate

Aalo, June 08: RAT testing centre has been shifted from PoE Ruksin to Piyi Check Gate Aalo and it has been made fully operational 7th July last. All symptomatic and positive by RAT on arrival, the District Administration team at the entry points shall arrange necessary transportation at the cost of the person for Home Isolation with necessary intimation to the concerned DMO as per guidelines issued by the govt. Any positive patients opting for COVID CARE CENTRE(CCC) will be lifted by an ambulance from testing centre. The PoL & other expenses on this shall be borne by District Administration, DMO will ensure placement of ambulance at Piyi Check Gate and SDO (TPT) shall monitor the records of maintaining LOG BOOKS and POL register of so detailed ambulance. Any positive patients opting for HOME ISOLATION (HI), the parents of patients shall arrange their own vehicle for further transportation ensuring that the person follows all COVID appropriate behaviour and SOP for HI and Discharge. However, if any patients unable to arrange their own vehicle then the District Administration shall arrange transportation at the cost of person or the patients themselves. And non compliance of this order shall be viewed seriously and action shall be initiated as per appropriate section of law.

The Northeast Frontier Railway joins hands with UNICEF to spread awareness on COVID-19 Appropriate Behaviours in Assam

Guwahati, June 08: The Northeast Frontier Railway and UNICEF Assam have joined hands to spread public awareness on COVID-19 in the state. As part of the collaboration, 36 railway stations (14 under Rangiya Railway Division, 13 under Tinsukia Railway Division, and nine under the Lumding Railway Division) across the state will disseminate information on COVID-19 and related topics, starting with the Guwahati and Kamakhya Railway Stations. This collaboration aims to support ongoing efforts by the Department of Health (and Family Welfare) and the National Health Mission (NHM), Government of Assam. Information on COVID-19 that has been disseminated by the government, including types of masks to use, COVID Appropriate Behaviours (CAB), vaccines,



mental health, home isolation and care, strains of the virus, helpline numbers, among others, would be placed at the entry and exit gates, platforms, foot bridges and waiting rooms of the railway stations, along with 20 coaches at the Guwahati Railway Station that have been converted to temporary isolation wards. Shri Anshul Gupta, General Manager, Northeast Frontier Railway said, "Railways is making all efforts in the fight against COVID-19. We are running Oxygen Express trains for supply of oxygen to the states, operating special COVID Care Centers in our hospitals for treatment of COVID positive patients and have provided coaches for isolation of patients whenever required. In this fight, awareness is the most important tool.

Northeast Frontier Railway is running awareness campaigns in its jurisdiction to make people aware about COVID Appropriate Behavior. This joint initiative with UNICEF Assam will go a long way in educating lakhs of people using railway premises regularly and will help restrict the spread of COVID-19 to a great extent." The COVID-19 pandemic has redefined the meaning of a global health crisis and is a challenge being faced by humanity today. The entire country, including Assam, is witnessing the second wave along with a surge in infections and fatalities. This has led to a scenario wherein the overall health infrastructure is overwhelmed in an unprecedented manner. According to UNICEF Assam's Chief of Field Office, Dr Madhulika Jonathan, "The current scenario can be overcome only with active participation from citizens. As per research, we know that COVID-19 spreads through the aerosols of an infected person, and it can spread fast. However, new mutants can also increase the rate and severity of the infection. In both the situations, it is important to prevent the spread by following COVID Appropriate Behaviours and taking the vaccine when your turn comes. Therefore, a need exists to sensitize the general public about various aspects to be adhered to in this fight against COVID-19. We thank the Northeast Frontier Railway for adding the much-needed-push to reach out to the masses of people travelling within and to-and-fro from Assam." Dr Jonathan added, The duration of the collaboration will be three months. Acknowledging the importance of the partnership, Dr Lakshmanan S, Mission Director, National Health Mission, Assam said, "After a steady decline of COVID-19 cases between November 2020 to April 2021, Assam is witnessing a spike in the number of new cases.

Guwahati, June 8: Higher Educational institution of middle Assam, Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradev University, has been performing social responsibilities time to time from the very beginning as well as the constructing educational milestones for success. Keeping in mind of the current covid-created situation and also the Assam Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sharma's call to help the teachers, officials and employee of the university donated a total assistance of Rs. 5 lakh to the Chief Minister's relief Fund today. The vice-chancellor of the university, Dr. Hitesh Dekha along with Registrar

Dr. Mrinal Kumar Bara and Prophan sompadok of Shrimant Sankaradev Sangh Babul Bora today meet the chief minister in his office chamber and handed over the cheque of 5 lakh. Understanding the social and moral duty by the employees of the university this decision was taken by them unanimously to give a stand, support at the side of the Govt of Assam giving a small token amount of Rs 5 Lakhs as donation to join hands against this fight for COVID. This has been informed to media by a press release by Dr. S K Sarkar, Dy. Registrar (Admin) of the university.

Services of special trains running between Guwahati - Secunderabad and Guwahati - Okha extended Services of Rajendra Nagar - New Jalpaiguri special train restored; To help clear extra rush of passengers

Guwahati, June 08: To help clear extra rush of passengers, it has been decided to extend the services of special trains running between Guwahati - Secunderabad and Guwahati - Okha. Services of these trains have been extended to run with existing timings, stoppages, composition and days of run for convenience of the passengers. It has also been decided to restore the services of special train between Rajendra Nagar and New Jalpaiguri with existing timings, stoppages, composition and days of run. Services of the following trains have been extended: Services of Train No. 07030 Secunderabad - Guwahati weekly summer special leaving from Secunderabad on Sunday have been extended to run for two trips. The first trip the train left from Secunderabad on 6th June, 2021; consequently, another trip of the train will leave from Secunderabad on

13th June, 2021. In return direction, services of Train No. 07029 Guwahati - Secunderabad weekly summer special leaving from Guwahati on Wednesday have been extended to run for two trips. The train will leave from Guwahati on 9th and 16th June, 2021. Services of Train No. 09501 Okha - Guwahati special leaving from Okha on Friday have been extended to run for another trip on 11th June, 2021. In return direction, services of Train No. 09502 Guwahati - Okha special leaving from Guwahati on Monday have been extended to run for another trip on 14th June, 2021. The train will run with revised timings at Kota junction, Sawai Madhopur and Bayana junction. Restoration of train service: Services of Train No. 03246 Rajendra Nagar - New Jalpaiguri (tri-weekly) special leaving from Rajendra Nagar on Thursday, Friday and Saturday have been restored



Meghalaya- Jaintia Student's Union block the entry

Flood situation in Nowboicha grim

North Lakhimpur, June 8: The overall flood situation in Nowboicha has remained unchanged with vast areas of Nowboicha Revenue Circle remaining submerged under flood water. Total 3,1,959 people of 18 villages under the three Revenue Circles in Lakhimpur district North Lakhimpur, Nowboicha and Bihpuria respectively, have been affected while 191.3 hectares crop area of these three Revenue Circles have been affected in the flood. The 13 villages under Bihpuria Revenue Circle Dharmapur block, Ahmedpur block, 1 no. Dharmapur, Kutubpur, 3 no. Dharmapur, 2 no. Kehutali, Dhekiajuli, Fatehpur, Islampur, 3 no. Islampur, Nizaluk, 4 no. Dharmapur, Garmur, a village under North Lakhimpur Revenue Circle Amtola PGR and the 4 villages under Nowboicha Revenue Circle Chengelijan, Gosanbari, 1 no. Gelahati and 2 no. Gelahati are the most affected villages of the three Revenue Circles. More than 400 people of the said 3 villages under Nowboicha Revenue Circle have been affected badly. The administration has set up one relief camp at Amtola Bazar Tinali under North Lakhimpur Revenue Circle to shelter the affected people. On the other hand, though Panchnoi, Diju Chapori and other villages under Nowboicha Revenue Circle, too, have been affected by the flood, the administration has not taken any step to set up relief camp in greater Nowboicha area. The flood-affected people of Nowboicha who are marooned for the last ten days have not been got any relief till date. Organisations like Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuva Chatra Parishad, AASU, Asomiya Yuva Mancha etc, vehemently criticised the NEEPCO for creating the flood in Lakhimpur district. The organisations also criticised vehemently the State Government for having given no importance of the flood situation.

Renound Musician Sarbadeep Neog Loses his Life



Kakopather, June 08: One of the renound Youth Drummer cum Padist of Tinsukia District named Sarbadeep Neog from Kakopather Rangajan expires today in about 1 a.m. According to one of his friend cum attendent who was there with him told that

Sarbadeep was suffering from cough and fever from a few days and suddenly his oxygen level dropped to a severe level for which he was taken to a nearby hospital from where he was referred to Tinsuki Civil Hospital where he was tested Covid Negative but gradual drop of oxygen led his condition severe for which he was referred to Assam Medical College on yesterday and where his health deteriorated and he took his last breath at 1 a.m. on 7th June. Although having covid symptoms along with continuous drop of oxygen level he was not detected covid positive with multiple RAT test which is also a matter of concern and doctors claims it to be pneumonia. Sarbadeep was one of the most loved musician of the district and had performed with many renound artist of the state. He was a man with well behaviour, good music and a descent attitude. People from all over the state is seen tributing in his death.

Covid claims one more in Nagaon dist, fresh 233 recorded

NAGAON, June 8: One more person named Golok Ch Nath of Tukurabahi under Jajori PS who was undergoing treatment in hospital, died of COVID 19 today, taking the total death toll in the district to 71. Besides, a total of 233 fresh COVID cases were detected today, taking the total cumulative active COVID cases in the district to 3576 while 430 COVID patients who were undergoing treatment in the hospital as well as at homes, were recovered from the infection of the virus today, sources added. Sources claimed that among those who tested positive today, 98 people were immediately admitted to hospital as well as 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 7898 people while RT-PCR test was conducted on 248 swab samples, sources further added. Meanwhile BJP leader Bibhuti Bhushan Borthakur under the banner of his father late Reboti Mohan Borthakur foundation, launched a massive sanitization drive at Kathiatoli areas as well as Kamrup town today. Borthakur along with his associates members from the district BJP Yuva Morcha participated in the drive and sanitized almost all including roads, sub roads and commercial establishments as well as other government offices situated at Kathiatoli areas as well as in Kamrup town.

BSF Apprehended 02 Indian Ficin Racketeers Along With Rs. 2,00,000/- Fake Indian Currency Notes (Ficin) From Indo-Bangladesh Border

Guwahati, June 08: In yet another success in its crusade against smuggling activities, 67Bn BSF under the aegis of Guwahati Frontier of Border Security Force apprehended 02 Indian Ficin racketeers along with Fake Indian Currency Notes (Ficin) face value of Rs. 2,00,000/-. On 07th June 2021 from bordering area of village Baladova P.S Dhubri, Distt-Dhubri (Assam). 02. Acting on tip off, on 07th June 2021, BSF troops of Border outpost (BOP) Tistapara of 67Bn BSF carried out a special operation in the general area of village Baladova close to Indo-Bangladesh border. Operation party apprehended 02 Indian Ficin racketeers along with Fake Indian Currency Notes (Ficin) having face value of Rs. 2,00,000/-, while the consignment was

trying to be smuggled from Bangladesh to India. 03. Details of apprehended Ficin racketeers are as under:- a) Hussain Ali (45 Yrs), S/o -Jonab Ali, R/o Vill - Binachar Part-IV, PS - Golaganj, Distt-Dhubri (Assam). b) Muslimunnd Hoque, (25 Yrs), S/o Boskar Ali, R/o Vill-Baladova Part-1, PS & Distt-Dhubri (Assam). 04. Apprehended Indian Ficin racketeers along with seized Ficin have been handed over to P.S & Distt-Dhubri (Assam) for further legal action. 05. Keeping in view of the vulnerability of border, heightened activities of the smugglers and anti-national elements on the border, BSF troops are always alert towards the issues of trans-border crimes & illegal infiltration and are making all out efforts to prevent commission of

GLTA Donates To The Cm's Relief Fund



GUWAHATI, June 08: On behalf of the Guwahati Lawn Tennis Association (GLTA) its President Kalyan Kumar Das and General Secretary Bhaskar Sarma extended their heartfelt congratulations to the newly elected Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today in his official chamber. GLTA hoped that under his leadership the state can rise as strong force at the national and international level in the field of sports and there will be unparalleled developments in the field of sports

and games in the state. GLTA also today handed over a cheque of Rs. 25,000/- (Rupees Twenty-Five Thousand) only to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund as a gesture of solidarity towards the government's fight against the Covid-19 pandemic.

