

# The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### NFR's 'International Level Crossing Day'

**Guwahati, June 10** : The Northeast Frontier Railways (NFR) on Thursday organized the "International Level Crossing Awareness Day" in different places of Assam. NFR officials sensitized the public on the need of following traffic rules to prevent accidents at railway level crossing gates. Such sensitization campaigns were conducted in NFR's Guwahati, Rangiya, Lumding and Alipurduar divisions. There was no loss of life of any passenger travelling in trains operated by the NFR in any accident during 2020-21, said sources. Implementation of various safety measures along with increased alertness on the part of railway staff helped in averting train accidents even during the lockdown period, when there was an increased movement of freight and parcel carrying trains.

### Military aircraft crashes

**Yangon, June 10** : A Myanmar military plane crashed on Thursday morning at Mandalay region due to bad weather condition, said an official. The military aircraft with 14 people on board took off from the country's capital city Nay Pyi Taw and was on the way to Pyin Oo Lwin. The aircraft crashed around 8 am when it was about to make a landing in Pyin Oo Lwin of Mandalay region. Xinhua news agency reported. He said the number of casualties has yet to be known as the rescue operation is being carried out. Military aircraft crashes in Myanmar's Mandalay, 12 killed. The Mandalay Region Fire Department's social media page said 12 on board were killed and two people have been rescued and sent to the military hospital for treatment so far.

### HS final year examinations

**Guwahati, June 10** : The Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) is all set to hold the Higher Secondary final year (class 12) examinations in July-August. This was stated in a letter, written by AHSEC Controller of Examinations - Pankaj Borthakur, to in-charges of examination centres across Assam. "It is for your kind information that Assam Higher Secondary Education Council is going to conduct Higher Secondary Final Examinations, 21 in the month of July/August, 2021," the letter stated. The AHSEC Controller of Examinations further instructed the examination centres' in-charges to look out for additional locations to hold the examinations, in order to maintain social distancing norms. Assam Education Minister Ranuj Pegu, on Tuesday, held a meeting with representatives of different students' organisations to discuss the possibility of holding the class 10 and 12 examinations in the state amid COVID-19 pandemic.

## CM inaugurates 300 bedded Covid Care Hospital at Sarusajai

1000 PICUs to be set up to strengthen health care infrastructure for children  
CM urges DRDO to consider setting up makeshift housing facilities for flood-hit



**Guwahati, June 10** : Coinciding with the 30-day completion of the State government, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma in a bid to give renewed push to Assam's Covid-19

management capabilities, dedicated a 300 bedded Covid Care Hospital at Sarusajai in Guwahati to the service of the people in the presence of Health Minister Keshab Mahanta today.

The new hospital built in association with DRDO, Government of India with a project cost of Rs. 21.46 crores will act as an annexe to Guwahati Medical College & Hospital. Oil India

Limited and ICICI Bank have extended financial support to the tune of Rs. 2 crore and 1.5 crore respectively for accomplishment of the project. The Chief Minister on the occasion also inaugurated a 20-bed ICU & 32 Oxygen Supported Beds at Kalapahar Covid Care Hospital, which will also be an annexe to GMCH. While speaking in a programme held on the occasion, Chief Minister Sarma termed the inauguration Contd...Page 6

## US 'to buy 500 million Covid vaccine doses for world'

**Washington, June 10** : US President Joe Biden's administration will provide 500 million doses of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine to about 100 countries over the next two years, US media report. About 200 million doses will be distributed this year, with the remainder delivered in 2022. The US has been under pressure to raise vaccination rates in poor countries. The move comes as Mr Biden landed in the UK at the start of his first foreign trip as US president. The White House is yet to officially comment on the plan to roll out 500 million doses worldwide. But when asked if the US government had a vaccination strategy for the world, Mr Biden said: "I have one, and I'll be announcing

it," before boarding Air Force One. An eager crowd awaited his arrival on Wednesday at the RAF Mildenhall airbase in Suffolk, keen to catch a glimpse of Air Force



One when Mr Biden touched down on Wednesday evening. Mr Biden addressed US troops stationed at the base, paying tribute to military families Contd...Page 6

## Chief Minister Dr. Sarma dedicates Sishu Seva scheme to beneficiaries

Scheme will help beneficiary to lead a life of dignity : CM  
Dr. Sarma announces financial support to COVID induced widows



**Guwahati, June 10** : Synchronising with the completion of one month in office of the present BJP led government in the state, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today dedicated Chief Minister Sishu Seva Scheme to the service of the beneficiaries and handed over the cheques of financial assistance to few beneficiaries who lost both their parents due to COVID. It may be noted that under the scheme an amount to the tune of Rs. 7,81,200 would be parked in the bank as fixed deposit in the name of each beneficiary. A monthly financial assistance of Rs. 3500 which will be realised from the fixed deposit will be given to the beneficiaries till they attain 24 years of age. On completion of 24 years of Contd...Page 6

## Yogi Adityanath reaches Delhi, likely to meet PM amid 'discontent' in UP

**New Delhi, June 10** : Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath Thursday

arrived in New Delhi where he met Union Home Minister Amit Shah at his residence. His visit assumes significance as the politically crucial state of UP is going to polls early next

year. Aside from Shah, CM Adityanath is also likely to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi and party chief JP Nadda. Adityanath is visiting Delhi a day after Congress leaders Jitin Prasad Contd...Page 6



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## Renowned Bengali Filmmaker-Poet Buddhadeb Dasgupta Dies At 77



**New Delhi, June 10** : Renowned Bengali filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta died at the age of 77 on Thursday morning. He was in his South Kolkata residence when he breathed his last. He was suffering from a kidney ailment. Buddhadeb Dasgupta, who was also a celebrated poet, had won several National Awards for his contribution to Bengali cinema. Mourners Buddhadeb Dasgupta on Twitter, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee wrote: "Saddened at the passing away of eminent filmmaker Contd...Page 6

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## Serum Institute's inability to meet global commitment will disrupt vaccine supply chains: Gavi

**New Delhi, June 10** : Serum Institute of India (SII), by not meeting its global commitments for a variety of reasons, most notably a devastating second COVID-19 wave, is going to disrupt vaccine supply chains throughout the world, said an executive of a global alliance that it is part of. "The terrible surge of the virus in India has had a severe impact on COVAX's supply in the second quarter of this year, to the point where, by the end of June we will face a shortfall of 190 million doses," a spokesperson of the Switzerland-based global vaccine alliance, Gavi, told Moneycontrol in an exclusive interview. "Even though COVAX will have larger volumes available later in the year through

the deals it has already secured with several manufacturers, if we do not address the current, urgent shortfall, the consequences could be catastrophic," the



spokesperson said. COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access, abbreviated as COVAX, is a worldwide initiative Contd...Page 6

## Chinese national held near India-Bangladesh border in WB, laptop and passport seized

**New Delhi, June 10** : A 35-year-old Chinese national was intercepted by the Border Security Force (BSF) near the India-Bangladesh Border on Thursday. According to initial reports, the Chinese national was held in West Bengal's Malda district near the border following suspicious activities. A laptop and a passport have been recovered from his possession, the paramilitary force said in a statement. The BSF further informed that concerned agencies are interrogating the Chinese national. The name and other details of the Chinese national is yet to be ascertained as senior BSF officials are tight-lipped due to the sensitivity of the case. However, they said that the details about the man would be shared Contd...Page 6

the deals it has already secured with several manufacturers, if we do not address the current, urgent shortfall, the consequences could be catastrophic," the

## JNU library vandalised and forcefully occupied by 'unruly' students for 2 days, FIR filed

**New Delhi, June 10** : The Jawaharlal Nehru University administration on Thursday (June 10) alleged that a group of students broke into the central library and clashed with the staff there following which an FIR has been registered with the police. The varsity alleged that the students have been occupying



the library for the last two days. The police said based on the complaint by the varsity, a case has been registered. According

to the police, the incident took place on June 8 and based on a complaint from the varsity's chief security officer, a case was registered on Wednesday. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Southwest) Ingit Pratap Singh said "Based on the complaint, a case was registered under section 188 (disobedience to

order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code, Delhi Disaster Management Act and Contd...Page 6

## BRICS summit planned for this fall Russian envoy Nikolay Kudashev



**New Delhi, June 10** : The Russian envoy to India Nikolay Kudashev said that the annual summit has been planned for this fall. India is the current chair of the BRICS or Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa grouping. Nikolay

Kudashev, speaking at a virtual event hosted by the Confederation of Young Leaders (CYL), said, "In the framework of multilateral efforts to address existing challenges and threats, BRICS remains a major factor in Contd...Page 6

## Minister Suklabaidya formally inaugurates Raimona National Park

**Guwahati, June 10** : The newly created Raimona National Park was formally inaugurated by Minister for Environment and Forest, Parimal Suklabaidya at Kachugaon in Kokrajhar district on Thursday. Inaugurating the park, Minister Suklabaidya said the opening of the Raimona National Park within a record span of time will herald development in the entire Bodoland Territorial Region in particular and the state in general. Suklabaidya said following the an-



nouncement by Chief Minister, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma, on World Environment Day at a plantation programme at Gandhi Mandap, two National Parks have come up in the state within a week. He said the park will boost conservation effort and provide fillip to tourism in a big way. Giving a clarion call to the people to conserve nature, Suklabaidya said, "We have to conserve nature, protect the flora and fauna as our very existence hinges on Contd...Page 6



# Biden arrives with demand that UK settle Brexit row over Northern Ireland



**Washington, June 10** : Warnings from envoys that David Frost must compromise with EU on border checks as risk to Good Friday agreement 'will not be welcomed by the US' Senior US embassy diplomats in London, backed by the US national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, have directly warned the UK's Brexit negotiator, Lord Frost, that he will inflame tensions in Northern Ireland if he does not compromise over border checks. A meeting between the US charge d'affaires Yael Lampert, currently America's most senior diplomat in London, and Frost led to an urging by the US for Britain to come to a negotiated settlement with the EU, according to an internal UK government note. However, US officials questioned whether a formal demarche had been issued by the US to the UK, a rare reprimand between two such close allies. The US has said its role was to urge compromise from all sides. Sullivan told a briefing on Air Force One before Joe Biden landed in the UK on Wednesday evening: "Any steps that imperil or undermine the Good Friday agreement will not be welcomed by the US." He declined to say if this is what he thought Boris Johnson was doing, adding: "The president was not issuing threats or ultimatums ... [he] has been crystal clear about his rock solid belief in the

Good Friday agreement as the foundation for peaceful coexistence in Northern Ireland. The agreement must be protected." A senior US administration official said of the issue that "engagement wasn't heightened or directed" by Biden. "As with any ally we have frank diplomatic conversations. Jake Sullivan spoke to these issues in his BBC interview, which addressed same themes we have been messaging privately." Although the UK can insist it is seeking an amicable agreement with the EU, and its stance does not challenge the agreement, the US tone suggests the Biden administration is taking close interest in details of the talks, given it has a formal role to uphold the Good Friday deal. Biden's affection for Ireland, where his ancestors are from, and scepticism about the wisdom of Brexit have hardly been disguised, but he has always accepted the British right to leave the EU. There were some

indications in the UK government note that the US was prepared to dangle a free trade agreement as an incentive if the UK compromised over the legitimacy of border checks in Northern Ireland to protect the integrity of the single market. The US warnings came as direct talks between the EU and the UK over Northern Ireland appeared on the brink of collapse. London indicated it was still considering unilateral action to keep unhindered supplies flowing from Great Britain into the region. The talks are designed to rework the Northern Ireland protocol which set up a post-Brexit trade border between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The European commission vice-president, Maroš Šefčovič, said patience was "wearing very, very thin" and described the relationship with the UK as "at a crossroads". Amid fears that the escalating crisis over Northern Ireland would develop into a trade war, Frost said there had been "no breakthroughs" over the Brexit checks but no "breakdowns" either after a two-hour meeting with Šefčovič in London. They agreed to continue to try to find a solution before 30 June when a ban on chilled meats including sausages and mince meat is due to come into force. On Wednesday evening, Johnson insisted that there was no crisis. "I'm very very optimistic about this. I think that's easily doable," he said, referring to an issue that was at the heart of the fraught Irish border negotiations two years ago: preventing a border on the island of Ireland while protecting trade within the UK after Brexit.



Statue of Mahabir Lachit Barphukana and his soldiers in river Brahmaputra near Fancy Bazar, Guwahati in the time of 'Surya Grahana' at Thursday. Pic- Kausik Rajkhowa

# Texas Republican asks: can we fix the moon's orbit to fight climate change?

**Washington, June 10** : 'I'd have to follow up with you on that one,' says forestry official Jennifer Eberlien to a bizarre question from Louie Gohmert. Louie Gohmert asked: 'Is there anything that the National Forest Service or BLM can do to change the course of the moon's orbit, or the Earth's orbit around the sun?' he Texas Republican congressman Louie Gohmert has asked a senior US government official if changing the moon's orbit around the

Earth, or the Earth's orbit around the sun, might be a solution for climate change. Bizarrely, the question was not posed to anyone from NASA or even the Pentagon. Instead it was asked of a senior forestry service official during a House natural resources committee hearing on Tuesday. Speaking with Jennifer Eberlien, associate deputy chief of the National Forest Service, Gohmert asked if it was possible to alter the orbits of the moon, or the Earth, as a way of combating climate change. "I understand from what's been testified to the Forest Service and the BLM [Bureau of Land Management], you want very much to work on the issue of climate change," Gohmert said, adding that a past director of NASA had once told him that orbits of the moon and the Earth were indeed changing. "We know there's been significant solar flare activity, and so ... is there anything that the National Forest Service or BLM can do to change the course of the moon's orbit, or the Earth's orbit around the sun?" Gohmert asked. "Obviously that would have profound effects on our climate," Eberlien said she would have to "follow up with you on that one, Mr Gohmert." "Well, if you figure out a way that you in the Forest Service can make that change, I'd like to know," Gohmert added. Though he seemed to be entirely earnest,

some observers have posited that Gohmert was seeking to express a belief that climate change was a phenomenon of natural changes in the orbits of celestial bodies, and so any other efforts to address it would be futile. Gohmert's question comes three years after a congressional science, space and technology committee hearing, focused on how technology could be deployed for climate change adaptation, heard from the Alabama Republican Mo Brooks on the subject of sea-level rise. Brooks posited a theory that erosion from land plays a significant role in sea-level rise, including silt from the world's major rivers, and rocks along the California coastline and the White Cliffs of Dover falling into the sea. "Every time you have that soil or rock or whatever it is that is deposited into the seas, that forces the sea levels to rise, because now you have less space in those oceans, because the bottom is moving up," Brooks said.

# US Capitol attack report finds intelligence, military and police failings

**Washington, June 10** : A Senate investigation of

the 6 January insurrection at the US Capitol has uncovered broad government, military and law enforcement failings before the violent attack, including a breakdown within multiple intelligence agencies and a lack of training and preparation for Capitol police officers who were quickly overwhelmed by the rioters. The Senate report released on Tuesday is the first - and possibly the last - bipartisan review of how hundreds of supporters of the former president Donald Trump were able to violently push past security lines and break into the Capitol that day, interrupting the certification of President Joe Biden's victory. It includes new details about the police officers on the front lines who suffered chemical burns, brain injuries and broken bones and who told senators that they were left with no direction when command systems broke down. It recommends immediate changes to give the Capitol police chief more authority, to provide better planning and equipment for law enforcement and to streamline intelligence-gathering among federal agencies. As a bipartisan effort, the report does not delve into the root causes of the attack, including Trump's role as he called for his supporters to "fight like hell" to overturn his election defeat that day. It does not call the attack an



could detail the statutory requirements for requesting National Guard assistance. Two of the three members of the board, the House and Senate sergeants-at-arms, were pushed out in the days after the attack. Sund also resigned under pressure. Congress needed to change the law and give the police chief more authority

immediately", Klobuchar said. The report recommends a consolidated intelligence unit within the Capitol police after widespread failures from multiple agencies that did not predict the attack even though insurrectionists were planning it openly on the internet. The police's intelligence unit "knew about social media posts calling for violence at the Capitol on 6 January, including a plot to breach the Capitol, the online sharing of maps of the Capitol complex's tunnel systems, and other specific threats of violence", the report says, but agents did not properly inform leadership of everything they had found. The senators also criticise the FBI and the homeland security department for downplaying online threats and for not issuing formal intelligence bulletins that help law enforcement plan. In a response to the report, the Capitol police acknowledged the need for improvements, some of which they said they were already making. "Law enforcement agencies across the country rely on intelligence, and the quality of that intelligence can mean the difference between life and death," the statement said. During the attack, the report says, Capitol police were heavily compromised by multiple failures - bad intelligence, poor planning, faulty equipment and a lack of leadership. The force's incident command system "broke down during the attack", leaving officers on the front lines without orders. There were no functional incident commanders, and some senior officers were fighting instead of giving orders. "USCP leadership never took control of the radio system to communicate orders to frontline officers," the investigation found. "I was horrified that no deputy chief or above was on the radio or helping us," one officer told the committee in an anonymous statement. "For hours the screams on the radio were horrific, the sights were unimaginable and there was a complete loss of control ... For hours no chief or above took command and control. Officers were begging and pleading for help for medical triage." The acting chief of police, Yogananda Pittman, who replaced Sund after his resignation, told the committee that the lack of communication resulted from "incident commanders being overwhelmed and engaging with rioters, rather than issuing orders over the radio". The committee's interviews with police officers detail what one officer said was "absolutely brutal" abuse from Trump's supporters as they ran over them and broke into the building.

# Shri Baidyanath Maharana will be new Director (Finance) of NEEPCO



Shri Baidyanath Maharana has been selected for the post of Director (Finance) in North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO) Limited at a Public Enterprises Selection Board (PESB) meeting held on June 07, 2021. Presently, he is serving as Chief General Manager (Finance) NEEPCO Ltd. Shri Maharana is a Cost Accountant of the 1991 batch. He possesses a Diploma in Software Commercial Application and is a graduate with Physics Honours from the Utkal University. He joined NEEPCO in the level of Accounts Officer in 1993 and is occupying the post of Chief General Manager (Finance) at present. He is a native of Odisha who, with his dedication and affinity to the region, has made North East his home. He has all round exposure in Finance along with an added experience in designing, coding and implementing Financial Software. His experience is multifaceted and comprises of Project Accounts, Contracts Management and Finance Concurrence, Funds management, Treasury Management, Direct and Indirect taxation, Budgetary Control and MIS, MoU, Internal Audit etc. He has achieved many laurels in his career in NEEPCO by implementing new systems & methods and achieving cost reduction. He has established himself as an expert in Funds Management and Contractual Matters. He is an avid public speaker and imparts professional development trainings in various Institutes. Under his leadership of Finance, the Corporation has received its highest credit ratings and raised long term loans at all time lowest interest rates. His business knowledge in Power sector is immaculate and he is a "Go to go person" in the NEEPCO Management for his problem solving attitude. He speaks an array of languages and utilized this skill to become very popular in the Company as well as in social spheres.