Borpam VDP observes Environment Day



Biswanath Chariali, June 8: The Borpam Tinali Village Defence Party (VDP) to the north of Sootea under Biswanath district had observed the world Environment Day maintaining Covid protocol like previous years. Members of VDP along with some selected invited guests including Pramod

Basumotary, Pradeep Barua, Krishna Patar, Dhananjay Kurmi had planted more hundred saplings of rare species in public places of north Sootea on Saturday. Further, the members of the Borpam VDP had distributed more one hundred saplings to the villagers. Talking to the media person, Arun Bordoloi; VDP secretary said, "the saplings planted last year are growing big now. We look after the plants every weekend." He further added that Borpam VDP has taken a resolution to plant one hundred plants each year. The programme was also attended by Jagananda Kurmi, Hridoy Bordoloi, Dinamani Majumdar, Raju Kurmi, Dhrubajyoti Bodo along with others.



such crimes. 08. BSF troops are always alert towards the issues of trans-border crimes and illegal infiltration and are making all endeavours to contain such trans-border crimes.

Punjab CM Amarinder Singh is made to stand trial in Gandhi family court

New Delhi, June 08 : Capt. Amarinder Singh must be scratching his head in despair and bewilderment. The Congress high command is running him down, publicly and spectacularly. The Punjab chief minister has been made to stand what looks like a trial before a three-member committee (read commission of inquiry) set up by party president Sonia Gandhi, purportedly to end an internecine war in Punjab Congress. His deposition before the committee in New Delhi last Friday

and Rahul Gandhi's proteges had complained about Singh's style of functioning and accessibility, then Sonia Gandhi could call the CM to 10, Janpath to seek an explanation. She could get her children - Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra - to sit by her side and sort out the issues their proteges have with Singh. But to put the Punjab CM on public trial like this! Rahul, Wayanad MP, and Priyanka, AICC general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, had a virtual meeting

had given a huge advantage to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in most states but Singh was able to blunt it in Punjab and dislodge the BJP-SAD government. So, what is it that's driving the Gandhis to emulate Kalidas and try to saw off the branch that they are comfortably perched on in Punjab? Trying to undermine the CM, barely eight months ahead of the next polls, is like political hara-kiri. The ostensible reason being cited is rebellion against Amarinder Singh by cricketer-turned-politician Navjot Singh Sidhu and a handful of other ambitious legislators. It's not the first time that Sidhu is having a problem with his captain. Remember his infamous walkout of the England tour in 1996. He had got upset with captain Mohammad Azharuddin. It was years later that former BCCI secretary J.Y. Lele revealed in a book how Sidhu had mistaken his captain's use of "maa ke" as an abuse. It took an amused Mohinder Amarnath to explain to the Punjabi-speaking batsman that Azhar wasn't abusing him and that "maa ke" (meaning 'mother's dear child') was "a common naughty address to a dear one in Hyderabad." But no matter how often he got out in his cricketing days, jumping out of the crease to try to hit a six, Sidhu wouldn't let patience tame his impulses - just as he doesn't do it today in politics either. So, when the BJP denied him a party ticket for Amritsar in favour of Arun Jaitley in 2014, Sidhu was defiant. The party tried to mollify him with Rajya Sabha nomination but his ambitions had started soaring by then. He didn't see much scope for a popular Jat Sikh leader in the BJP in Punjab. And Arvind Kejriwal wouldn't declare him the AAP's chief ministerial candidate. Sidhu was soon berating Kejriwal: "Bholi surat dil ke khote, naam bade aur darshan chhote." Ahead of the 2017 assembly election, he joined the Congress and went on to become a minister but it wasn't good enough for him. It was only a matter of time before Sidhu started stepping out of the crease to hit a six in politics, secure in the belief that a Gandhi is behind the stumps. What must also have given him confidence is the fact that the BJP would be looking for a popular Jat Sikh face in Punjab after its split with the SAD. So would the AAP, given its desperation to regain political relevance in the state.



was a political spectacle. Making a chief minister come to the national capital to explain his conduct before a party committee might be a grand display of the Congress high command's power and authority but it does no good to the CM's political stature and image in his home state. Last year, the Congress had set up a similar three-member committee to look into the grievances of Sachin Pilot-led rebels in Rajasthan. Has anyone heard of that committee for the past year? No. Has that committee summoned CM Ashok Gehlot for deposition, even in Jaipur? No. And rightly so. This is not to suggest that the Congress high command is right in leaving Pilot high and dry after he gave up his rebellion. The limited point here is that there are dignified ways of dealing with chief ministers and party stalwarts like Ashok Gehlot and Amarinder Singh. Aside, even in times of peace, the Congress has committees to coordinate with the government in states where it's in power. These committees are invariably a mechanism to keep the CMs under check, and, to this end, needle them intermittently. Coming to the subject of Capt. Singh's 'trial', if a section of Punjab Congress leaders

with the committee comprising Mallikarjun Kharge, Harish Rawat and J.P. Aggarwal later - don't ask 'in what capacity'. What would stop Gandhi family members from meeting the Punjab CM - a friend and Doon School senior of late Rajiv Gandhi - when they were all in Delhi? Of the five states that will go to polls in February-March next year - UP, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Goa, and Manipur - the Congress stands the best chance in Punjab. Singh has handled the farmers' agitation on central farm laws skilfully, supporting their demand but, at the same time, coordinating with the Centre and moderate elements among protesters to try to resolve the impasse. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), despite its support to the farm agitation, finds itself on the political margins while a splintered Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) seems to have lost its way. Even the legislators who were critical at the AICC committee meeting about the CM being 'inaccessible' want to go into the next assembly election with Amarinder Singh as the party's face. They know his skills on the political and electoral battleground. Going into the 2017 assembly elections, surgical strikes on terror launch pads across the Line of Control and the demonetisation move



People participate in the Rose Festival parade in Kazanlak, Bulgaria.

Global G7 deal may let Amazon off hook on tax, say experts

London, June 08 : Experts have raised concerns that Amazon may escape paying significantly more tax in some of its biggest markets unless world leaders close a large loophole in a historic global deal. Finance ministers in London from the G7 group of wealthy nations, including representatives of the UK, US and EU, on Saturday agreed the landmark deal aimed at making the biggest companies such as Apple, Microsoft, Google and Facebook pay more tax. The two "pillars" of the deal would make companies pay a percentage of their profits in markets where they make large sales despite minimal corporate presence, as well as setting an unprecedented global minimum corporation tax. However, a communiqué from G7 ministers said that they envisaged pillar one would only apply on "profit exceeding a 10% margin for the largest and most profitable multinational enterprises", a restriction that could rule out Amazon. Amazon is one of the largest businesses in the world, with a market value of \$1.6tn (£1.1tn) and sales of \$386bn in 2020. A Luxembourg subsidiary paid zero corporation tax in 2020 on sales income from across Europe of €4bn (£38bn), making Amazon a prominent target for politicians campaigning for changes to the global tax system. However, its profit margin in 2020 was only 6.3%. It runs its online retail business at very low profit margins, partly because it reinvests heavily, and partly to gain market share. Richard Murphy, visiting professor of accounting at the Sheffield University management school, said the 10% profits threshold was "inappropriate" because of different business models for different companies. He added that current approaches to reporting profits in each country were

"easily gamed". "This could turn out to be a false hope unless they get the detail right," he said. The G7 deal aimed to give momentum to talks at the larger G20 group of nations, followed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a club of mainly wealthy nations that has led tax negotiations for a decade. Campaigners said they hoped the later negotiations would include an approach known as "segmentation", meaning profitable parts of businesses would pay tax in their own right. "Based on the communique Amazon is not captured," said Paul Monaghan, chief executive of the Fair Tax Foundation, which accredits businesses that do not avoid tax. "If there's another layer of detail that suggest Amazon will be captured that's great, but it hasn't emerged yet." Janet Yellen, the US Treasury secretary, on Saturday told the Reuters news agency that she expected Facebook and Amazon to be covered by the proposal. "It will include large profitable firms and those firms, I believe, will qualify by almost any definition," she said. A segmentation approach would mean a company like Amazon would pay tax in countries such as the UK on profits of subsidiaries such as Amazon Web Services, its lucrative web hosting arm. AWS made a margin of 30% in 2020, according to the Fair Tax Foundation. The US tech firm ended 2020 with more than \$13.5bn in annual operating profits from annual AWS revenue of \$45.4bn, up nearly 30% year on year. Sources said that while the G7 sealed an over-arching agreement, details about how to carve up the revenues of big corporations into their constituent parts for tax purposes had yet to be agreed. It is possible that some businesses will be able to rejig their operations to offset profits against loss-making units to remain under the 10% threshold, unless tough rules are in place. Alex Cobham, chief executive of Tax Justice Network, said: "If the OECD cannot ensure Amazon is in scope, not only will it fail to meet the public demand for fairness here, it will also offer a blueprint for other major multinationals to escape this element of the reform." "Work is under way by the OECD under the banner of its inclusive framework to resolve how companies should be taxed ahead of a meeting by the G20 groups of countries in July that is expected to ratify the G7 deal. It is expected that 135 countries that have signed up to the OECD scheme will benefit from extra tax revenues from large corporations. George Turner, director of TaxWatch UK, a thinktank, said it would be vital to ascertain whether tech companies would pay more UK tax overall, after the UK and other nations including France conceded that they will remove unilateral digital services taxes that aimed to target big tech." It could be taking with one hand and giving with the other," Turner said. Facebook, the social network company, on Saturday said it believed it will pay more tax. However, Amazon was unable to say whether it expected to pay more tax. An Amazon spokesperson said: "We believe an OECD-led process that creates a multilateral solution will help bring stability to the international tax system. The agreement by the G7 marks a welcome step forward in the effort to achieve this goal. We hope to see discussions continue to advance with the broader G20 and Inclusive Framework alliance."

Police in Malaysia use drones to detect high temperatures amid Covid surge

Bernama, June 08 : Police in Malaysia are using drones to detect people with high temperatures in public spaces as part of Covid prevention measures, according to local media. The drones, which can detect people's temperatures as high as 20m above ground, emit a red light to alert the authorities if someone has a high reading, Bernama, Malaysia's state news agency, reported. Malaysia entered a near total national lockdown last week in an attempt to halt rising daily infections, which had reached more than 9,000 by the end of May. Though daily cases have since fallen, health director general, Noor Hisham Abdullah, has warned that the majority of new infections and deaths were from unknown contacts. "One of the reasons is the emergence of new variants in the community which have higher infectivity and mortality rates," he said in a statement on Monday, urging people to stay home. Under the lockdown rules, only two people from each household are allowed to go out to buy essentials, do non-contact sport, or seek medical treatment near to their home. Schools and shopping malls are shut, though much of the manufacturing sector has continued to operate with a reduced workforce. Malaysian police have previously warned they will use drones to enforce earlier travel restrictions, with officers in some areas also stating they would carry out surprise home visits to ensure people were following rules. China reportedly used drones last year as part of its virus prevention efforts. According to a video posted by state-controlled Global Times, drones were used to spray hand sanitiser, and tell citizens to stay home.



The University of Zambia Vice-Chancellor Luke Mumba (L) receives the donation from the Chinese Ambassador to Zambia Li Jie during a handover ceremony in Lusaka, Zambia

Netanyahu says Israeli coalition poised to unseat him is result of 'election fraud'

London, June 08 : Benjamin Netanyahu has said a newly formed Israeli coalition that is poised to unseat him as prime minister was the result of "the greatest election fraud" in the history of democracy. The sweeping accusation, similar in tone to those made about the US election by his former close ally Donald Trump, came as Israeli security services warned of an escalation in violent discourse in the country. In power for 12 consecutive years, the Israeli prime minister faces being toppled by a diverse coalition of lawmakers united only by their shared hostility towards him. Mired in a court battle on corruption charges that could lead to imprisonment, the veteran politician has mobilised his supporters to peel off defectors before a confirmation vote. Netanyahu focused his



allegations on a broken campaign promise from the man set to replace him as prime minister, nationalist Naftali Bennett. Bennett had pledged not to partner with leftwing, centrist and Arab parties, but on Wednesday announced with opposition leader Yair Lapid that they had formed a governing coalition with factions from across the political spectrum. "We are witnessing the greatest election fraud in the history of the country, in my opinion in the history of any democracy," Netanyahu said in comments to legislators of his rightwing Likud party. "That's why people justifiably feel deceived and they are responding: they must not be shut up," he said in the remarks, which were broadcast live and referred indirectly to Bennett's campaign promise not to team up with Lapid and others. On Saturday, the head of Israel's Shin Bet internal security agency, Nadav Argaman, issued a rare public statement warning of a "severe escalation in violent and inciting discourse" on social media. "This discourse could be understood by certain groups or individuals as enabling illegal violence that could even cost a life," Argaman said, calling on public officials to "issue a clear call to stop this discourse". Politicians opposing Netanyahu and some local media have interpreted Argaman's statement as a warning to the premier. "There is a very thin line between political criticism and inciting violence," Netanyahu said on Sunday. "We can't say that when criticism comes from the right, it's incitement to violence, and when it comes from the left, that it's a justified use of freedom of expression," he told a meeting of Likud party members. "I condemn all incitement to violence." Netanyahu claimed he was the target of an "even more serious" campaign and described the coalition that seeks to replace

him as a "dangerous leftwing government". The alliance comprises three rightwing, two centrist and two leftwing parties as well as an Arab Islamic conservative party. Under the coalition agreement, Bennett of the rightwing nationalist Yamina party would be premier for two years, to be replaced by the centrist Lapid in 2023. Netanyahu's supporters have been working hard to win defectors from Yamina deputies uncomfortable working with Arabs and Jewish leftwingers. Some have held demonstrations outside the homes of Yamina lawmakers. A parliamentary vote of confidence, the last step to formalise the new government, could be held on Wednesday or the following Monday, according to Israeli media. Meanwhile Israeli police burst into the home of a prominent family in the contested Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem on Sunday, the family said, arresting a 23-year-old woman who has led protests against attempts by Jewish settlers to evict dozens of Palestinian families from their homes in the area.