shows scenery in Hemu Village of Kanas, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

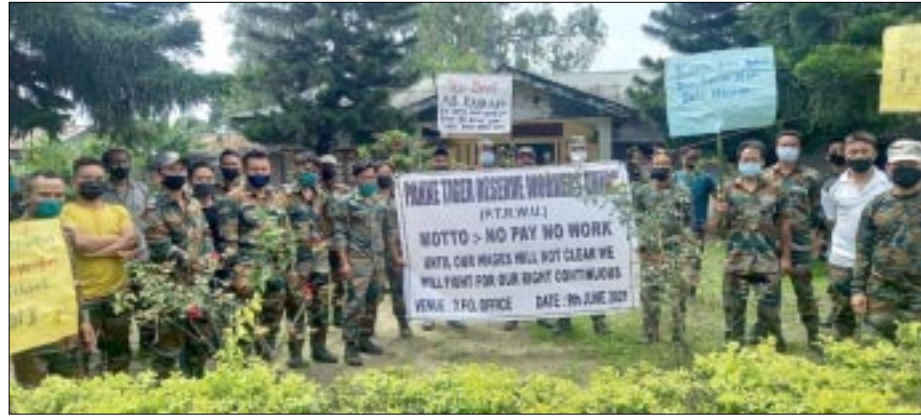
# Retired nun admits to embezzling more than \$800,000 to fund gambling habit



**London, June 10** : Sister Mary Margaret Kreuper used tuition fees and donations to a California Catholic school to subsidize her casino expenses. A retired nun has admitted to embezzling \$835,000 over 10 years from a Catholic school in California to fund her gambling habit, according to federal prosecutors. Sister Mary Margaret Kreuper, 79, a former principal at St James Catholic School in Torrance, California, used tuition fees and donations to subsidize casino gambling expenses and credit card payments, the authorities said. Kreuper, who took vows of poverty at age 18 and spent 59 years in the religious order, said in her plea agreement that she had begun diverting money from the school's tuition and donation account to a savings account that funded the living expenses of the nuns who worked at the school - and then used some of the money herself. According to prosecutors, Kreuper admitted that she falsified monthly and annual reports to the school administration to cover up her fraudulent conduct and "lulled St James School and the administration into believing that the school's finances were being properly accounted for and its financial assets properly safeguarded, which, in turn, allowed defendant Kreuper to maintain her access and control of the school's finances and accounts and, thus, continue operating the fraudulent scheme." In a statement to The Washington Post, Kreuper's lawyers said she is "very remorseful" and "sorry for any harm she has caused". "As soon as she was confronted, she accepted full responsibility for what she had done and she has cooperated completely with law enforcement and the archdiocese," the statement said, adding that "she has been suffering from a mental illness that clouded her judgment". The scheme was uncovered during an audit after Kreuper retired in 2018. Prosecutors said that she had also instructed school employees to "alter and destroy financial records". Kreuper is due in court on 1 July and faces up to 40 years in federal prison. The archdiocese of Los Angeles said in statement that "the community of faith at St James was shocked and saddened by these actions" and expressed gratitude "to local and federal law enforcement agencies for their work in the investigation of this matter".



## STF union of Pakke Tiger Reserve staged agitation



**Biswanath Chariali, June 10:** The union of Special Task Force (STF) engaged in Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve, Seijusa, to the north of Jamugurihat has been staging demonstrations in front of the divisional office of Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary and Tiger Reserve since June 8 in support of their long pending demands. STF Wild life Union workers from Seijusa and Reserve Forest of west bank PTR along with union workers from Tipi, Rillo and Seijosa ranges were assembled altogether respectively. More interestingly, nine domestic elephants were also seen standing in line along with the STF workers. The dem-

onstrators demanded release of their pending salaries from December last year. The demonstrators shouted slogans 'no salary no work'. The STF employees have to lead a difficult life due to non release of their salaries in due time. While they have been rendering services for protection of the wild life sanctuary and tiger reserve round the clock. According to the demonstrators, the central government had already released the salary of 202 STF workers but due to negligence of T. Pali, the D.F.O of Wildlife Sanctuary, they have been deprived from getting their dues. The demonstrators also demanded immediate transfer of the DFO.

## Team from vigilance and anti corruption visits Nagaon PS to investigate the nexus between police official and criminal

**NAGAON, June 10:** A team from Vigilance and Anti-Corruption, Guwahati visited Nagaon Sadar Police Station today and interrogated one Tajnur Hussain alias Raju for over two hours in the police station itself, sources added. Sources claimed that the team from vigilance and anti corruption, were comprising of three officials from the cell rushed to the PS this morning and interrogated him for over two hours in the PS itself. Tajnur Hussain was arrested recently from Juria area in connection with case no 265/20. It is noteworthy to mention that notorious criminal Tajnur Hussain was arrested from Juria last year and police recovered an illegal 7.65 pistol and other

ammunitions from his possession. In the meantime, Tajnur was able to flee from police net just right after his arrest following which Nagaon police declared him absconding criminal. Significantly, Tajnur Hussain was hiding in Morigaon district for over a couple of months and managing a senior police official of Morigaon district, Tajnur became a regular visitor to Morigaon Police Guest House. Besides, he also used to introduce himself to the general public as a CID official. Following his recent arrest, a row over his nexus with a top police official of Morigaon district came into light in various local medias and public sought a probe into the issue.

## Celebrates Foundation Day



**Guwahati, June 10:** JBF (Just Be Friendly), a Guwahati based social sector organization working for animal welfare since 2003, is organizing free Anti Rabies Vaccination drive at seven different locations across Guwahati on 10th June 2021 to celebrate its Foundation Day in North East India. According to Dr Sashanka Sekhar Dutta, Chief Functionary of JBF, the organization has been doing its part to mitigate deadly Rabies and will continue to carry on

through every possible way. He also added that he is confident that with their continuous activities we will reach the ultimate goal of Rabies free society by 2030. For the Free Anti Rabies Vaccination Program the organization collaborated with prime governmental and non-governmental authorities to carry on the drive smoothly and to reach every animal in need. The drive is carried on in all the following venues from 9 AM to 12PM viz Teaching Veterinary Clinic, Khanapara; State Veterinary Hospital, Chenikuthi; Pet Care Unit, Jalukbari; Vet Care (Holistic Medicos), Hengerabari; Urban Tails, Kahilipara; Safe Haven Clinic, Dispur and Hiyaa's (Clinic and Surgical Centre for Pets), Ghoramara Chariali. Rabies is deadly, but preventable. JBF since its inception on 2003 has been working to eradicate this deadly disease with the sole motive to build a healthy society for both human and animal.

## APEDA, Power&Hydropower Department Carry out Maintenance of Yoriko Hydel

**Mechuka 10th June:** A survey and maintenance works on existing system of Yoriko Hydel was carried out by team APEDA, power and hydropower departments to enhance and add to the power demand by drawing supply from the said hydel. The departments disclosed that few more works are to be carried out and power of adjoining villages will be fed by this hydel so that load on Power House gets



reduced. The transformer of Mechuka village has also been brought down to Aalo to sort out some technical problems and the department has urged the consumers fed

## Vehicles loaded with illegal timbers seized

**Guwahati, June 10:** A vehicle loaded with illegal timbers was detected and seized by the Beat Officer, Sadar Beat Rangia on Wednesday. Beat Officer along with forest personnel intercepted the vehicle while it was coming from BTAD. The vehicle is now under the safe custody of the department. Another vehicle loaded with sawn timbers was detected and seized in Lewbari area under the Goalpara Sadar Range on Tuesday evening. Range Officer, Santana Medhi, Goalpara Sadar Range accompanied by her personnel chased and intercepted the vehicle laden with timbers. Cases have been registered against the offenders.

## Mahapurusha Srimanta Sankaradeva Viswavidyalaya (MSSV) Celebrated its 8th Foundation Day

**Nagaon, June 10:** Mahapurusha Srimanta Shankardev University, a higher educational institute in central Assam, today stepped into its eight years of its establishment. In view of the current covid situation, this eight Foundation Day programme is organized through online platform followed by flag hosting at its main campus at Nagaon at 9 am by Dr. Hitesh Deka, Vice-Chancellor of the university. After that Dr. Mrinal Kr Borah, Registrar of the university hosting the formal session of the day which was conducted via google meet. This was after which the vice-chancellor of the university, Dr.Hitesh Deka, respectfully recalled the people behind the establishment of the university and launched the e-journal of the institution. The chancellor of the university and Podadhikar of Srimanta Sankaradeva Sangha Kamalakant Gogoi, and Chife advisor of Srimanta Shankardev Sangh Bhabendranath Deka, Prophan Sompadak of Shrimant Shankardev Sangha Sjt Babul Bora along with university professors, officials, students as well as the official of Srimanta Shankardev Sangha are also present. On the day of its foundation day, the Vice-Chancellor of the University announced the award of 'Vice Chancellor's Excellence Award' for the session 2020-21. For this time Vice-Chancellor conferred the award to Mrinal Kumar Gogoi, HOD In-charge and Assistant Professor, Department of Social Work, employee Diganta bora and Govind Balmiki for their sincerity, dedication, punctuality and hard work. In this virtual meet about 250 members joined from Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Delhi and rest of India and expressed their gratitude and success for the university. This was informed to media by Dy. Registrar (Admin.) of the university Dr. S.K.Sarkar.

## Star Cement Ticks Another First in North-East- A Prestigious 'NABL Accredited' Cement Lab



**Guwahati, June 10:** Star Cement, the most trusted and premium cement brands of North-East has recently added a new feather to its cap by becoming the first cement lab of the region to receive a NABL accreditation. National Accreditation Board for Testing and Calibration (NABL), an autonomous body under the aegis of Ministry of Science & Technology, Government of India has recently granted its accreditation to the cement testing laboratory of Star Cement Ltd situated at its grinding unit in Sonapur, Guwahati. NABL is the sole body authorized by the Government of India to grant accreditation in almost all the fields of science, en-

gineering and medical testing. The accreditation granted to the testing laboratory of Star cement provides the underlying assurance that the organization is adhering to the internationally recognized standards for testing and calibration. Commenting on the feat, Shri Sanjay Kr. Gupta, CEO, Star Cement said, "We are honoured to become the first cement testing lab of the region to receive the prestigious NABL accreditation." "This recognition from a body authorized by the Government of India will definitely strengthen the trust and confidence of our customers on Star Cement's commitment in delivering the most premium qual-



Moinakhurung Stone Crusher Unit Under Kamrup East Division, Guwahati, Donated to Rs 1.80 Lakhs to CM Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma at His Official Chamber For CM Relief Fund, Recently

## Tense situation prevails at Rupahihat following the mysterious death of a youth

**NAGAON, June 10:** The tense situation prevailed at the greater Rupahihat bazaar today following a mysterious death of a youth chased by Rupahihat police last evening. Sources claimed that the deceased youth Saif Akhtar (23) of Laogaon village under Nagaon PS was assembled along with a huge crowd in a betting cricket match held under newly constructed bridge at Gorematikhuwa. Being informed about the huge crowd there, when a team from Rupahihat PS rushed to the spot, on seeing police, people assembled in the crowd

started running away. Many of them even jumped into the nearby rivulet. Meanwhile, police from the same PS received information from Rupahihat Model Hospital that some people brought a dead person to the hospital stating that he had died fleeing away from police. The crowd went on a rampage and created ruckus in the hospital. Besides, the crowd vandalised the hospital and destroyed doors as well as windows and other properties of the hospital. Police immediately rushed to the spot and tried to bring the situation under control, sources added. But the crowd was so violent that they even leaped on police and forcefully brought the body of the deceased youth to Rupahihat PS. Meanwhile violating almost all COVID protocol, the crowd created a law and order situation inside PS and started pelting stones at the police personnel. Getting no option, police finally had to blank fire several rounds to disperse the crowd, sources said adding that no injuries were reported in the police firing, sources said adding that a case was registered in Rupahihat PS in this regard.

## COVID claims one in Nagaon district, 213 fresh cases detected

**NAGAON, June 10:** More 213 fresh COVID cases were detected today, taking the total cumulative active COVID cases the district to 3188 while one more died of COVID 19 today in the district. Including this death case, a total of 73 people have died of COVID 19 in the district till the time of filing this report, sources said.

Meanwhile 380 people who were undergoing treatment in hospital as well as at homes after being affected by the virus, have been recovered from infection of the virus today. Sources claimed that among those who tested positive today, 95 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 11658 people today while RT-PCR test was conducted on 126 swab samples, sources added.

## Services Of Few Special Trains Restored In NFR

Services of special trains running between Guwahati - Okha extended

**Guwahati, June 10:** It has been decided to restore the services of few special trains in N. F. Railway from this month for the benefit of passengers. To help clear extra rush of passengers, it has also been decided to extend the services of special

train running between Okha and Guwahati with existing timings, stoppages, composition, days of run and with revised timings at few stations.

Restoration of train service: "Services of Train No. 05621 Kamakhya - Anand Vihar (T) special express leaving from Kamakhya at 05-35 hours on every Thursday to reach Anand Vihar (T) at 18-15 hours on next day have been restored from 17th June, 2021. In return direction, Services of Train No. 05622 Anand Vihar (T) - Kamakhya special express leaving from Anand Vihar (T) at 23-45 hours on every Friday to reach Kamakhya at 15-30 hours on third day have been restored from 18th June, 2021.

"Services of Train No. 05624 Kamakhya - Bhagat Ki Kothi special express leaving from Kamakhya at 17-15 hours on every Friday to reach Bhagat Ki Kothi at 21-45 hours on third day have been restored from 18th June, 2021. In return direction, Services of Train No. 05623 Bhagat Ki Kothi - Kamakhya special express leaving from Bhagat Ki Kothi at 16-10 hours on every Tuesday to reach Kamakhya at 23-10 hours on third day have been restored from 22nd June, 2021.

"Services of Train No. 05640 Kamakhya - Puri special express leaving from Kamakhya at 20-10 hours

on every Sunday to reach Puri at 02-55 hours on third day have been restored from 20th June, 2021. In return direction, Services of Train No. 05639 Puri - Kamakhya special express leaving from Puri at 14-55 hours on every Tuesday to reach Kamakhya at 21-35 hours on next day have been restored from 22nd June, 2021.

Services of the following train have been extended:

Services of Train No. 09501/09502 Okha - Guwahati - Okha special leaving from Okha on Friday have been extended for more one trip to run on 18th June, 2021 and leaving from Guwahati on Monday have also been extended for another trip to run on 21st June, 2021. The train will run with revised timings at few stations from Kota junction to Varanasi junction.

The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available in Railway's website and are also being notified in various newspapers and social media platforms of N.F. Railway. Passengers are requested to see these details before undertaking their journey. On arrival at their destination, the passengers will have to adhere to prevailing health protocols of the destination state. All passengers are requested to co-operate with the railway and respective state govt officials in this regards.



Pranab Kumar Nath, a Yoga expert and a resident of Milan Nagar Dibrugarh has won first position in senior category in 9th Asian Yoga Sports Championship organised by International Youth Yoga Federation India and Om Shapharishi Yoga, Malaysia held on 30th May 2021 virtually. Pranab Kumar Nath, a silent yoga exponent got many laurels in the field of yoga and by profession he is an Assistant Director of Akashvani and Doordarshan Dibrugarh under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.



## THE ASSAM RISING

VOL. NO. VI, ISSUE NO. 116 FRIDAY, JUNE 11, 2021

## Global protection against the disease

G7 summit will call for a new, transparent investigation by the World Health Organization into the origins of the coronavirus, according to a leaked draft communique for the meeting. The call was initiated by Joe Biden's administration and follows the US president's decision to expand the American investigation into the origins of the pandemic, with one intelligence agency leaning towards the theory that it escaped from a Wuhan laboratory. The broad consensus among scientific experts remains that the most likely explanation is that Covid-19 jumped to humans from an animal host in a natural event. An on-the-ground investigation by WHO experts earlier this year concluded that it was "extremely unlikely" the pandemic began in a laboratory. According to Bloomberg News, which said it had sight of the communique draft, the G7 will also commit to deliver a billion extra doses of the Covid-19 vaccine over the next year to accelerate global protection against the disease. The move may disappoint aid agencies that want most of the world's 8 billion people to be vaccinated, but the communique will argue that the fresh commitment will dramatically increase the number of people in the developing world offered a vaccine. Ahead of his arrival at the summit, Biden said the US would commit to buying 500m doses of the vaccine for distribution to developing countries. The communique, which is often leaked ahead of the G7 summit, is due to be finalised on Sunday following a three-day meeting in Cornwall. At the 2020 summit in France, leaders abandoned publishing a list of commitments after then-president Donald Trump refused to sign the letter. According to the Bloomberg report, this year's communique will contain a pledge to tackle forced labour in global supply chains, including in the solar and garment sectors and where it involves the forced labour of minorities. In a clear swipe at China's leadership, the commitment also forces EU leaders, the US, Canada, Japan and the UK to take action against Beijing following the ill treatment of Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang. It will include a pledge to end unnecessary trade restrictions on vaccine exports along with commitments to shift to zero-emission vehicles, and a promise of new funding to tackle the climate emergency while also stressing the need to ensure the long-term sustainability of public finances once the recovery is firmly established. It is understood there will also be a call for Russia to tackle groups within its borders that conduct ransomware attacks, use virtual currencies to launder ransoms, and carry out other cybercrimes.

## Kashmir issue is riding on Palestinian cause to gain global support. But who is behind it?

**Tara Kartha**

In all the noise of the blame game over the handling of the Covid-19 pandemic, some interesting developments have gone entirely unnoticed. True, the sudden flaring up of the Palestine issue did take up media space and lead to angry reactions. But what went under the radar was that in Kashmir and other parts of the world, the plight of Palestinians was suddenly being talked and written about, and even sung along with the Kashmir issue, in protests, webinars and overwhelmingly on social media. While the underlying theme was meant to highlight the plight of Muslims, none of these platforms mentioned the prosecution of Muslims in China's Xinjiang or their killing by the Taliban. That, in itself, is a clue. But it's not the whole story. In May, the Valley saw violent anti-Israel protests at a time when strict pandemic restrictions were in place. It led to arrests, including of a cleric from Shopian, who had made a fiery speech on Palestine at a gathering on the eve of Eid, which went viral. The result? Violence, arrests and crowds on the street, all of which was covered eagerly by social media influencers. Most of those arrested were released a day later, which of course was ignored. But the recent protests are curious for several reasons. Kashmiris have been backing the Palestine cause for years, with some of the worst violence during the 2014 Gaza crisis, when Palestinian flags were flown on vehicles and shops in Srinagar in a gesture of solidarity. But the fact is that support to the Palestinian cause has increased significantly under the Narendra Modi government, with the first ever prime ministerial visit to Palestine taking place in February 2018. Here's another fact. Palestinians themselves have never protested for Kashmir on the ground. Or in support of India either even though the Palestinian Authority expects Delhi's support. So, the conflation of Kashmir and