Great apes predicted to lose 90% of homelands in Africa, study finds

London, June 08 : Great apes - humanity's closest relatives, many of which are flagship species for conservation efforts within Africa and worldwide, are predicted to lose a "devastating" 90% of their homelands in Africa in coming decades, according to a study. All gorillas, chimpanzees and bonobos are already endangered or critically endangered. But a combination of the climate crisis, the destruction of wild areas for minerals, timber and food, and human population growth is on track to decimate their ranges by 2050, the scientists said. Half of the projected lost territory will be in national parks and other protected areas. Some new areas will become climatically suitable for the apes, but the researchers doubt they will be able to migrate into these regions in time. The estimated range loss is stark, but today's ranges in central and western Africa are already much smaller than in the past. "It's a perfect storm for many of our



closest genetic relatives, many of which are flagship species for conservation efforts within Africa and worldwide," said Joana Carvalho, a biologist and computer modeller at Liverpool John Moores University in the UK and who led the study. "If we add climate change to the current causes of territory loss, the picture looks devastating." The analysis used data from the International Union for Conservation of Nature's apes database on species populations, threats and conservation action at hundreds of sites over 20 years. It then modelled the combined future impacts of global heating, habitat destruction and human population growth. There are uncertainties in the data and model results, said Carvalho. "But there is going to be change and not for the best. Even the ranges we see at the moment are much smaller than they have been." Most great ape species prefer lowland habitats, but the climate crisis will make some lowlands hotter, drier and much less suitable. Uplands will become more attractive, assuming the apes can get there, but where there is no high ground, the apes will be left with nowhere to go.

THE ASSAM RISING

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The illegal market

Chinese markets linked to some of the earliest Covid-19 cases were illegally selling a range of wildlife from which the coronavirus may have spread, according to a study published less than two weeks after U.S. President Joe Biden ordered a deeper probe into the pandemic's genesis. Mink, masked palm civets, raccoon dogs, Siberian weasels, hog badgers and Chinese bamboo rats were among 38 animal species sold live at markets in Wuhan from May 2017 to November 2019, researchers said Monday in a paper in the journal *Scientific Reports* originally submitted last October. The hunt for Covid-19's origins has become increasingly political amid criticism that the Chinese government hasn't been open and transparent with key information, including activities in a Wuhan lab studying coronaviruses. The new findings support the conclusions of a World Health Organization-led research mission in early 2021 that concluded SARS-CoV-2 most likely spilled over to humans from animals - either directly from a bat or via another mammal, possibly one sold at the Huanan seafood and fresh produce market in central Wuhan. "This report clearly places SARS-CoV-2 susceptible animals smack in the middle of Wuhan," said Robert Garry, a professor of microbiology and immunology at Tulane University in New Orleans, who wasn't involved in the research. It's "a major revelation," he said in an email. Access to the detailed data in the study was serendipitous, the researchers said. The findings were based on routine monthly surveys of shops selling live wild animals as pets or for food across Wuhan in the years before Covid-19 emerged at the end of 2019, the authors said. That unrelated study was intended to identify the source of a tick-borne disease. "While we caution against the mis-attribution of Covid-19's origins, the wild animals on sale in Wuhan suffered poor welfare and hygiene conditions and we detail a range of other zoonotic infections they can potentially vector," lead author Xiao Xiao, from the Lab Animal Research Center at Hubei University of Chinese Medicine in Wuhan, and colleagues wrote. Both wild-caught and farmed non-domesticated species were sold - alive, caged, stacked and in poor condition - by 17 vendors, the researchers said. None posted an origin certificate or quarantine certificate, "so all wildlife trade was fundamentally illegal," they said. The WHO-led research team reported that market authorities claimed all live and frozen animals sold in the Huanan market were acquired from farms officially licensed for breeding, and it found no verified reports of live mammals being sold around 2019. The market was shut down at 1 a.m. on Jan. 1, 2020. "This paper is affirmative evidence that there was obfuscation regarding which animals were being sold at the wet markets in Wuhan," Garry said. China temporarily banned all wildlife trade on Jan. 26, 2020, and permanently banned eating and trading terrestrial wild animals for food a month later. Before the ban, most stores offered butchering services, done on site, with considerable implications for food hygiene and animal welfare. Marmosets, selling for more than \$25 a kilogram (\$11/pound), were the most expensive, while raccoon dogs and badgers were priced at about \$15-to-\$20 a kilogram, the researchers said. "This group was able to learn a huge amount from vendors in these stalls, who were even willing to discuss openly that they were selling illegal wildlife," said Michael Worobey, head of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Arizona in Tucson, who wasn't involved in the study. "It is hard to imagine them being so transparent with government authorities or even the WHO. This serves as a reminder that less 'official' investigations can play a huge role." While the prevailing theory among virologists is that Covid-19 originated in bats and made its way into humans via an intermediary animal, efforts to pin down the details or identify any infected animals have been unsuccessful for the past year and a half. In part because of that futile attempt, combined with restrictions from China in the effort to gather information, some scientists have started calling for a more detailed investigation into the lab-leak theory. President Biden directed his intelligence agencies to delve deeper into the issue last month, after he received a report on the origins earlier in May that detailed the scientific divide over whether SARS-CoV-2 arose naturally in animals or if it was leaked from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, one of the world's foremost laboratories working on coronaviruses. Any finding of a coronavirus closely related to SARS-CoV-2 circulating in wild animals would likely quell suspicions that the pandemic virus was created in a lab, said Joel Wertheim, an associate professor of medicine at the University of California, San Diego, who studies viral molecular epidemiology. Still, there's no guarantee such a virus will ever be found.

Earth's core is growing faster on one side-but gravity is keeping it from getting lopsided

The Earth's solid-iron inner core is growing faster on one side than the other, said a new study by seismologists at the University of California, Berkeley, U.S. According to the study, the inner core has been growing faster on one side ever since it started to freeze out from molten iron more than half a billion years ago. However, this does not mean that the core is lopsided. Gravity evenly distributes the new growth to maintain a spherical inner core that grows in radius by an average of 1 millimeter per year. But the enhanced growth on one side suggests that something in Earth's outer core or mantle under Indonesia is removing heat from the inner core at a faster rate than on the opposite side, under Brazil. Quicker cooling on one side would accelerate iron crystallisation and inner core growth on that side. This has implications for Earth's magnetic field and its history, because convection in the outer core driven by release of heat from the inner core is what today generates the magnetic field that protects us from dangerous particles from the sun. Asymmetric growth of the inner core explains a three-decade-old mystery - that the crystallised iron in the core seems to be preferentially aligned along the rotation axis of the earth, more so in the west than in the east, whereas one would expect the crystals to be randomly oriented. More on Science Focus. An observatory in Namibia has recorded the most energetic radiation and longest gamma-ray afterglow of a so-called gamma-ray burst (GRB) to date

- giving scientists the best ever view of the brightest explosions in the universe. The observations with the High Energy Stereoscopic System challenge the established idea of how gamma-rays are produced in these stellar explosions which signal the birth of black holes. GRBs are bright X-ray and gamma-ray flashes observed in the sky emitted by distant extragalactic sources. They are the biggest explosions in the universe. They are associated with the collapse of a rapidly rotating massive star to a black hole. The burst is divided into two distinct phases - an initial chaotic prompt phase lasting tens of seconds, followed by a long-lasting, smoothly fading afterglow phase. In August 2019, a GRB was detected in the constellation of Eridanus. The event, cataloged as GRB 190829A, turned out to be one of the nearest gamma-ray bursts observed so far, with a distance of about one billion light years. More on Space.com. A team at the Washington State University in the US has bred a strain of a fungus that can protect bees against varroa mites without the use of chemical pesticides. Varroa destructor mites are small parasites that live on honey bees. They play a large role in Colony Collapse Disorder, which causes beekeepers to lose 30-50 per cent of their hives each year. The mites feed on bees, weakening their immune systems and making them more susceptible to viruses. Known as metarhizium, the strain created by the researchers can survive in the warm environments common in honey bee hives, which typically have a temperature of around 35 Celsius.

Mohana Basu

Real fight for National Archives should be about what it doesn't contain, not the relocation



Rama Lakshmi

A recent article by Hilal Ahmed about not treating evidence-based history and emotion-based history as necessary binaries speaks partly to the long-held academic opposition to the discipline of oral history. Academic historians have traditionally looked down upon oral histories as a lesser and somewhat unreliable form of constructing the past. Their insistence on so-called hard evidence like primary archival records and archaeological artefacts often undervalues the importance of intangible history. As if these hard evidences offer definitive histories. British historian John Hugh Arnold said, "History is above all else an argument." One of the first things I learnt in my museology classroom was that history is not a set of facts but a set of interpretations. So neither streams - academic historians or public historians - have a moral and monopolistic claim over history masquerading as the truth. Oral histories belong in India's national archives

too. Even though Hilal Ahmed has written the article in the context of the National Archives of India, the argument he put forth goes beyond the immediate destruction and construction involved in the Central Vista project, underway in the heart of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's New Lutyens. Scholars of tangible histories often fear that if emotion and people's memories are included in historiography, then the majority communities, or those who can leverage power, will weaponise this emotional capital. In algorithmic democracies, that is a real risk. But the solution is not to police them or dismiss them as unreliable or emotional. There are standards and gatekeeping that shape this discipline too. "Oral history is not simply stuff that people say on tape or camera," wrote American public historian Jason Steinhauer. "Oral history (as a methodology) does not exist in disciplinary isolation." Let us try to imagine what it would look like if academic historians were all to agree to enlist collective memories and emotions in the writing of histories, as Ahmed recommends. First of all, a sort of hege-

mony would be broken. I don't mean that cold hard facts won't determine historical research any more. But a sort of arrogant academic pretence of being the sole searcher and purveyor of truth will come undone. The other outcome of this action would be that history will become more inclusive and accessible. It will also become what it was always meant to be - fluid, changing and open, one that admits there are many ways of looking at and interpreting history. It would finally be an acknowledgement that the study of history is, at best, interpretive. This is not about liberal or conservative approach to history - or secular versus Hindutva histories. It is about recognising and dismantling an almost century-old wall that has existed in the history departments of campuses around the world. Investing energy in resisting Central Vista reconstruction is futile now. That ship has sailed. We can, however, do two things: continue asking for transparency in the way the archives are handled and preserved in the interim period until they find a new home, and also keep pushing for a new, expanded scope and definition of archives. Adversity is the best time for reconfiguring old ways. Teen Murti library has a rich collection of oral histories. Delhi government is currently building oral history archives of the city by recording "memories and perceptions" of 100 individuals through one-on-one interviews. It's time we bring them to the new home of the National Archives of India too, like in other countries. As the National Archives of India building is torn down (not the archives itself, just the building. And that too, the Annexe, a sarkari term for PWD extensions done in the past couple of decades), there is much to worry about the state of the fragile records; but there is also an opportunity to imagine a better, more inclusive archive. One that doesn't keep people away in order to keep history

impervious. We need the National Archives of India to include oral histories that are now stored in colleges, advocacy groups and personal collections. Oral histories are primary source material that belong in archives. There's an impressive collection of oral histories of Narmada Bachao Andolan voices that Nandini Oza worked on; there's another by Pramod Kumar Srivastava on militant freedom fighters who were sent to Kala Pani; C.S. Lakshmi's women's movement archives; Godrej archives managed by Vrunda Pathare; Indira Chaudhury's oral histories of Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. There will, of course, be some chest-thumping histories that will pour in, or what John Dower dismissively called "4th of July historiography." But there will also be those that run counter to handed-down, State narratives, like anti-caste oral histories, Dalit and tribal people's histories, and disability rights. Room must be made for all. The archives will be richer for it. Hilal Ahmed quotes Jawaharlal Nehru to show how he accommodated national imagination and framework for the collection of historical evidence. He also quotes Modi and his foregrounding of "feelings" in history writing. Both use history to serve their nation-building motives. If Nehruvian India witnessed the first nation-building age, then, for some, Modi's India is going through a third nation-building phase; 1991 was the second phase of nation-building. Whether some wince at it or not, the old India is being changed. Nehru's core template for historiography was unity, and Modi's is uniformity. And public history - with all its fluidity, diversity and autonomy - is a stronger antidote to uniformity than fixed academic histories. Across the world, big, dominant narratives have been defeated not by what's in the history books but by people's voices.

British politicians are obsessed with borders-and yet they aren't protecting us

Daniel Trilling

The idea of the border has come to dominate British politics - yet it seems as if everywhere, borders aren't doing what politicians say they should. In England, a potentially dangerous variant of Covid-19 has taken root, despite the traffic-light system of international travel restrictions. In Northern Ireland, a representative of loyalist paramilitaries raises the prospect of violence if the post-Brexit customs border in the Irish Sea is not removed. In Glasgow, an immigration raid prompts a community to occupy the streets in protest against the very border policy that the government claims is there to keep them safe. What these examples have in common is that they are all cases in which politicians have presented borders as a tool for greater

control - over public health, say, or national sovereignty, or immigration. Yet their efforts seem to have the opposite effect. Why does this keep happening? Often, we talk about borders as if they are a fact of life - a natural dividing line between peoples and states - or as if they are mere technical arrangements that can be safely sectioned off from wider politics. Last week, for instance, the home secretary, Priti Patel, announced plans for a "fully digital border system" that would enable officials to count the number of people who enter and leave the country. Under this new system, immigration will be simpler and fairer for people who come to the UK legally, allowing the government to be even tougher on people who are here without official permission. Patel might be distinguished from her predecessors by her hardline approach to enforcement, but this is also a version of what politicians in her position have promised for decades. Yet the promise is always something to be fulfilled in the future, never in the present. The philosopher Etienne Balibar has a useful explanation for why international borders are so often the site of such conflict today. Borders, first of all, are what he calls "overdetermined": they never have a single function, such as marking out the edges of a territory, but express a range of different political relationships: between neighbouring states, certainly, but also between regions and political blocs, or between the powerful and the weak. "Global Britain," Patel said in her speech, is more than a slogan: it "underpins everything we do". A major claim of the Conservatives' emerging "global Britain" ideology is that Brexit will revive the UK as a world trading power, through treaties that for the most part still need to be signed. When Covid cases in India shot up this spring, did the government delay placing the country on the "red list" of travel restrictions to avoid souring a prospective trade deal, as some critics have suggested? The health secretary said not, but the issue illustrates the competing pressures at work. Balibar also describes how a border can mean radically different things to different people, depending on how a state wants to treat them. Earlier this month, a German-born businessman called Wolfgang told the Guardian of his shock at being detained on arrival at Heathrow, despite having indefinite leave to re-



main in the UK. "How is it that a border official with one tick can suspend those rights," he asked. This was a case of rules being misapplied: as an EU citizen who had been living in the UK before Brexit, Wolfgang should have been allowed to enter the country freely. But border systems are designed precisely to discriminate between people, on the basis of nationality certainly, but also to reinforce a global system of class and caste. The immigration raid that prompted such opposition in Glasgow is a case in point. Patel defended the practice, which extends border control far away from the geographical frontiers of the UK and into the heart of the country's residential neighbourhoods, as a necessary means to expel undesirables. People who seek to disrupt immigration enforcement, said Patel, "should think about whether their actions may be preventing murderers, rapists and high-harm offenders from being removed from our communities". Her opponents say that it's the enforcement itself that causes harm to communities. The heavy police presence in Glasgow, said Van Man, an activist who lay under an immigration enforcement van for almost eight hours to stop it driving off, "just goes to show how these 'hostile environment' policies start off criminalising migrants, but quickly turn on anyone

else who stands in the government's way". At the root of the matter, says Balibar, there is a fundamental conflict in the tasks that borders are expected to perform. Borders might be a set of legal and technological measures that aim to filter people, or goods, or anything else whose movement a state might wish to regulate. But they also play an important ideological function, existing to reinforce a sense of shared national identity and continuity among citizens of a state - and the first set of priorities can often come into conflict with the latter. Enthusiasts for Brexit, for instance, may well argue that the erosion of the UK's borders during its membership of the EU was responsible for a nationalist backlash - yet the situation in Northern Ireland now is only the most alarming example of how imposing border controls can expose divisions among the inhabitants of a state rather than smooth them over. We often talk about borders in terms of what they mean for outsiders - for the people and things that are either excluded or welcomed. But the way a country chooses to police its borders will tell you most of all about the political priorities of the people who run that country. If the priority now is "global Britain", then what we should be asking is: who will that benefit? And who will lose out?

BRICS organisation and Covid-19 vaccine geopolitics

Mumbai, June 08 : The debate on international geopolitical forces gains new strength in the current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is a fact that the pandemic highlighted a crisis of globalization and global governance, intensifying international disputes, while consolidating China as a global power and demonstrating to the



world Russia's remaining importance. Pakistan train collision 2 trains collide in Pakistan's southern Sindh Province; 30 killed, 50 injured. Prince Harry, Meghan announce birth of baby girl called Lilibet 'Lili' Diana Mountbatten-Windsor. Prince Harry, Meghan announce birth of baby girl called Lilibet 'Lili' Diana Mountbatten-Windsor. A first overview of the situation concerns the type of cooperation undertaken by these countries in their participation in the international division of scientific work. It is noted that even though there are divergences within the BRICS and a certain slow progress when it comes to implementing initiatives, the North-South cooperation model, fundamental in the international context of the 1990s, continues to lose importance as the predominant model in the regions in development. South-South cooperation has grown and at the same time, other forms of cooperation have appeared, including South-North cooperation, such as China's support for Italy, and East-North cooperation, as in the shipment of Russian medical supplies to the United States. In the international dispute for the vaccine, even though the traditional producers of science have been those who most increased their number of scientific publications in internationally indexed journals during the pan-

dem, Russia, India, China and, to a lesser extent, South Africa have been playing a role in the global immunization market. These countries have had strong initiatives to develop vaccine technology and have substantially improved their national regulatory capacity. Russia was the first country to announce the registration of a vaccine

against COVID-19, in August 2020, naming it Sputnik, in reference to the first Russian space satellite, launched in 1957. Although some data from the Russian tests has not yet been made available by the Gamaleya Institute, responsible for vaccine research, in 2021, the British scientific journal The Lancet published research showing that the Russian vaccine is as effective as several Western vaccines, at 92%. India, which is the country in the bloc with the most scientific publications on COVID-19, contacted heads of state from around the world seeking global coordination in managing the coronavirus outbreak. The country, with support from India, Russia and South Africa, has argued in international forums that the vaccine is a global public good. Brazil, on the other hand, has preferred to adopt a posture aligned with developed countries. This posture differs from that adopted in the past together with India, at the time of the Doha Declaration (2001). The declaration recognizes the right of each country to obtain generic drugs without paying royalties charged by multinationals. This is the first international crisis in which China is bolstering its soft power and actively assuming a global leadership role. This is the first international crisis in which China is bolstering its soft power and actively assum-

ing a global leadership role. The public health crisis is an opportunity for China to build confidence in the world, rebuild its international image and consolidate its place as a global power. In March 2020, it donated US\$20m to WHO in the fight against the pandemic and in April, after the US president threatened to reduce the contribution paid to WHO, China pledged to donate another US\$30m. The US contributed in 2019 US\$550m/year to the WHO. The Serum Institute of India (SII) is the largest vaccine manufacturer in the world in number of doses produced (1.5 billion doses/year, 80% are exported) and the company supplies about 20 vaccines to 165 countries at an average of US\$ 0.50 per serving, one of the most affordable in the world. The Serum Institute, responsible for producing doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine imported by Brazil, delayed in March the shipment of new immunization agents to Brazil. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India informed that the delay occurred because India only started to release the doses after opening its own immunization campaign. The agreement between India and the Brazilian Ministry of Health provides for the Serum Institute to send the country 10 million doses of the Oxford vaccine, according to Fiocruz, the public institution responsible for manufacturing the immunizing agent in Brazil. Two million doses were delivered to the country at the end of January. The current contract provides for the eight million doses to arrive in four shipments of two million each by July 2021. The National Health Surveillance Agency of Brazil (Anvisa) decided this Friday (June 4th, 2021) to approve, conditionally and with restrictions, new requests for endorsement to import doses of vaccines against Covid Covaxin and Sputnik V. Among the conditions, is carrying out extra studies of effectiveness and delivery of new data by providers, before the distribution. Anvisa also says that the use of both vaccines can be suspended in case of new assessments by the

agency or the WHO contrary to the current opinion. Requests for the use of the Covaxin vaccine were made by the Ministry of Health and by six Brazilian states. Initially, the orders involved 20 million doses of Covaxin. However, imports equivalent to 1% of the population of the states and the country were authorized - the equivalent of 4 million doses, considering two doses. This is the second time that the agency has met to evaluate requests for exceptional endorsement of imports from Covaxin. In March, Anvisa denied an import request for Covaxin made by the Ministry of Health of Brazil. Among the reasons was the lack of minimum data required for analysis and a certificate of good manufacturing practices. Since January, SII's vaccine has been used in the Brazilian vaccination campaign against COVID-19. In addition to it, the country has been using a greater quantity of Coronavac, produced by the Chinese laboratory Sinovac in partnership with the Butantan Institute. With only two immunization agents available and problems with the production of inputs, the country has been vaccinating at a slow pace. The international strength of Russia and China seems to be expressed, in the geopolitics of the vaccine, through the choice of themes dealt with in cooperation with other BRICS countries and through their soft power in the international system, which gains new contours in the search for solutions of international organizations for the current situation. In the vacuum left by the rich countries, three BRICS countries present themselves with their own immunization agents and a desire to expand their influence in the international system: Russia, China and India. For Brazil, which has already played a major role in the BRICS, it could be an opportunity to use its experience in large-scale production and immunization.

Amaze Inverters and Batteries extends Endorsement Deal with Cricket Superstar Virat Kohli for Another 3 years

The top-order batsman has been associated with the brand since its inception in 2018 and has been the face of Amaze



New Delhi, June 08 : Amaze, one of the youngest and the fastest growing inverter and inverter battery brand in India, has extended its endorsement deal with the Indian cricketer Virat Kohli for another 3 years. The top-order batsman has been associated with the company since its inception in 2018 and has been the face of Amaze. As part of the deal, Virat Kohli will feature in all print and electronic media advertisements for the brand. Talking about the contract extension, Virat Kohli, Indian Cricketer said, "I have a great association with Amaze and will continue to be with the brand. Amaze has been growing tremendously across different geographies of India and I take pride to say that they have been living up to their promise of providing high-performance power backup products". Mr. Rajesh Kalra, Head of Sales, Amaze said, "We are delighted to extend our collaboration with one of the greatest batsmen in the world, Virat Kohli. He has always brought a deeper consumer connect to the

brand and we hope to seek exemplary success together". Speaking on this association, Mr. Vipul Sabharwal, Managing Director said, "At Amaze, our commitment towards delivering the best, resonates with Virat's superb performance on the cricket field. As we celebrate more than 3 years of our association with the Captain of Indian Cricket Team, we are proud to continue our journey with him and hope to grow rapidly." About Amaze: Amaze is one of the youngest and the fastest growing inverter and battery brand in India. Amaze came to business in 2018 and it is a product of Long last Power Products Limited. The company offers a range of inverters and batteries that are designed to withstand long and frequent power cuts. The Company aims to provide high performance and high-quality power back up products to its customers through its network of distributors present in most of the cities across India.

SGX Nifty signals gap-up start for Sensex, Nifty; 5 things to know before the opening bell



Mumbai, June 08 : BSE Sensex and Nifty 50 were likely to open in the green on Monday, as suggested by SGX Nifty. In the previous session, equity indices on Dalal Street ended lower after the RBI announced to keep the repo rate unchanged. Broader markets indices S&P BSE MidCap and S&P BSE SmallCap outperformed the benchmarks. Global cues were mixed during the early hours of trade while Wall Street indices climbed in over-

night trade on Friday. Factors such as corporate results, stock-specific developments, oil prices, rupee movement and other global cues will guide the stock markets in today's session. Global watch: Asian stock markets were trading mixed on Monday with Japan's Nikkei gaining 0.33 per cent. The Topix index and South Korea's Kospi were marginally up. US stocks climbed on Friday, lifted by technology stocks. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.43 per cent, the S&P 500 gained 0.83 per cent, and the Nasdaq Composite added 1.5 per cent. Share Market Today, Share Market Live, Share Market LIVE: SGX Nifty sits in green; Economy unlikely to get fresh stimulus boost this quarter. Nifty,

sensex, stock market Sensex, Nifty end in red on GDP growth forecast cut by RBI; check how to trade next week. Results today: Union Bank of India, Central Bank of India, Mrs Bectors Food Specialities, Dynamic Technologies, MRF, New India Assurance Company, Shree Pushkar Chemicals & Fertilisers, SMC Global Securities, SMS Lifesciences India, Tower Infrastructure Trust, Victoria Mills, and Yuken India, among others are scheduled to announce their January-March quarter earnings on June 7. Vijaya Diagnostics files IPO papers: Vijaya Diagnostics Centre has filed preliminary papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial share-sale. The initial public offer (IPO) is entirely an offer for sale of 3.56 crore equity shares by the promoters, Dr S Surendranath Reddy and investors Karakoram Ltd and Kedaara Capital Alternative Investment Fund.