Palestine is certainly not originating in Gaza. Take a look at who's covering this story. One prominent source is the Turkish Anadolu Agency, which regularly publishes articles linking Palestine to Kashmir. Ankara is known to be on the same page as Islamabad on this, but interestingly, Islamabad's English media is far more discerning. It is now being punished severely for its independence. Then there is the Qatari mouthpiece, Al Jazeera, which apart from coverage of "Indian Administered Kashmir" also publishes the Palestine twinning aspect. This, in turn, is viewed through the lens of scholarship by experts, for instance at the University of Warwick, who while apparently examining post-colonial states, also do an extremely one-sided analysis of Kashmir, Hinduva and 'post secularism'. Higher in the pecking order are posts on the institute of one of the top universities, UC Berkeley, which pushes the Palestine-Kashmir linkage. Then there is the Kashmir scholars network working on the same lines, though it doesn't offer any details on its website. There is, however, a letter from the body, to the United Nations General Assembly urging it to not give India a seat on the UN Security Council. It is signed by a group of academics from across the US, and obviously from the Quaid-i-Azam University in Pakistan. It naturally doesn't mention Pakistan's completely illegal - by its own laws - occupation of Gilgit Baltistan and so-called 'Azad Kashmir'. This is just the tip of the iceberg. The whole is backed and encouraged by another set of actors. For some time, groups formerly focused only on Palestine have turned their attention to Kashmir. A group named American Muslims for Palestine made its voice heard on the Article 370 issue. Research outlines other ties, particularly between the shadowy Stand With Kashmir and groups like Students for Justice in Palestine, now out in strength in a vigil against Israeli actions, in twinning Kashmir with Palestine. SWK also supported a solidarity march for Palestine on 29 May by the Council for American Islamic Relations, a group that aims to

fight Islamophobia in the US. Yet another is the Majlis Ash Shura, an umbrella organisation of nearly a hundred mosques and other outfits that organises webinars where the audience is urged to see Kashmir in the same way they view Palestine. A central role in much of this is by the ICNA (Islamic Circle of North America), which has long aspired to lead the dialogue on Kashmir in the US. It is now shown to be supportive of the Jamaat-i-Islami, a group that propagates and encourages violence in the Valley, and is closely associated with Pakistani intelligence, not to mention terror groups in Kashmir. The ICNA, with its million dollar purse, now brackets not only Palestine and Kashmir but also the Black Lives Matter movement, thus powerfully building up its base in the US. Backed by a deep purse (with funds pouring in online as this is written), it was identified as the main backer for last year's Congressional hearings on Kashmir. The twinning is also apparent on social media. Take, for instance, this undoubtedly melodious song on Palestine and Kashmir, by an advocacy group that is apparently based in London, Rome, Istanbul, Toronto, and, of all places, Beijing. Unsurprisingly, its members are anonymous, but the song itself has hit the charts well on social media. Even more notable is the BDS Movement (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) with a near global reach, and some two lakh followers on Twitter. It just launched its first entirely poisonous video against the Modi government and its policies in Kashmir. There's more of this activity, particularly on social media, than can be adequately documented here. But the point is that the US and others, with very little knowledge about the Kashmir issue, particularly the state of affairs on the Pakistani side, are now being heavily influenced at a time when matters on the Gaza strip have taken centre stage. To put it even more simply, the Pakistanis and their allies have managed to piggyback on the Palestine issue to their advantage. The irony is that those fighting for Palestine should wish they had even half the rights that Kashmiris have enjoyed for years. While their land has been steadily eroded, not an inch of Kashmiri land could be sold to outsiders till recently. Even after the setting aside of Article 370, new domicile laws still restrict land ownership in the state. Yes, it irks some Kashmiris. But that's the truth when compared to the Gaza strip. More importantly, hundreds of Indian soldiers have died fighting well-armed terrorists, but have never ever slipped into raising levels of force. Civilians have little idea of the sheer grit needed to ensure peace in Kashmir for those who really want it. Notice also that while Kashmiri Pandits were forced out, there are no Muslim Kashmiri refugees anywhere, unlike the 5.7 million Palestinians outside of their land.

## Aviation and Sustainable Development



**Hardeep S Puri**

Around the globe, Civil Aviation has been a sector that has propelled economic growth, promoted social development and created access. On the other hand, it has also had alimited detrimental impact on our environment, especially on the local environment, as aircraft and airport operations contribute to air, water, soil and noise pollution. In October 2016, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) decided to launch an initiative to limit emissions from international aviation. Global consciousness around this has driven numerous policy-driven solutions to be implemented in the sector regarding the efficient operation of aircraft and airports. As we celebrate World Environment Day in United Nations Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, it is fitting to look at the Indian Civil Aviation sector and the efforts

taken to step into the next era of aviation, with environmental and ecosystem preservation as a core tenet. Pre-COVID, India was the third-largest domestic aviation market globally, with approximately 140 million passengers traveling annually. The country is poised to become the third-largest overall market in three years. With just 7.3% of the population using aviation as a mode of transportation, the growth potential in the sector is immense. While Covid-19 has undoubtedly disrupted the sector, we are making a resilient and robust comeback as we revitalise our economy. Push for initiatives like the Airport Council International - Airport Carbon Accreditation Programme, which independently assesses and recognises the efforts of airports to manage and reduce their carbon emissions through 6 levels of certification, is a timely intervention to combat climate change. India has been following the programme since 2014. Recognising that the Indian aviation sector will undergo exponential growth in the coming years, addressing the

environment and sustainability concerns is a top priority for us. Delhi Airport is the first airport in the Asia Pacific region to have achieved "Level 3+, Neutrality" accreditation in 2016 and "Level 4+, Transition", the highest accreditation in 2020. Other airports like Mumbai, Hyderabad & Bangalore International Airports have achieved Level 3+ Airport Carbon accreditation. Airports Authority of India has been taking the lead in implementing technical fixes for route optimisation like shortening and straightening major air routes, Reduced Horizontal Separation and Performance-based Navigation (PBN). In consultation with Indian Air Force, AAI has optimised airspace utilisation under Flexible Use of Airspace (FUA) initiative. Estimated annual CO2 emissions reduction by establishing the 32 conditional routes come to about 2 Lakh Metric Tonnes. Initiatives to promote the adoption and promotion of renewable energy use at Indian Airports have also been initiated. Since 2014, the installed solar capacity has increased by 44 MWpat 44 airports, helping us achieve a carbon emission reduction of approximately 57,600 tonnes of CO2 per annum at AAI Airports. Today, Delhi Airport sources 100% of their energy demand through renewable energy sources. Similarly, with an installed Solar Power capacity of 40 MWp, Cochin International Airport has become the first fully solar-powered airport in India. In tandem, initiatives to promote energy conservation and monitoring have also been brought into the fold through regular energy audits. Since 2014, review audits to assess the effectiveness of implementation measures of previous audits have already been completed for 50 airports. Also, under the National LED program (UJALA- Unnatyoti by Affordable

LEDs for all), AAI has aimed to replace conventional light fixtures with LED fittings at 85 airports. The work has been completed at 81 airports, and at four airports, the work is in progress. Infrastructure building which is another essential aspect of an expanding civil aviation industry in the country, has been brought under a green and sustainability focus. Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru International Airports have already received a 'Gold rating' by the International Green Building Organisation, LEED. While Jammu, Chandigarh, and Tirupati airports have received a "4-star rating" by Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA), which is India's very own green building rating system. The AAI has also taken the initiative on waste and water management by minimising the wastage of potable water by processing wastewater and reusing treated water. The Sewage Treatment Plants (STP) and Rainwater harvesting are provided/planned with every existing/new project. Through the UDAN 'UdeDeshkaAamNagrik' scheme, 100 new airports are being built to increase access to civil aviation in the country. This development will benefit from the decisions made in hindsight, as green infrastructure, energy efficiency, waste management, and efficient transportation have become vital aspects of India's expanding civil aviation sector. Over the next decade, finding the appropriate balance between ecology, economy, and society will be crucial. Civil Aviation progress that is synchronous with preserving and restoring our environment and ecosystems is the key to unlocking a safe, healthy and prosperous future for our citizens and remains a cornerstone philosophy of the Modi government.

The writer is Union Minister for Civil Aviation

## India's retired diplomats are divided on Modi's foreign policy. RSS has picked its team

India's elite diplomatic community has usually fought shy of publicly commenting on current foreign policy trends, but last week's letter by one set of retired diplomats attacking another set of retired diplomats has burst open this particularly polarised can of afflicted beings. For a service that always prided itself on nuance, the letter firmly places the group of 33 former ambassadors that has signed it, called the Forum of Former Ambassadors of India (FOFA), in the pro-Narendra Modi camp; while statements by the Constitutional Conduct Group (CCG), a larger body of retired civil servants, are largely seen as critical of the Prime Minister. This letter was not FOFA's first foray into the public domain. Like the Ministry of External Affairs, FOFA has earlier been critical of Justin Trudeau's comments on the farmer protests, of the World Trade Organization's "double standards" on agriculture, and been in favour of French President Emmanuel Macron taking a tough line on Islamist terror attacks. FOFA's best-known member is former foreign secretary Kanwal Sibal, who, in 2002, refused to entertain criticism of the Gujarat riots by the European Union. The burden of FOFA's latest argument is that there is unfair criticism of Modi's foreign policy, when in fact, there has always been continuity - for example, the 1998 nuclear tests were conducted under Atal Bihari Vajpayee and led to the 2008 Indo-US nuclear deal under Manmohan Singh. (Except, FOFA forgets how the BJP tried hard to stymie the nuclear deal during Singh's tenure and even prevented the PM from speaking during a vote of confidence in Parliament.) But what riles FOFA most is not just CCG's criticism of the Modi government, but that internationally reputed foreign policy practitioners like former National Security Adviser Shiv Shankar Menon and former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran - both of whom are signatories to CCG statements - have especially disputed Modi's foreign policy handling of China as well as the Covid crisis, while accusing him of "image management." The big difference, of course, between FOFA and CCG is that the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) takes a keen interest in the former. Senior and powerful RSS leaders like Krishna Gopal and Dattatreya Hosabale, the number-two man in the organisation only next to Mohan Bhagwat, have addressed FOFA meetings. While Chandra Wadhwa, RSS functionary in charge of the RSS' 'vishesh sampark' or 'special initiatives' project, and India Foundation trustee, is the only non-ambassador who regularly posts RSS documents on the Forum's WhatsApp group. Some would say, so what? After all, the RSS makes no secret of wanting to make friends and influence people, so what's wrong if it seeks to win over a group of retired Indian diplomats? As for the diplomats in question, it is entirely up to them if they want to be guided and influenced by one or another thought process or ideology - after all, the free-