ICICI Prudential Life announces the highest ever bonus of ₹867 crore for policyholders

Mumbai, June, 2021: ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has announced an annual bonus of ₹867 crore for all eligible participating policyholders for FY2021. The bonus declared is the highest ever by the Company till date and is also 10% higher than the bonus announced in the last fiscal. All participating policies in force as of March 31, 2021 are eligible to receive this bonus and will be added to the policyholders' benefits. A total of 9.8 lakh participating policyholders will benefit from this, taking them closer to their long-term financial goals. Bonus is the share of profits generated by the Company's participating policyholder's funds which are added to their guaranteed maturity benefits, thus enhancing the corpus. This is the 15th consecutive year the Company has declared a bonus, underscoring its customer-centricity and long-term investment approach to deliver superior risk-adjusted returns to policyholders. The stringent investment philosophy of the Company has ensured zero defaults in its portfolio since inception and across market cycles. As of March 31, 2021, 96.8% of the fixed income port-

folio is invested in sovereign or AAA rated paper. Mr. N S Kannan, Managing Director & CEO, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said, "We are delighted to announce that the annual bonus for FY2021 is the highest ever in the history of the Company. What gives us special satisfaction is the fact that it coincides with the 20th anniversary of our operations. It demonstrates our customer focus, resilience and ability to navigate through the unprecedented challenges posed by the pandemic. What drives us in this challenging environment is the commitment to our vision of building an enduring institution that serves the protection and long-term saving needs of our customers with sensitivity." The Company's entire range of traditional long-term products provides customers with safety of capital and steady returns and the life cover provides the much required financial security to the family. Lakshya, the Company's innovative participating product, caters to the diverse needs of customers ranging from long-term wealth creation to specific income requirements at different life stages. About ICICI Prudential Life Insurance

Company ICICI Prudential Life is promoted by ICICI Bank Limited and Prudential Corporation Holdings Limited. The Company began operations in fiscal 2001 and has consistently been amongst the top private sector life insurance companies in India on a Retail Weighted Received Premium (RWRP) basis. The Company offers an array of products in the Protection and Savings category which match the different life stage requirements of customers, enabling them to provide a financial safety net to their families as well as achieve their long-term financial goals. The digital platform of the Company provides a paperless onboarding experience to customers, empowers them to conduct an assortment of self-service transactions, provides a convenient route to make digital payments for purchasing and making renewal premium payments, and facilitates a hassle-free claims settlement process. On March 31, 2021, the Company had an AUM of ₹2,142.18 billion and a Total Sum Assured of ₹20.30 trillion. ICICI Prudential Life is listed on both the National Stock Exchange (NSE) Limited and the BSE Limited.

New Income Tax e-filing website Live: ITR e-filing 2.0 portal link, features, benefits to be operational soon

Mumbai, June 08 : New e-filing website (www.incometax.gov.in) launch: Along with the launch of the new e-filing portal, the Income Tax Department will also provide free of cost ITR preparation software for Forms ITR-1, ITR-2 and 4. In a statement earlier, the Ministry of Finance had said, "Free of cost ITR preparation software available with interactive questions to help taxpayers for ITRs 1, 4 (online and offline) and ITR 2 (offline) to begin with; Facility for preparation of ITRs 3, 5, 6, 7 will be made available shortly. Functionalities for filing Income Tax Forms, Add tax professionals, Submit responses to Notices in Faceless Scrutiny or Appeals would be available. New Income Tax e-filing website Live | e-filing website link, e-filing portal benefits, new e-filing website benefits, e-filing website features | ITR e-filing 2.0 portal link The new e-filing website will enable a new online tax payment system with multiple new payment options using net banking, UPI, credit card and RTGS/NEFT from any account of taxpayer in any bank,

work towards making it operational soon," the tax department tweeted at 9 am. Along with the launch of the new e-filing portal, the Income Tax Department will also provide free of cost ITR preparation software for Forms ITR-1, ITR-2 and 4. In a statement earlier, the Ministry of Finance had said, "Free of cost ITR preparation software available with interactive questions to help taxpayers for ITRs 1, 4 (online and offline) and ITR 2 (offline) to begin with; Facility for preparation of ITRs 3, 5, 6, 7 will be made available shortly. Functionalities for filing Income Tax Forms, Add tax professionals, Submit responses to Notices in Faceless Scrutiny or Appeals would be available. New Income Tax e-filing website Live | e-filing website link, e-filing portal benefits, new e-filing website benefits, e-filing website features | ITR e-filing 2.0 portal link The new e-filing website will enable a new online tax payment system with multiple new payment options using net banking, UPI, credit card and RTGS/NEFT from any account of taxpayer in any bank,

for easy payment of taxes. "The mobile app will also be released subsequent to the initial launch of the portal, to enable taxpayers to get familiar with the various features," the CBDT said. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) frames policy for the Income Tax Department and the e-filing website is used by the taxpayers to file their tax returns and perform other transactions with the department. Read more "We are as excited about the new portal as our users! We are at the final stages in the roll-out of the new portal and it will be available shortly. We appreciate your patience as we work towards making it operational soon," the tax department tweeted at 9 am. "We are as excited about the new portal as our users! We are at the final stages in the roll-out of the new portal and it will be available shortly. We appreciate your patience as we work towards making it operational soon," the tax department tweeted at 9 am. "We are as excited about the new portal as our users! 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Contd. From Page 1

Assam Class 10, 12 Board Exams

had said that he is hopeful on holding the board exams. Mr Pegu also said that the government will consider the flood situation in the state and allocate exam centres accordingly. "We have identified enough exam centres that are outside the flood-prone zones where exams can be held seamlessly. Also, the cases of COVID-19 are also decreasing in the state. So, we are very hopeful," Dr. Ranaj Pegu had said. The opposition Congress on Monday also called for the cancellation of Class 10, 12 board examinations in Assam, and urged the state government to take a decision in this regard soon. Writing a letter to Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam Congress President Ripun Bora requested him to immediately formulate a mechanism or an evaluation scheme in order to cope up with CBSE's internal assessment after the cancellation of examinations by the central board. The students of Assam have been demanding that the state government cancel Class 10 and Class 12 Board exams in view of the COVID-19 pandemic for the past few weeks. They had also campaigned on Twitter using Wake Up SEBA AHSEC, Cancel Assam Board Exams and Cancel Assam Board Exam to register their protest.

Assam minority group wants MHA

file two interlocutory applications in the Supreme Court on May 11 seeking a comprehensive re-verification of the complete list of citizens published on August 31, 2019. The AAMSU pointed out that Mr. Sarma projected the NRC as a "draft" with a view to discarding the entire exercise carried out under the direction and supervision of the apex court. Of the 3.3 crore people who had applied for inclusion in the NRC, 19.06 lakh were left out for lack of adequate documents to establish their citizenship. Those on the rejection list were supposed to have been served notices with reasons for their exclusion. According to the AAMSU, each of these 19.06 lakh people has been awaiting the rejection slip for approaching a Foreigners' Tribunal to present their cases afresh within 120 days of receiving the notice. Keeping the excluded people in limbo by not issuing the rejection orders is an injustice that warrants action against the NRC Coordinator, the AAMSU said.

79% decline in COVID cases since

home isolation + medical infrastructure) and there has been a 6.3% overall decrease in positivity from June 1-7. Aggarwal also said that there has been a 33% decline in the number of cases in the last week and a 65% reduction in active cases. "State-wise, there are 15 states with less than 5% positivity," Aggarwal, added. Speaking on his turn, AIIMS Director Dr Randeep Guleria said, "No data, global or Indian, has had any observations of children being affected more. Even in the 2nd wave, kids who were infected had mild illness or co-morbidities. I don't think we will have a serious infection in children in the future." Replying to a question related to vaccine supply and prices, Dr VK Paul of Niti Aayog said, "The price of vaccines to private sectors (hospitals) will be decided by vaccine manufacturers. States will aggregate demand of the private sector, which means they will oversee how much network of facilities it has, and how many doses does it require." Paul further said that the govt has placed an order to purchase 25 crore doses of Covishield and 19 crore doses of Covaxin. "Govt has also placed an order to purchase 30 crore doses of Biological E's vaccine, which will be available by September," Dr VK Paul said. India on Tuesday reported 86,498 new COVID-19 cases and 2123 deaths in the last 24 hours, according to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare data. This was the lowest number of cases reported in the last 68 days. With the new cases, the COVID case tally in India reached 2,89,09,975. According to Union Health Ministry, as many as 1,82,282 patients recovered from the disease in the last 24 hours taking the total number of recoveries to 2,73,41,462. Meanwhile, the active number of COVID cases in the country stands at 13,03,702. The new fatalities pushed the COVID death toll in the country to 3,51,309. As many as 36,82,07,596 samples have been tested in the country up to June 8 including 18,73,485 samples tested on Monday, informed the Indian Council of Medical Research.

Photographs of President, PM

at Digharkhal and Srirampur inter-state border gates. This practice will continue on a pilot basis till March 31. The chief minister, finance minister, and transport minister will monitor the whole process.

Assam CM directs to draft guideline

The Chief Minister also suggested steps for a comprehensive survey to assess the scenario of agricultural produce in 3000 village panchayats and VDCs involving the students of Assam Agricultural University, Gauhati University and Dibrugarh University," said a press release. The meeting was attended by agriculture minister Atul Bora and senior officials of the department.

Asom Ratna, Asom Bibhushan

on Tuesday decided that this award would be given away every year from now onwards. On the other hand, three new awards - Asom Bibhushan, Asom Bhushan and Asom Shree - have been introduced by the Assam Government. The Asom Ratna award would be given away to only one personality every year and will also carry a reward of Rs 5 lakh. On the other hand, the Asom Bibhushan award would be conferred upon three personalities and will carry reward of Rs 3 lakh each. Also read: Assam: NSCN-IM raises objection to proposed Karbi Accord, says 'agreement victimizing Rengma Nagas not acceptable' Meanwhile, Asom Bhushan and Asom Shree awards would be given away to five and ten personalities respectively. While, Asom Bhushan award would carry a reward of Rs 2 lakh each, the Asom Shree award would carry a reward of Rs 1 lakh each. The awards would be given away on Sukapha Divas or Asom Divas, which is being celebrated in Assam on December 2 every year, to commemorate the advent of the first king of the Ahom kingdom in Assam. These awards would be conferred for outstanding contribution in literature, art and culture and social service. The announcement was made by Assam Education Minister Ranuj Pegu on Tuesday. The awardees would become entitled to avail medical treatment and use rooms in circuit houses for free.

Placed orders for 44 crore doses

Biotech," Dr Paul said. He said the Centre has been supporting the efforts of states and union territories for an effective vaccination drive under the "whole of government approach" since January 16 this year. Based on various representations received by the Centre, the vaccination for all adults above 18 years of age was opened in Phase III of the vaccination strategy beginning May 1. "Now with the aim to further universalise the countrywide vaccination drive, all citizens above 18 years of age can receive the COVID-19 vaccine doses free of cost at government health facilities," Paul said. The central government will provide free coronavirus vaccines to states and union territories for inoculation of all above 18 years of age from June 21. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday, announcing that the Centre will take over the 25 per cent state procurement quota. Asserting that vaccine supply would be increased significantly in the coming days, the prime minister said the Centre has now decided to buy 75 per cent of jabs from vaccine makers for free supply to states, while private sector hospitals will continue to procure the remaining 25 per cent.

Huge Internet Outage, Some

facing "Degraded Performance", the website showed. Separately, Amazon.com Inc's retail website also seemed to be down. Amazon was not immediately available to comment. Websites operated by news outlets including the Financial Times, the Guardian, the New York Times and Bloomberg News also faced outages. A glitch at Fastly, a popular CDN provider, on Tuesday, left websites like Twitch, Amazon, Spotify, Reddit, HBO Max, Quora, PayPal, Vimeo, the New York Times, BBC, Financial Times, UK government website, and a few others, facing an outage. This was first reported by Financial Times. Fastly has also updated its Status page confirming that it is facing an outage. "We're currently investigating potential impact to performance with our CDN services," Fastly said. Over 21,000 Reddit users have reported an issue with the website so far, and over 2,000 users have reported troubles with Amazon, as per Downdetector.com. Since 4 pm IST on 8 June, there has also been a spike in issues reported about Google. For the uninitiated, Fastly is an "edge" network, that sits between users and websites and bridges the gap for content delivery network, image optimisation, video and streaming, cloud security, among other things.

Centre issues revised guidelines

than 45 years of age; Citizens whose second dose has become due; and Citizens 18 years and above. As per the guidelines, within the population group of citizens over 18 years of age, the Centre said States/UTs may decide their own prioritisation factoring in the vaccine supply schedule. "Vaccine doses provided free of cost by Government of India will be allocated to States/UTs based on criteria such as population, disease burden and the progress of vaccination. Wastage of vaccine will affect the allocation negatively," the notification said. Further, the Centre said that under the revised guidelines, it will provide States/UTs advance information of vaccine doses to be supplied to them. "States/UTs should similarly, further allocate doses well in advance to districts and vaccination centres. They should also put in the public domain the information about the above availability at district and vaccination center level, and widely disseminate it among the local population, maximizing the visibility and convenience of citizens," it stated. In order to incentivise production by vaccine manufacturers and encourage new vaccines, domestic vaccine manufacturers are given the option to also provide vaccines directly to private hospitals. "This would be restricted to 25 per cent of their monthly production. States/UTs would aggregate the demand of private hospitals keeping in view equitable distribution between large and small private hospitals and regional balance. Based on this aggregated demand, the Government of India will facilitate the supply of these vaccines to the private hospitals and their payment through the National Health Authority's electronic platform. This would enable the smaller and remoter private hospitals to obtain a timely supply of vaccines, and further equitable access and regional balance," the government notification said. According to new guidelines, the price of vaccine doses for private hospitals would be declared by each vaccine manufacturer, and any subsequent changes would be notified in advance. "The private hospitals may charge up to a maximum of Rupees 150 per dose as service charges. State Governments may monitor the price being so charged," it stated. The government noted that all citizens irrespective of their income status are entitled to free vaccination, and those who have the ability to pay are encouraged to use private hospital's vaccination centres. Under the revised guidelines, to promote the spirit of "Lok Kalyan", the use of non-transferable Electronic Vouchers which can be redeemed at private vaccination centres, will be encouraged, which would enable people to financially support vaccination of Economically Weaker Sections at private vaccination centres. "The CoWIN platform provides every citizen with the facility of conveniently and safely pre-booking vaccination appointments. All government and private vaccination centers would also provide an onsite registration facility, available both for individuals as well as groups of individuals, for which detailed procedure is to be finalized and published by States/UTs, in order to minimize any inconvenience to citizens," the Centre said adding that the states may also optimally utilize the Common Service Centres and Call Centres to facilitate prior booking by citizens. "The revised program provides States/UTs with additional central government support across funding, procurement and logistics. It also facilitates scientific prioritization, wider access, harnessing of private sector capacity and flexibility at the state and local level," the Centre added. The plan for centralised free COVID-19 vaccination was presented to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 1 on the completion of one month of the decentralised model. The implementation of the Liberalised and accelerated phase-3 strategy of Covid-19 vaccination has started from May 1, 2021.

Kashi Vishwanath Temple

features added to the project like the Ganga View Point will be delayed further as approval from the state government is pending. "The official leading the team of the company executing the Kashi Vishwanath Dham project has tested COVID-19 positive. Besides, a large number of labourers, including those from West Bengal, left for home after the surge in COVID-19 cases. Moreover, the agency had to reduce manpower for maintaining social distancing at sites as per COVID protocol. Hence, the work has been affected. We are now confident of completing work by November 15," divisional commissioner Deepak Agrawal said on May 25. PWD executive engineer Sanjay Gore, who is supervising the project, said, "A total of 24 buildings are proposed in KV Dham area. Structural work of 12 buildings has been fully completed while work on 12 others is in progress. Construction of jetty and its retaining wall at Manikamika, Jalasen and Lalita ghats has also been completed. In total, 53 per cent of the work on the project has already been completed." The work of over Rs 600 crore KV Dham project was also impacted during the nationwide lockdown in 2020. The project has cleared all barriers after approval from the Yogi Adityanath-led government in December 2017 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had laid its foundation in March 2018.

Rights of Mehul Choksi will

citizen is before the courts. The courts will decide what happens to the gentleman and we will allow the court process to go through. I do not like to get involved by making public statements in these matters," Skerit said. "His rights will be respected as has been done thus far and let the court decide what will happen. We have no issues in so far as the matter relates to Antigua and or India, we are part of our own community and we must recognize our duties and responsibilities in this regard," he was quoted by the website. Choksi had mysteriously gone missing on May 23 from Antigua and Barbuda where he has been staying since 2018 as a citizen. He was detained in neighbouring island country Dominica for illegal entry after a possible romantic escapade with his rumoured girlfriend. His lawyers alleged that he was kidnapped from Jolly Harbour in Antigua by policemen looking like Antiguan and Indian and brought to Dominica on a boat. He was also brought before a Roseau magistrate, on the orders of Dominica High Court, which is hearing a Habeas Corpus petition filed by his lawyers, to answer charges of illegal entry where he pleaded not guilty but was denied bail. A team of Indian officials had gone to Dominica to try deportation of Choksi, having pending Interpol Red Corner Notice, but returned after High Court adjourned the matter.

Special Vaccination Drive for Aged Persons Starts in Golaghat

Golaghat, Jun 8: 'Near to Home' a special Covid vaccination drive for the elderly and specially abled persons was started from today in Golaghat. In the program today thirty such aged persons were brought to the Covid vaccination centre at Mudoj Gaon LP School and given Covid 19 Vaccines. Under this special program senior citizens and specially abled persons will be vaccinated in vaccination centres near their homes. Today twenty number of specially abled persons were vaccinated at Morongi Dinanath High School Vaccination Centre under this 'Near to Home' program. Today in the inaugural program District Vaccination Officer Jyoti Deori, Additional CHMO Dr Taufiq Hussain, Senior Medical Practitioner Dr Sunita Ekka, District Program Officer of NHM Anushka Bora along with several other doctors and health workers were present.

Juhi Chawla's 5G lawsuit dismissed by Delhi High Court, actress fined Rs 20 lakh

New Delhi, June 08: The Delhi High Court on Friday (June 4) dismissed the lawsuit filed by actress and environmentalist Juhi Chawla against the setting up of 5G wireless networks in the country. The court said that the plaintiffs abused the process of law and imposed a fine of Rs 20 lakhs on the actress, ANI reported. In its order, the Delhi

High Court said that 'it appears that the suit was for publicity'. It said Juhi Chawla circulated the link of the hearing on social media, which created disruption thrice. "Delhi Police shall identify the persons and take action against those who created a disruption," the court added. The court also directed the Delhi Police to identify and take ac-



Biswanath Chariali,

June 8: A rare species of Chinese Pangolin (Manis pentadactyla) was spotted in a house of one Manipuri Mech; a resident of Na-Telia under Biswanath district on Tuesday morning. It was rescued by local people in association with a team of foresters from the Western Range, Nagsankar under Biswanath Wildlife Division. Later on, the team of foresters released it in the sixth addition area of Kaziranga National Park.

Oxygen Expresses deliver nearly 27600 MT of LMO to the Nation

392 Oxygen Expresses complete Oxygen deliveries across the country

New Delhi, June 08: Overcoming all hurdles and finding new solutions, Indian Railways is continuing its journey of bringing relief by delivering Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) to various states across the country. Oxygen Expresses crossed mark of 27000 MT of LMO delivery in service to the Nation. So far, Indian Railways has delivered nearly 27600 MT of LMO in more than 1603 tankers to various states across the country. It may be noted that 392 Oxygen Expresses have completed their journey so far and brought relief to various States. Till the time of this release, 4 loaded Oxygen Expresses on run with more than 381 MT of LMO in 21 tankers. More than 3700 MT Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) offloaded in Tamil Nadu by Oxygen Expresses. Oxygen Expresses offloaded more than 2700, 3000 and 3300 MT of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) in the state of Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka respectively. It is worth mentioning that Oxygen Expresses started their deliveries 45 days back on 24th April in Maharashtra with a load of 126 MT. It is Indian Railways endeavour to deliver as much LMO as possible in the shortest time possible to the requesting states. Oxygen relief by Oxygen Expresses reached out to 15 states namely Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand and Assam. Till the time of this release, 614 MT of Oxygen has been offloaded in Maharashtra, nearly 3797 MT in Uttar Pradesh, 656 MT in Madhya Pradesh, 5790 MT in Delhi, 2212 MT in Haryana, 98 MT in Rajasthan, 3341 MT in Karnataka, 320 MT in Uttarakhand, 3773 MT in Tamil Nadu, 3049 MT in Andhra Pradesh, 225 MT in Punjab, 513 MT in Kerala, 2765 MT in Telangana, 38 MT in Jharkhand and 400 MT in Assam. Till now Oxygen Expresses offloaded LMO in around 39 cities/towns in 15 states across the country namely Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur, Bareilly, Gorakhpur & Agra in Uttar Pradesh, Sagar, Jabalpur, Katni & Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh, Nagpur, Nashik, Pune, Mumbai & Solapur in Maharashtra, Hyderabad in Telangana, Faridabad & Gurugram in Haryana, Tuglakabad, Delhi Cantt & Okhla in Delhi, Kota & Kanakpura in Rajasthan, Bengaluru in Karnataka, Dehradun in Uttarakhand, Nellore, Guntur, Tadipatri & Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, Ernakulam in Kerala, Tiruvallur, Chennai, Tuticorin, Coimbatore & Madurai in Tamil Nadu, Bhatinda & Phillaur in Punjab, Kamrup in Assam and Ranchi in Jharkhand. Indian Railways has mapped different routes with Oxygen supply locations and keeps itself ready with any emerging need of the States. States provide tankers to the Indian Railways for bringing LMO. Criss crossing the country, Indian Railways is picking up oxygen from places like Hapa, Baroda, Mundra in the West and Rourkela, Durgapur, Tatanagar, Angul in the East and then delivering it to States of Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh & Assam in complex operational route planning scenarios. In order to ensure that Oxygen relief reaches in the fastest time possible, Railways is creating new standards and unprecedented benchmarks in running of Oxygen Express Freight Trains. The average speed of these critical Freight trains is way above 55 in most cases over long distances. Running on high priority Green Corridor, with a highest sense of urgency, operational teams of various zones are working round the clock in most challenging circumstances to ensure that Oxygen reaches in fastest possible time frame. Technical stoppages have been reduced to 1 minute for crew changes over different sections. Tracks are kept open and high alertness is maintained to ensure that Oxygen Express keeps zipping through. All this is done in a manner that speed of other Freight Operation doesn't get reduced as well. Running of new Oxygen is a very dynamic exercise and figures keep getting updated all the time. More loaded Oxygen Expresses are expected to start their journeys later in the night.

Several NGOs' took out Plantation Drive in Hojai District

Hojai, June 08: In synchronisation with rest of the world, World Environment Day was observed in Hojai district too. Several NGOs, individuals, Government and non government establishments planted hundreds of saplings. Marwari Samellan Hojai Unit planted twenty saplings at the campus of Gandhi Vidyapith High School and at the premises of Laxminarayan Temple in Hojai on Saturday. Talking to this correspondent, Pradeep Sureka, President and Ramesh Munda General Secretary said, "Environment Protection is the need of the hour and everyone need to be accountable for its protection and conservation." The volunteers of Geetaashram Trust along with Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Durga Vahini and Bajrang Dal planted 100 saplings at Bihutoli field, Gowshala and Ashananda. The authorities of Sankardevnagar Junior College, KMK memorial college opted for virtual plantation drive thereby encouraged the student to recycle papers clothes which can help the environment in nature. On the other hand the teachers in the school took active participation by inspiring the student to observe this day with the help of several environmental related activities. The principal and vice Principal of the institution involved themselves in the plantation drive and planted a number of saplings around the school campus. Fatima welfare Foundation, Daboka took an initiative of planting 3,000 saplings. The volunteers of All Assam Minority Student Union, Nilbagan Unit planted hundred of saplings.

tion against the person who disrupted proceedings of the Delhi high court during the hearing on the matter. The unidentified person on Wednesday did not stop singing songs from popular movies of actor Juhi Chawla during the online hearing until he was muted and removed from the online hearing.