**Jyoti Malhotra**

dom to practice and believe in anything you want is the underpinning of a democratic state. In which case, one might ask, why the secrecy? Why does FOFA want to hide its association with the RSS? Last week's letter, in fact, makes no mention of the fact that FOFA has such a relationship with the ruling BJP's ideological mentor. Questions to FOFA's convener, Bhaswati Mukherjee, and Chandra Wadhwa, asked around the time Hosabale addressed the forum some months ago, did not yield any response. "Speak to the Ambassadors," was all that Wadhwa would say. Certainly, this is not the first time that the Indian Foreign Service (IFS) has been split wide open. Former IFS officer Brajesh Mishra, who became famous for his interaction with Mao Ze Dong (when Mao 'smiled' at Brajesh Mishra) when he was posted in Beijing in 1970, quit the service in 1981 because he disagreed with Indira Gandhi's refusal to openly condemn the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan; he later joined the BJP in 1991 and became Vajpayee's powerful National Security Advisor in 1998. It's not even the first time that a former diplomat has joined politics and become a serving external affairs minister like S. Jaishankar. Former IFS officer of the 1953 batch, K. Natwar Singh, joined the Congress in 1984 and became minister of state in Rajiv Gandhi's government and a full-fledged minister in 2004, when the Congress returned to power under Manmohan Singh. Mani Shankar Aiyar, who resigned from the IFS in 1989 to join the Congress party and later became petroleum minister, has been very critical of the BJP. The charge of former diplomats turning politically partisan doesn't hold water - that's what they are expected to do. IFS officers have joined all kinds of political parties - Pavan Varma joined Nitish Kumar's Janata Dal in 2013; Meira Kumar joined Congress in 1985 and rose to become social justice and empowerment minister in 2004 and Speaker in 2009; while Hardeep Singh Puri, minister for urban affairs and civil aviation in the current Modi government, joined the BJP in 2014. In today's deeply polarised politics, George W. Bush's "you're with us, or against us" mentality prevails.



# Welcome The Grand Life with Hyundai ALCAZAR Bookings Now Open



**New Delhi, June 10 :** Hyundai Motor India Ltd., country's First Smart Mobility Solutions provider and largest exporter since inception, today announced the commencement of bookings for its upcoming 6 and 7 Seater Premium SUV - Hyundai ALCAZAR. The company is accepting bookings at Hyundai Dealerships and on its online car buying platform - Click to Buy (<https://clicktobuy.hyundai.co.in>) for Rs 25 000/- only, with bookings commencing on June 09, 2021. Commenting on the Hyundai ALCAZAR booking announcement, Mr. Tarun Garg, Director (Sales, Marketing & Service), Hyundai Motor India Ltd., said, "Hyundai has had a remarkable 25-year journey of excellence in India.

Over the years, we have captivated the dreams and aspirations of customers with benchmark products that elevate customer experiences, thereby also amplifying customer love especially for Hyundai SUVs. Our customers choose to live the Hyundai SUV Life with brands such as CRETA, VENUE, TUCSON and KONA Electric, resulting in Hyundai becoming the highest selling SUV manufacturer in India, in 2020. Today, we are pleased to open the bookings for Hyundai ALCAZAR, our Premium 6 and 7 seater SUV that will offer our customers Quality assurance, making travelling together a more memorable and fun experience." Hyundai ALCAZAR is all set to redefine premiumness, comfort and versatility for an unrivalled travel experience. With a host of 1st in Segment features, Hyundai ALCAZAR will make journeys more epic - \* 26.03 cm (10.25") Multi-Display Digital Cluster, \* Bose Premium Sound System (8 Speakers), \* Auto Healthy Air Purifier with AQI Display, \* Front Row Seatback Table with Retractable cup-holder and IT Device Holder, \* Front Row Sliding Sunvisor, \* Side Foot Step, \* Rear Window Sunshade, Creating a harmonious synergy of premium interiors and futuristic technology, Hyundai ALCAZAR will be offered with Premium Dual Tone Cognac Brown interiors. The cabin inspires a soothing and elegant ambience, while projecting a magnificent and lavish in-car experience that is accentuated by Hyundai ALCAZAR's segment leading wheelbase of 2,760 mm. Hyundai ALCAZAR will come with a host of Advanced & Hi Tech Features - \* Voice Enabled Smart Panoramic Sunroof, \* 2nd Row One Touch Tip and Tumble Seats (Captain & 60:40 Split Seats), \* Drive Mode Select (COMFORT | ECO | SPORT), \* Traction Control Modes (SNOW | SAND | MUD), \* Puddle Lamps with Hyundai Logo Projection, \* 64 Colors Ambient Lighting, \* Power Driver Seat - 8 Way, \* Ad-

# The Frame TV 2021 is Here! It's Smarter, Classier & Innovative

The New Samsung TV has Customizable Bezels & is also 46% Thinner

**Delhi, June, 10 :** Samsung, India's No. 1 TV brand, is introducing the 2021 edition of its most stylish and much desired lifestyle TV, The Frame, which is a TV when it's on and Art when it's off. The Frame has been tastefully designed to make your luxury living spaces more distinctive and allow you to make your own style statement with stunning and customizable bezel options. The 43-inch The Frame makes its debut this year, bringing design to life in stylish compact spaces. The new Frame will be available on Amazon, Flipkart and Samsung's official online store Samsung Shop starting at INR 61,990. It will come in four screen sizes - 43-inch, 50-inch, 55-inch and 65-inch, from June 12, 2021. Early bird consumers of The Frame will get complementary bezel worth up to INR 9,900, from June 12 to June 21. Unbelievably stunning, The Frame lets you to 'Make your own TV' through various customization options. With 2021 edition, you can select different colour bezels to complement your surroundings. Now curate your personal art collection from growing library of over 1,400 pieces of art. And not only this, you can upload and display your family or travel photographs. You can also customize your pictures with 5 different mat layout options and a palette of 16 different colours to make it more realistic. That's not all, the all-new uber-chic 2021 edition of The Frame is 46% thinner than the previous model, looks like an actual picture frame and blends in beautifully anywhere you put it. The Frame 2021 isn't just beautiful, it offers superior picture quality with QLED technology that enables life like colours, enhanced contrast and impeccable details with 100% colour volume for an exceptional picture quality. The Frame 2021 also comes with Samsung's Quantum Dot technology, powerful Quantum Processor 4K, 4K AI up scaling capabilities, and SpaceFit Sound that auto-optimises sound settings after analysing the environment of your room. The Frame 2021 will be available on Amazon, Flipkart and Samsung's official online store Samsung Shop starting June 12. Early bird consumers of The Frame will get complementary bezel worth up to INR 9,900, from June 12 to June 21. As a part of Samsung's sustainability initiatives, The Frame 2021 will come with sustainable packaging design that can be upcycled as a cat house or bookshelf and self-charging solar cell-powered remote controls that doesn't need external batteries and gets charged by indoor lights, to help reduce greenhouse emissions. "Consumers today are looking for products that are an amalgamation of great design and premium technology. When they are de-

signing their homes, they want technology to add to their distinctive and personalised elements of their lifestyle. With The Frame 2021, we are empowering our consumers to transform their living space with customizable bezel options, while also delivering brilliant picture quality through our QLED technology. The new edition will surely be a connoisseur's delight, elevating the design of any living space." Sandeep Singh Arora, Senior Director, Online Business, Consumer Electronics, Samsung India, said.



Create Own Your Style  
The Frame 2021 will take the aesthetic quotient of your home a notch higher, giving you the freedom to choose bezel colour and bezel style options to complement each space in a unique way. The Frame bezel can be customized with two colour options: White and Teak and offer a tasteful contrast and subtle aesthetic complement whether you are designing based on a room's location or a unique colour pattern. It also comes with a new height adjustable TV stand especially meant to accommodate the sound bar for a clutter free look.

For the Art Connoisseur in You  
One of the most unique and spectacular features of The Frame is that when it is not being used as a TV, it moves into Art Mode. The Frame 2021 comes with additional original artworks to match individual tastes and lets you curate your own personal art collection with a growing library of over 1,400 pieces of art from world-renowned institutions. It also includes AI-based auto-curation technology that recommends artwork based on your selections. The Frame 2021 now offers increased photo storage space, up from 500 megabytes earlier to 6 gigabytes, so you can store up to 1,200 photos in UHD quality.

Price, Offers & Where to Buy  
The new Frame will be available on Amazon, Flipkart and Samsung's official online store Samsung Shop starting at INR 61,990. It will come in four screen sizes - 43-inch, 50-inch, 55-inch and 65-inch, from June 12, 2021.