Top Japanese virologist warns of risks of Tokyo Games during pandemic

Tokyo, June 08 : Already postponed from last year because of the pandemic, a scaled-down version of the Games with no foreign spectators is set to start on July 23 despite public fears the event could spread the coronavirus and drain medical resources. A top Japanese virologist and government adviser has warned of the risks of spreading COVID-19 infections during the Tokyo Olympics, the Times of London reported on Tuesday, the latest high-profile caveat about the global sporting showpiece. Tohoku University professor Hiroshi Oshitani was an architect of Japan's "Three Cs" approach to the pandemic, which advises avoiding closed spaces, crowds and close contact situations. "The government and the organising committee, including the IOC (International Olympic Committee), keep saying they're holding a safe Olympics. But everybody knows there is a risk. It's 100 per cent impossible to have an Olympics with zero risk...of the spread of infection in Japan and also in other countries after the Olympics," the Times quoted Oshitani as telling the newspaper. "There are a number of countries that do not have many cases, and a number that don't have any variants. We should not make the Olympics (an occasion) to



spread the virus to these countries," he added, noting most countries lack vaccines. Already postponed from last year because of the pandemic, a scaled-down version of the Games with no foreign spectators is set to start on July 23 despite public fears the event could spread the coronavirus and drain medical resources. However, a former Olympian turned public health expert said she believed the Games can be pulled off with an acceptable level of risk. "There will be cases, but having one case or a couple of cases doesn't mean that it was a failure," Tara Kirk Sell, a professor at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, told Reuters on Tuesday. Playbooks from event organisers detailing testing regimes and movement

restrictions for athletes and other visitors "outline a good strategy" for minimising contagion, she added. Japan has not suffered the explosive outbreak seen elsewhere but has recorded nearly 760,000 cases and more than 13,500 deaths. Tokyo and other regions are under a state of emergency as it battles a fourth wave which is straining hospitals. The government's top medical adviser, Shigeru Omi, said last week medical experts planned a statement on the Games by June 20, when the state of emergency is set to be lifted. A labour union in the northern island of Hokkaido, where the Olympic marathon will be held, petitioned its governor on Monday calling for the Games to be cancelled, media said. Japanese Olympic Committee board member Kaori Yamaguchi, a judo bronze

medallist at the 1988 Games, said on Friday Japan had been "cornered" into pressing ahead with the Games. read more Japan's public remains divided about holding the Games, although opposition appears to be easing somewhat. A poll by broadcaster TBS this week showed 55% wanted the Games either postponed or cancelled - down 10 points from last month. Sell, a silver medalist swimmer at the 2004 Games in Athens, said accelerating vaccinations and ebbing case numbers in Japan are positive signs the Olympics can go on, but not without the risks involved in any type of international travel. "These Games are very much a symbol of the whole world emerging from this terrible, global pandemic," she said. "If we wanted to be as safe as possible, we'd never leave our house."

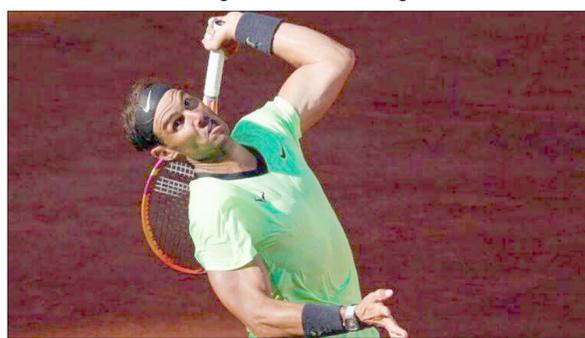
Dom Bess deactivates Twitter account after selection in England Test squad

London, June 08 : England off-spinner Dom Bess has been recalled into the Test squad as a cover for left-arm off-spinner Jack Leach ahead of the second Test against New Zealand starting June 10. However, a few hours after getting a place in the England side, Bess deactivate his Twitter account. "The reason we have added Dom is that any cover we may need has to be in here with us. If Jack was to feature, we would need back-up for him in terms of concussion replacements and things like that," England coach Chris Silverwood told media. Recently, wisden.com shared a racist tweet by one of the current England players without revealing the player's name. As per the report, the England player is being investigated by England Cricket Board (ECB). Earlier, debutant Ollie Robinson was suspended from all formats of international cricket after his racist and sexist tweets resurfaced. Robinson was 18-year-old when he made these remarks. Bess has not played an international match since



England's tour of India earlier this year. Bess took five wickets in two Tests including a four-wicket haul. However, he remained wicketless in the Ahmedabad Test where Axar Patel was phenomenal with the ball. Since then, he has been playing County Cricket for Yorkshire. Old screenshots of the 23-year-old's posts have also surfaced on social media which cannot be verified. Meanwhile, Robinson has been backed by England skipper Joe Root as the speedster has apologised for remarks he made when he was a teenager. India's frontline off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin also backed him with a message for "social media Gen" going forward.

In Paris, Rafael Nadal is the same as always, and yet he's different



Paris, June 08 : His hair is thinning on top. His knees can be shaky. In January, he came down with a balky back that almost forced him to withdraw from the Australian Open. And yet, with his win Monday over Jannik Sinner of Italy, a 19-year-old rising star, Rafael Nadal surged into the final eight once again at the tournament he has essentially owned since 2005. It's just that he owns it in a different way than he used to. Nadal was not perfect Monday in his 7-5, 6-3, 6-0 win. He was down 5-3 in the first set before winning four straight games. He coughed up a 4-0 lead in the second. But as he nearly always has on the clay at Roland Garros, he made all the necessary shots, joy-sticking Sinner around the court as though he had a metal rod inserted into his chest. "At some point he was playing and I was only running," Sinner

said. Nadal has won the French Open 13 times. France's tennis federation unveiled a statue of him on the grounds here before the tournament began, a steel abstraction of the final moments of his powerful forehand shot. Monday's win was his 104th at Roland Garros. The victory moved Nadal, seeded third because of his current ranking despite all his success in Paris, closer to a semifinal showdown with Novak Djokovic, the world No. 1. Djokovic beat 19-year-old Italian upstart Lorenzo Musetti in one of the more bizarre matches of this tournament. Djokovic appeared lost for the first two sets, missing his targets and uncharacteristically dropping two tiebreakers. Then he took a bathroom break and returned a steadied player, winning 12 of the next 13 games to knot the match at two sets each. He won four

more games before Musetti retired down 4-0 in the fifth set. But the 35-year-old version of Nadal looming in the semifinals for Djokovic, 34, is plenty different from the Nadal who started winning in Paris long ago. Back then, Nadal was a defender of the first order. He hunkered down behind the baseline, chased down every ball and, especially on the red clay he loves so much, turned his matches at Roland Garros into wars of attrition. That was not the Nadal whom Sinner met Monday in the round of 16, or the one Cam Norrie of Britain ran into in the third round over the weekend. The Nadal of today, who knows there are only so many five-hour marathon matches a veteran player can survive, targets speed and efficiency nearly as much as victories. "I do what I can in every moment of course," he said. "If I can win quicker, better." By now, several years into this latter era of Nadal dominance on clay, opponents have become accustomed to what to expect but still come away staggered from the experience. "It's amazing how quick he was after his serve to find his forehand," Norrie said after his loss. Norrie felt like he was playing pretty well against Nadal, but as he spoke his eyes appeared glazed, as though he had just seen something he could not quite believe. "The guy is relentless," Norrie said. Between points, Nadal is as deliberate as ever. He sweats profusely and towels off at every opportunity he can manage.

South Korea's 2002 World Cup star Yoo Sang-chul dies at 49



Seoul, June 08 : Yoo Sang-chul, one of the stars of South Korea's surprising run to the semifinals at the 2002 World Cup, has died after long battle with pancreatic cancer. He was 49. Yoo played 124 times for South Korea from 1994 to 2005. The most famous of the Yoo's 18 goals was the one that sealed his country's first ever win in a World Cup match - 2-0 against Poland. It was in South Korea's first game in the World Cup it was co-hosting with Japan. "We will forever remember the shouts and glory of that day with you. Rest in peace," the Korea Football Association said in a message posted Monday on its social media channels. South Korea's inspired run on home soil also included a win over Portugal in the group stage and a golden goal win over Italy in the Round of 16, with millions of people pouring onto the streets to celebrate. The Koreans advanced to the semifinals on penalties after their quarterfinal against Spain ended 0-0. The campaign

concluded with a 1-0 loss to Germany in the semifinals and a 3-2 loss to Turkey in the third-place playoff. Reaching the top four remains the best performance by an Asian team at FIFA's global tournament. Yoo, a versatile midfielder who also played at the back and in attack during his long career, was included by FIFA in its 2002 World Cup All-Star team after appearing in all seven games for the South Koreans. After retiring in 2005, Yoo, who won league titles as a player in Japan with Yokohama F. Marinos and in South Korea with Ulsan Horangi, worked as a pundit on national television. Yoo started his coaching career in the K-League with Daejeon Citizen in 2011 and his last job was as head coach of Incheon United. He was diagnosed with cancer in November 2019 but remained with the team and only quit as head coach two months later, after helping Incheon avoid relegation to the second tier. According to the Yonhap news agency, Yoo is one of only two players in K-League history to be included in the season-ending top XI as a forward, a midfielder and a defender.

One more England player under scanner for his old racist tweets: Report

London, June 08 : One more current England player is being investigated by the country's cricket board for his allegedly racist remarks on Twitter as a teenager after Ollie Robinson was suspended for similar conduct. The old tweets of the player in question were unearthed by wisden.com, which did not reveal the identity of the cricketer since he had not reached the age of 16 at that time. The website posted screenshots of the tweet without revealing the player's identity. "..... your going out with a asian," the player seem to have posted with hashtags of #asianthroughhandthrough # hweollo #chinky. The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) is now investigating the matter. "It has been brought to our attention that an England player has posted historic offensive material on their social media account. We are looking into it and will make a further comment in due course," an ECB spokesperson was quoted as saying by the website. The offensive posts came to fore hours after the ECB suspended Robinson pending a investigation into his racist tweets in 2012 and 2013. Robinson, who scored 42 runs and took seven wickets on his Test debut against New Zealand, has already apologised for his behaviour after his old tweets emerged. England's Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden, however, criticised the ECB's decision to suspend Robinson, calling it "over the top". The country's Prime Minister Boris Johnson also agreed with him.

World Cup 2022 qualifiers: Japan, Australia extend runs; Kyrgyzstan without a keeper



Seoul, June 08 : While players from Japan, Australia and Syria were extending winning streaks, a defender from Kyrgyzstan was having some difficulty handling a new assignment in Asian qualifying for the 2022 World Cup. Kyrgyzstan was forced to play a second-round qualifier with a defender in goal on Monday because all three of the national team's goalkeepers were self-isolating following a COVID-19 outbreak. Aizar Akmatov instead played between the posts, allowing one goal in a 1-0 loss in Group F to Mongolia, which is ranked 192nd of FIFA's 211 teams. Oyunbaataryn Mijiddorj scored in the

34th minute for Mongolia, which posted its second win in eight matches but remained in last spot. At the top of the group, Japan beat Tajikistan 4-1 for its seventh victory in seven matches in this stage. Japan had already secured a place in the third round of qualifying. Kyogo Furuhashi, Takumi Minamino, Kento Hashimoto and Hayao Kawabe all scored for Japan, while Ehsoni Panshanbe scored for Tajikistan - the first goal Japan has conceded in 549 minutes. Syria became the second team to advance to the third round with a 3-0 win over Guam in Sharjah, its seventh successive win in Group

Australia had a 5-1 win over Taiwan for its sixth straight victory in Group B, staying five points clear of Jordan. The Australians can move into the next round with a win on Friday over Nepal. Goals from Harry Souttar, Jamie Maclaren, Trent Sainsbury and two from Mitchell Duke secured the points, with Gao Wei-Jie scoring for Taiwan after 62 minutes. "The performance was very good," Australia's head coach Graham Arnold said. The Australians have a run of four games within two weeks, so squad rotation is part of the process. "We had a very inexperienced team that was given an opportunity - only a couple of senior players around them," Arnold said. "They handled everything really, really well." Only the eight group winners progress automatically to the third round, which is set to start in September, along with the four best second-place teams. China is eight points behind Syria and can only hope to finish second in Group A despite a 2-0 win against the Philippines. The goals came from Wu Lei and Wu Xinghan. "It was a tough game and a good win," China coach Li Tie said. "There are still two games left but we are focused only on the next one." Second-half goals from FC Zenit striker Sardar Azmoun and Mehdi Taremi of Porto gave Iran a 3-0 win over Bahrain. Iran is in second place in Group C and just two points behind Iraq, which beat Cambodia 4-1. Uzbekistan thrashed Singapore 5-0 to move two points behind Saudi Arabia in Group D. India posted its first victory in Group E with a 2-0 win over Bangladesh, and Vietnam stayed atop Group G with a 4-0 win over Indonesia in Dubai. United Arab Emirates moved into second, two points behind, after defeating Thailand 3-1.

Addressing Mental Fatigue: Indian players to get three-week break between WTC and England series

New Delhi, June 08 : The Indian team management has decided to give a three-week break to its players after the World Test Championship final in a bid to address the mental fatigue that might be triggered by lengthy spells in a bio-bubble. The WTC final against New Zealand will be held from June 18-22 at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton and the members of the Indian squad will disperse for close to three weeks (20 days) before regrouping on July 14 to prepare for the five-match series against England starting in Nottingham from August 4. "As skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri had told the media at the pre-departure press conference, there will be a break. There is a six-week gap between WTC final and opening Test against England, so we had to address the issue of players' well-being. Within UK, they can disperse off, go for a holiday, meet friends and family," a



senior BCCI official told. Obviously, there could be some team get-togethers also but players would be free to choose how they want to spend their time. "Most of them have come to UK for multiple times and have friends and acquaintances around the country. It's only fair that they can switch off," said the source. In fact, skipper Kohli on June 2, during the pre-departure, had answered a query if the 42-day gap between the two assignments would affect the team's preparations. Kohli had termed it a welcome break for the team. "I feel like after you are done with WTC, I think it's a great opportunity to refresh and restructure. Hopefully, if things are okay, out in England, we would have finished our quarantine period and just for the guys to be normal for a few periods of time just disconnect again," Kohli had said back then."

Sri Lanka Cricket and cricketers reach temporary truce, salvage England tour



Colombo, June 08 : The Sri Lankan

cricketers have agreed to compete against England on a tour-specific contract but would not sign the annual contracts unless governing body SLC explains the evaluation process. Sri Lanka are scheduled to tour England for three Twenty20s and as many ODIs between June 18 and July 4. Following a stormy round of talks, the players were told by the management that they would either call off the England tour or

send a third string side. The players told the management they would sign a tour-specific contract but need more time to sign the annual contracts. The players had defied a June 3 deadline to sign the contracts, citing lack of transparency in the process. While defying the deadline the players said they were willing to play for the country even if the administration decided not to pay salaries due to their refusing to enter contracts.

Jalandhar to Tokyo via Auckland : Indian origin shuttler set to compete in Olympics

Chandigarh, June 08 : When Abhinav Manota left for Christchurch in New Zealand seven years ago, father Lovleen Kumar - a former India shuttler - had hoped to see his son pursue a career in management. But with Abhinav, who had become Punjab singles champion in 2012, opting to play the sport in New Zealand too, Kumar would often share tips over phone. Last week, the 29-year-old three-time Oceania champion booked his berth for the Tokyo Olympics on the Oceania quota. With the world number 91 sealing his ticket to Tokyo, Kumar and wife Rajni Bala have been watching old videos of their son. "I could only become Punjab champion and always aspired to win a medal at the nationals," shares the 61-year-old. "To see Abhinav compete at the Tokyo Olympics will be the biggest thing to have happened for our family. Even when he had planned to move to New Zealand, we knew that he could not leave badminton behind." Abhinav is currently at No. 103 on the Race to Tokyo rankings, and will qualify as the 35th player into a draw of 38 qualifiers. Badminton remains an Asia-dominated sport, and with the Badminton World Federation and IOC determined to watch it expand to hitherto unexplored countries, the qualification process has cast its net wide to include participants from as many outposts as possible. The policy of inclusion means Abhinav, who's managed to play just 15 tournaments and has a third of Kidambi Srikanth's points, gets in on the basis of his Oceania Zone geotag. Kumar would often spend his time at the Hansraj Badminton Stadium in Jalandhar, and a young Abhinav would often accompany his father to his practice sessions as well as insist on playing at their residence. The youngster would go on to become Punjab junior champion before claiming the Punjab senior title in 2012. A second-round defeat at the Nationals, and a first-round loss against Tommy Sugiarto at the Syed Modi Grand Prix in the same year was followed by a loss in the qualifiers of the TATA Open the following year. These disappointments may have prompted Abhinav to opt for a move to New Zealand to pursue management at the Aba-

cus Institute of Studies, Christchurch. It was during a badminton training session that Abhinav met New Zealand doubles player Dylan Soedjasa after which he decided to compete on the New Zealand circuit seriously and move to Auckland. "After spending a year in Christchurch, where he stayed with his cousin Pavitar and played at the local stadium, he moved to Auckland on the insistence of



Soedjasa, who also offered his home to stay for a year," shares Kumar. Abhinav would pair up with Soedjasa to reach the quarterfinals of the Sydney International in 2015 followed by a semifinal run at the 2016 Waikato International, a tournament in which he also reached the quarterfinals in singles in 2017. The last four years have seen Abhinav bagging three Oceania titles with the last coming in 2020, apart from two runner-up finishes in the BWF International Challenge/Series with him reaching the final of the North Harbor International in 2018 and the Bulgarian International in 2019. Abhinav, who acquired New Zealand citizenship in 2019, has also paired up with Oliver Leydon Davis to claim three doubles titles -

Dutch International, Hellas Open and Bulgarian International in 2019 with all three being BWF International Challenge/Series events. "Initially, when he suffered some early losses in singles, he would get frustrated and often sounded disheartened. He has been working as a development officer with North Shore Badminton Association and as a coach with the North Harbour Centre and would tell us that those

coaching sessions would motivate him when he would get frustrated," shares Kumar. While Abhinav has played against the likes of HS Prannoy and Sameer Verma, he faced two-time Olympic and five-time world champion Lin Dan at the New Zealand Open, a BWF Super 300 event, in 2019 and though he suffered a 6-21, 7-21 loss against the Chinese legend, the father is quick to share that it's moments like these that they would cherish. "Whenever he met players like HS Prannoy, Sameer Verma and even juniors like Lakshya Sen, Abhinav would never hesitate to ask for tips. When he suffered the loss against Lin Dan, he made sure that he got a picture clicked with him and us and that's what has kept him going all

these years. New Zealand's Danish coach Rickey Olsen Siegemund and Indonesian coach Fanny Megawati tell him that his playing style resembles that of Prakash Padukone and if only he gets more time to train individually, he can improve further. But then Abhinav also has to earn money through his job to support himself," says Kumar. While Abhinav spends most of his day coaching youngsters, the last three years have also seen him being part of Badminton New Zealand's training programme in Europe. In 2019, he also started a crowdfunding initiative to raise money for achieving his Olympic dream on the insistence of Siegemund, a seven-time world medallist, before his parents and sister helped him. "While Badminton New Zealand fully funds some of the training and competitions, players have to fund their travel and training too. Siegemund had suggested a crowdfunding drive and they managed to raise more than 300 dollars. At that time, I was visiting my daughter Nishita and her husband Gaurav in Australia and when we got to know about this, we gave Abhinav 10,000 dollars," shares Kumar. The pandemic has meant that Abhinav has not visited India since 2019 and the family too will miss watching the Olympics in the stadium. But Kumar and his wife Rajni would make sure that they follow the action on TV. "During the last seven years, Abhinav has always prepared next day's breakfast and lunch to save time for his training and coaching kids the next day. He will surely remember all those days when he plays in Olympics and once he visits us, I would make sure he gets to eat as much fresh food as he wants," shares Bala.

India's Olympic-bound athletes to get second dose of vaccine after four weeks

New Delhi, June 08 : The gap between two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine for Olympic-bound athletes and officials has been set to four weeks by the Ministry of Health, informed Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President Narinder Batra on Monday. Batra has communicated the same to national sports federations. All NSFs whose Athletes have Qualified for Tokyo Olympics. Letter has been issued by Ministry of Health Government of India, that in the case of Tokyo Bound Athletes and officials, the 2nd dose of

vaccination will be done after 4 weeks of 1st dose of Vaccination," Batra said in a statement. Last month, a government panel had recommended that the dosage interval of Serum Institute of India's Covishield vaccine be increased to 12-16 weeks. However, the gap between the two doses of Bharat Biotech's Covaxin is four weeks. The IOA on Sunday had said 120 athletes and 27 para-athletes have so far received at least one dose of the vaccine. The body said that there are 62 fully-vaccinated athletes, including four para athletes.

Ollie Robinson suspension splits opinion along Tory-Labour lines

Kolkata, June 08 : Events related to England medium pacer Ollie Robinson have overshadowed the drawn first Test at Lord's. At the end of the first Test between England and New Zealand, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) suspended the 27-year-old seamer from all international cricket for offensive/abusive tweets he posted eight and nine years ago. The ECB's decision has divided opinion, with ministers and MPs too, wading into the controversy. Robinson made an impressive Test debut at Lord's, taking seven wickets in the match and scoring 42 runs in the first innings. The suspension, however, has put a serious question mark over his international fu-

waded into the controversy and the ECB's decision hasn't gone down well with a lot of them. Secretary of state for digital, culture, media and sport (DCMS) Oliver Dowden has urged the English cricket hierarchy to have a rethink. "Ollie Robinson's tweets were offensive and wrong," Dowden tweeted, adding: "They are also a decade old and written by a teenager. The teenager is now a man and has rightly apologised. The ECB has gone over the top by suspending him and should think again." And the culture secretary reportedly has British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's backing. "Yes. The Prime Minister is supportive of the comments



ture. Robinson had posted racist and sexist tweets when he was a teenager. In one tweet from 2012, he had said: "My new Muslim friend is the bomb". Another tweet read: "I wonder if Asian people put smileys like this :) #racist", while a third had this: "Guy next to me on the train definitely has Ebola." The tweets resurfaced on the first day of the first Test. Some of those tweets were posted when Robinson was playing for Yorkshire and the County, as reported by BBC, had sacked him for "unprofessional behaviour". At the end of the first Test, the ECB put out a statement, saying: "England and Sussex bowler Ollie Robinson has been suspended from all international cricket pending the outcome of a disciplinary investigation following historic tweets he posted in 2012 and 2013. He will not be available for selection for the LV= Insurance second Test against New Zealand starting at Edgbaston on Thursday 10 June. Robinson will leave the England camp immediately and return to his county." Politicians have now

from Oliver Dowden that he made via a tweet this morning. As Oliver Dowden set out, these were comments made more than a decade ago, written by someone as a teenager and for which they have rightly apologised," Johnson's official spokesperson was quoted as saying by Daily Mail. While the Conservative Party MPs have by and large opposed the ECB's decision, their Labour counterparts have supported it. UK's minister for the Pacific, international environment, climate and forests Zac Goldsmith, a Tory MP, has called the suspension "disproportionate and absurd". His tweet read: "He sent stupid tweets as a teenager, and has apologised profusely. What is to gain in trying to ruin his career over this? Completely disproportionate and absurd." His colleague George Freeman, an MP, aimed a jibe at the ECB. "Seriously? Posting inappropriate tweets when a teenager - for which he's apologised - is now a disqualifying crime for playing cricket for your country? Seriously??" Freeman snapped. Labour, however, have backed the ECB.

French Open: Krejckikova swats aside Stephens, to face Gauff in quarter-final



Paris, June 08 : The 25-year-old Krejckikova broke the American's serve twice in the opening set and then wiped her out in the second. Former world number three Stephens, who reached the final in Paris in 2018, did not have any answer to Krejckikova's powerful but effortless play in their first meeting and did not help her cause by committing 26 unforced errors. Krejckikova, who won the 2018 doubles title at Roland Garros with Katerina Siniakov, has been unbeaten since a maiden title-winning run in Strasbourg ahead of the French Open and dominated the 2017 U.S. Open winner from the start on a sun-bathed

Suzanne Lenglen court. The Czech converted her second matchpoint with a forehand winner, her 10th of the match, and will face American Coco Gauff for a place in the semi-finals. American teenager Coco Gauff reached her first Grand Slam quarter-final with a crushing 6-3 6-1 defeat of Tunisia's Ons Jabeur in the fourth round of the French Open on Monday. The 17-year-old capitalised on a nervous start by Jabeur and never let her opponent off the hook in a clinical display. - Roland-Garros (@rolandgarros) June 7, 2021 Jabeur, like Gauff a former junior French Open champion, tried to mix things

up with her trademark drop shots but nothing could disrupt Gauff's flow. Gauff wrapped up the win in less than an hour on her fourth match point and is yet to drop a set in the tournament. She will face Czech Barbora Krejckikova, who swept Sloane Stephens aside 6-2 6-0, for a place in the semis. Greek Maria Sakkari bundled out American fourth seed Sofia Kenin, the highest remaining women's seed, from the French Open on Monday with a 6-1 6-3 thrashing to reach her maiden Grand Slam quarter-final. A wasteful Kenin, who reached last year's final at Roland Garros, managed to hold just two ser-

vice games and cut a frustrated figure on the Suzanne Lenglen court, constantly muttering to herself but unable to solve her problems. Kenin, who played with taping on her left inner thigh, committed nine double faults and made 32 unforced errors in the contest - the last of them when she sent a shot long on the second match point. Sakkari, the 17th seed, had lost both her previous matches in majors against the 2020 Australian Open winner, and will meet either Polish defending champion Iga Swiatek or unseeded world No. 81 Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine for a place in the semi-finals.

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