Early bird consumers of The Frame will get complementary bezel worth up to INR 9,900, from June 12 to June 21.

Consumers can also avail a cashback of up to INR 3,000 on No Cost EMIs on HDFC debit and credit cards. It comes with exciting no-cost EMI options up to 24 months on leading banks.

# FM Nirmala Sitharaman meets heads of insurers; stresses on faster claim settlement

**Mumbai, June 10 :** During a virtual meeting with the heads of insurance companies, she stressed on the importance of streamlining the process and documentation requirements under the schemes so that the claims are disbursed speedily, an official statement said. The objective is to ensure that more and more persons working in the unorganised segment get the much-needed financial security of Rs 4 lakh by enrolling themselves under PMJJBY and PMSBY at a premium of less than Rs 1 per day. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday reviewed the progress made under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package (PMGK) insurance scheme for health workers fighting COVID-19 and asked insurers to accelerate the disbursement of pending claims under the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY). During a virtual meeting with the heads of insurance companies, she stressed on the importance of streamlining the process and documentation requirements under the schemes so that the claims are disbursed speedily, an official statement said. While the amount borrowed under the RBI-enabled mechanism last year was Rs 1.1 lakh crore - there was still a shortfall, Rs 60,000-Rs 70,000 crore by one estimate - the idea is to borrow some Rs 1.58 lakh crore in 2021-22. May Mop-up: GST collection above Rs 1 lakh crore; revenues 65% higher than that in May last year. The G7 accord feeds into a much broader, existing effort. EXPLAINER - What is a global minimum tax and what will it mean? The finance minister observed that under the PMGK scheme, a total of 419 claims have been paid as on date, amounting to Rs 209.5 crore disbursed in the account of their nominees. To address the issue of delays arising out of states sending documents, Sitharaman said that a new system has been put in place whereby a

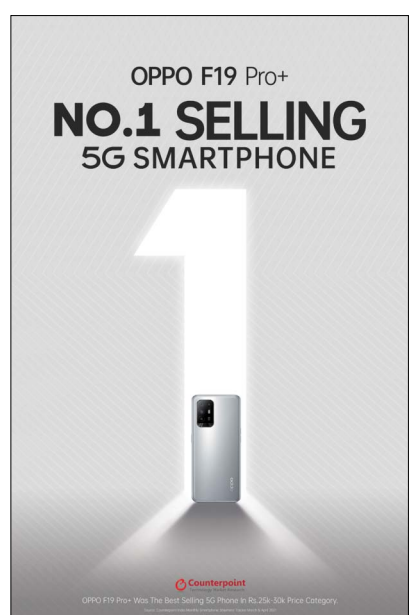


simple certificate from the District Magistrate (DM) and endorsed by the nodal state health authority will be sufficient to process these claims. She also appreciated the efforts of New India Assurance Co which has been entrusted to manage the scheme and cited the example of Ladakh where a claim was settled within four hours of receiving the District Magistrate (DM) certificate and urged to maintain a similar approach in future. The finance minister also directed the states to take up COVID claims of health workers on priority and make maximum use of this simplified mechanism that has been put in place. A total of 4.65 lakh claims have been paid amounting to Rs 9,307 crore under PMJJBY. Since the beginning of the pandemic that is April 2020 onwards till date, 1.2 lakh claims have been paid amounting to Rs 2,403 crore, at a disposal rate of 99 per cent. The finance minister also took stock of the disposal of claims made under Pradhan Mantri Surksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) scheme. A total of 82,660 claims have been paid settled amounting to Rs 1,629 crore as of May 31, 2021. Appreciating the recent efforts made by insurance

companies and banks in speedy processing of claims, she said that insurance company officials should continue being sympathetic while providing services to nominees of deceased policy holders, especially during pandemic period. She also appreciated the initiatives taken recently to facilitate claims processing under PMJJBY and PMSBY during the pandemic including processing of claims by insurers within 7 days instead of 30, end-to-end digitization of the claim settlement process between banks and insurance companies and claim documents transmission via email/App. Public sector insurance companies are going to implement API-based App for claim transmission by June 2021 and rationalised forms and simplified claims process being issued shortly, an official statement said, adding attending doctor's certificate or certificate issued by DM/authorized officer, in lieu of death certificate to be considered for the faster settlement of claim. These claim amounts provide much-needed financial relief to nominees who have lost near and dear ones, and the government's steps will enhance the ease and speediness of this process, it

added. PMJJBY and PMSBY were launched in 2015 to provide life and accidental insurance covers respectively of Rs 2 lakh each to all beneficiaries enrolled under the schemes through their bank with annual premium of only Rs 330 and Rs 12, respectively. The objective is to ensure that more and more persons working in the unorganised segment get the much-needed financial security of Rs 4 lakh by enrolling themselves under PMJJBY and PMSBY at a premium of less than Rs 1 per day. Through the government's financial inclusion programme, while over 42 crore bank accounts have been opened under Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY), cumulative enrolments under PMJJBY and PMSBY are 10 crore and 23 crore respectively, it said. With Jan Dhan Aadhaar-mobile linking, the beneficiaries of different government schemes are receiving the government support directly in their bank accounts, it added.

# OPPO's F19 Pro+ 5G becomes No.1 selling 5G smartphone as per Counterpoint for 2 consecutive months



**Guwahati, June 10 :** Consolidating its 5G legacy, OPPO India's F19 Pro+ 5G was recently declared as the No 1

selling 5G smartphone in the 25k-30k category for two consecutive months in March and April. Markets including Ahmedabad, Bangalore, and Mumbai have been the top-performing states recording the highest sales volume of the product. F 19+ Pro, OPPO's 5G product launched in the mid-segment range was introduced to make 5G accessible to all. Interestingly, this device successfully clocked sales worth over INR 230 crores in only three days of the F19 Pro series availability in the market. Commenting on this success, Mr. Damyant Khanoria, Chief Marketing Officer, OPPO India, said, "We are delighted to see the response we have received on F19 Pro+ 5G. This success bears testimony to the love and acceptance of the devices in the series. This product stands for powerful specs and continues to be a firm favorite among millions of Indian users. We are driven to push the boundaries

of innovation and simultaneously create engaging consumer touchpoints to give our users a great experience as we carry this legacy forward." The brand also introduced several offers that customers can avail in the month of June. OPPO has collaborated with HDFC Bank, Kotak Bank, Standard Chartered and Bank of Baroda for customers to avail a flat 7.5% Cashback along with zero down payment finance scheme and an 11% instant cashback for anyone using PayTM. F series has always been a firm favorite among the young discerning trendsetters & known for its trending features allowing users to flaunt their life. With cutting-edge technologies from unique features like the AI Highlight Portrait Video, Smart 5G dual-video mode, superior battery, immersive gaming experience, and a lot more, the F19 Pro series is doing wonders among the young trendsetters.

No. TECH-30/SEI(R&B)/BID-TENDER/2018-19/23, Dtd. Kokrajhar, the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021

### INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)

Sealed bids affixing a non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight & Paise Twenty Five) only with a validity period of 180 days, which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the printed bid form are invited from the registered contractors of Class - I(A),(B)&(C) category of Assam, PWD(Building)/BTC, according to their eligibility for submitting bidders for the works stated below:

Sl. No	Name of Work	Approx. Value of work (in Rs.)	Cost of Bid document (D/D)	Bid Security for each Group (in Rs.)	Bid Security is to be Drawn in favour of	Time of Completion
1	Construction of Boundary wall of Barkhopa M.E and High School (Examination Centre) Baksa, BTC under SOPD for the financial year 2019-20.	Rs. 44,95,573.00	Rs. 1350/-	Rs. 89,912.00 for General & Rs. 44,956.00 for Reserved Category	E.E. PWD, Mughalpur (R&B) Division, Mughalpur	6 (Six) months

Detailed IFB may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Bids will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent upto 4.00 PM on 14<sup>th</sup> June/2021 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Demand Draft duly pledged in favour of Principal Secretary, Bodoland Territorial Council, Kokrajhar. The Bidder has to submit 2% in case of GNL and 1% in case of ST/SC/OBC/MOBC/GE/UGE as Bid Security in the form of Fixed Deposit/Call Deposit/Bank Guarantee under any Nationalized Bank duly pledged in favour of Executive Engineer, PWD, Mughalpur (R&B) Division, Mughalpur at the time of submission of Bid.

### N.B :-

- Date of receiving application : 11/06/2021 (up to 4.00 P.M.)
- Date of issue of Bid document : 14/06/2021 (up to 4.00 P.M.)
- Date of Pre-Bid Meeting : 15/06/2021 (at 11.00 A.M.)
- Date of receiving Bid : 21/06/2021 (up to 2.00 P.M.)
- Date of Technical Bid Opening : 22/06/2021 (at 2.30 P.M.)
- In case of office remains closed due to various reasons on the scheduled dates as mentioned in the IFB, the same will be received/issued/opened on the next working days.
- Contractors/Bidders must submit Solvency Certificate from Nationalized Bank, Affidavit for Key Person, Affidavit for Tools & Plants, Audit Report for last 5 (five) years & latest copy of Registration/PAN/VAT etc.
- Contractors/bidders who do not fulfill the requirement need not apply for bid. The Superintending Engineer, PWD (R&B) Circle, Kokrajhar reserves the right of issuing of Bidding Document or outright rejection of the same without assigning any reason thereof.
- The intending bidders or their authorized representative may remain present at the time of opening of Bid.
- Others details can be seen in the bidding documents.
- This IFB will form a part of the contract agreement.
- The successful bidder shall deliver Performance Security of 1% (One P.C) for ST/SC/OBC/MOBC/GE/ UGE and 2% (Two P.C) for GNL of the contract price in the form of Fixed Deposit/Call Deposit/Bank Guarantee under any Nationalized Bank duly pledged to the E.E. PWD, Mughalpur (R&B) Division, Mughalpur.
- Payment will be made subject to the availability of fund.

Sd/  
Superintending Engineer,  
P.W.D.(R&B) Circle, Kokrajhar.



## Contd. From Page 1

## US 'to buy 500 million Covid

and remembering his late son, Beau, who served in the National Guard. He praised US allies - "like-minded nations" - and added: "The United States is back!" "Democracies of the world are standing together to tackle the toughest challenges and the issues that matter most to our future," he said. Mr Biden later travelled on to Cornwall. The US president and Prime Minister Boris Johnson will meet for the first time on Thursday, ahead of the G7 summit in the south-western corner of England. Also in his eight-day trip Mr Biden will meet the Queen at Windsor Castle and join his first Nato summit as president. He has said the visit is about "America rallying the world's democracies". The US president is due to meet his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, at the end of his travels in Europe. The US government will donate the vaccines to 92 lower-income countries and the African Union, Reuters news agency reports. Distribution will go through the Covax scheme, which was set up last year to try to ensure fair access to vaccines among rich and poor nations. The US had previously said it would donate 60m vaccine doses through Covax. People familiar with the deal told the New York Times that the US would pay for the doses at a "not-for-profit" price. Albert Bourla, chief executive of Pfizer, is expected to appear with Mr Biden when he officially announces the initiative on Thursday. Earlier this week, Mr Johnson said he would urge G7 leaders to commit to vaccinating the world against Covid-19 by the end of next year. The UK and Canada have not yet said how many doses they will provide to the Covax scheme. The G7 (Group of Seven) is made up of the world's seven largest so-called advanced economies - Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and the US - plus the EU. Other G7 leaders will arrive in Cornwall on Friday, and meetings will get under way the following morning. Image caption Tracy Williams (L) and family members were among those waiting for Air Force One outside RAF Mildenhall. The main topic of conversation will be Covid recovery, including "a stronger global health system that can protect us all from future pandemics". The agenda also includes climate change and trade. Mr Biden is expected to warn that the ongoing UK-EU trade row could imperil peace in Northern Ireland. He will call on fellow leaders to protect the gains of the Good Friday agreement. At the end of the summit, the UK - as the host nation - will publish a document outlining what has been agreed by the leaders. The first US-Russia summit of the Biden presidency will take place in Geneva, Switzerland, on 16 June. It comes at the tail end of Mr Biden's trip, giving the president plenty of time to hear from US allies beforehand. The White House has indicated that he intends to cover a "full range of pressing issues" with his Russian counterpart, including arms control, climate change, Russian military involvement in Ukraine, Russia's cyber-hacking activities and the jailing of Russian dissident Alexei Navalny. Three organisations linked to Mr Navalny were outlawed by a Moscow court on Wednesday as "extremist". Mr Putin threw cold water on the Biden meeting last week, saying he hoped to improve the "extremely low level of relations" between the two countries but expected no breakthroughs. Speaking in Suffolk on Wednesday evening, Mr Biden said that the US was not seeking conflict with Russia but wanted a stable, predictable relationship. "I've been clear: the United States will respond in a robust and meaningful way if the Russian government engages in harmful activities." He said he would tell Mr Putin there were consequences for "violating the sovereignty of democracies in the United States, in Europe and elsewhere". The transatlantic alliance (Nato) would remain a vital source of strength for the UK, Europe and the US, the president said. The White House said Mr Biden's meeting with Mr Johnson ahead of the summit would "affirm the enduring strength" of the countries' "special relationship". Both leaders took part in a virtual climate action summit hosted by the US in April but have not yet met in person. The president and First Lady Jill Biden will also be received by the Queen at Windsor Castle. It will be the 95-year-old monarch's first meeting with a foreign leader since the death of her husband Prince Philip. The next leg of Mr Biden's trip takes him to Brussels, where he will meet leaders of other Nato countries. US relations with Nato were strained under his predecessor Donald Trump, but Nato Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg - in a White House visit on Monday - hailed Mr Biden's "powerful commitment" to US allies.

## CM inaugurates 300 bedded Covid

of the new Covid Care Hospital a decisive move in the fight against Covid-19. He also thanked DRDO for setting up the hospital within a record period of around 20 days and for having been a generous partner in this critical project. The Chief Minister further mentioned it as a fine example of center-state collaboration and collective spirit of the government of Assam and people of the state. Saying that the hospital will have a life span of five years, which can be further extended with minimum infrastructure boost up, the Chief Minister informed that there will be 100 ICU beds available in the hospital and oxygen facility could also be made available in other 200 beds. Moreover, liquid oxygen tank has been set up to provide continuous supply of oxygen to patients which shall be refilled weekly, the Chief Minister added. Chief Minister Sarma further said that from now on, treatment of Covid patients will be gradually reduced at MMCH and Singimari hospital and patients will be taken care of at GMCH and the Covid Care Hospital at Sarusajai. Stating that planning was afoot to boost health care infrastructure further to combat Covid 19 from the time of formation of the government, the Chief Minister said that during last 30 days 465 ICU beds including beds with ventilation facility, 2684 oxygen supported beds were added in the medical institutions. Moreover, 200 ICU beds at GMCH will be made functional in next ten days; he informed adding that the government is working to set up at least 15 ICU beds in every district hospital. Further, in view of flood and erosion affecting large population every year in the state, the Chief Minister urged DRDO to consider setting up makeshift housing facilities in different parts of the State so that flood affected people could take shelter there. The Chief Minister also said that vaccination has been intensified to cover all categories of people above 18. Moreover from 21st June, Assam would start getting free vaccine from Government of India, which will be a big relief to the State government. He also informed that 1000 Paediatric Intensive Care Units (PICU) will be set up to strengthen health infrastructure for children needing critical treatment and there is no need for panic among people about the third wave of the pandemic. The Chief Minister also thanked the health officials and medical fraternity for their unwavering commitment in the fight against Covid-19 in the state. While Principal Secretary Health Anurag Goel delivered the welcome speech, the programme was also addressed by Health Minister Keshab Mahanta and Executive Director of DRDO Dr. Hanumant Rao. Chief Secretary Jishnu Baruah, Commissioner & Secretary Health Siddhartha Singh, MD NHM Dr. Laxmanan S, Kamrup (Metro) DC Biswajit Pegu and Principal of GMCH Dr. Achyut Baisya were present among others on the occasion.

## BRICS summit planned

international politics and economics". Annual BRICS summit is planned for this fall. At the previous BRICS summit, our leaders have reaffirmed, the importance of BRICS people to people contact in enhancing friendship between people, especially the younger generation," he added. On June 1, India hosted the BRICS FMs meet virtually. As the chair of the grouping, nearly 50 events have been held, and many more are scheduled during the rest of the year. This is the third time India is holding the BRICS chairship, after 2012 and 2016. Kudashev highlighted that both countries, India and Russia, remain committed to "further expand our financial cooperation and extend the use of national currency in bilateral and international trade", pointing out that Russia is the "only foreign country so deeply involved in Indian nuclear power sector contributing to the national energy security". Russia has been involved in Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. He said, "We would be very encouraged with regard to the decision of the Indian government on the second site for construction of more nuclear reactors of Russian design." Amid the COVID pandemic, both countries supported each other. Kudashev said, "In the hour of need, India helped Russia with the supplies of anti-virus medicines. Russia on its part provided a huge part of humanitarian assistance to India." "Russia supplied 20 tonnes of life-saving equipment and medicines to India earlier this year to deal with the crisis. These include oxygen production units, lunge ventilating machines and drugs such as Remdesivir. India will be manufacturing the Sputnik V COVID vaccine. Chairman of the Confederation of Young Leaders, Suwan, speaking at the event extended his gratitude to Russia for the outreach amid the COVID crisis. He said, "Right from Oxygen concentrators to Sputnik vaccine, such efforts to extend India a lifeline underscores the need to strengthen popular support for the long-term development of the Russia-India relations."

## Serum Institute's inability

aimed at equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines directed by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the World Health Organization (WHO). So far, COVAX has delivered over 77 million vaccine doses to lower-income economies through the Gavi COVAX AMC (Advance Marketing Management) and self-financing participants. Of this, Serum Institute's share stands at 30 million vaccine doses. The AMC has already secured 1.3 billion doses for global delivery in 2021. This is enough to protect the most at-risk population groups: health workers, the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. "We need an additional \$2 billion to lift coverage in AMC countries up to nearly 30 percent, and we need it by the first week of June to lock in supplies now so that doses can be delivered through 2021, and into early 2022," the Gavi spokesperson said. A Serum Institute of India official told Moneycontrol that "at this stage we would not like to comment on this." He, however, referred to a May 18, 2021, statement issued by SII CEO, Adar C. Poonawalla, which said that in January this year, "we had a large stockpile of vaccine doses. Our vaccination drive had started successfully, and the number of daily cases being recorded were at an all-time low. At that stage, most people, including health experts, believed that India was turning the tide on the pandemic." Poonawalla said that: "Many other countries in the world were facing an acute crisis and were in desperate need of help. Our government extended support wherever possible during this period. It is this spirit that had initially led to cooperation between countries when the virus first emerged in the beginning of 2020. The cooperation between countries also forms the basis for us getting access to technology and aid for healthcare. Today, it is this reciprocity, where India has helped other countries with the supply of HCQ and vaccine exports, that has in turn led to support from other countries." Said the Gavi representative: "We are seeing the traumatic effects of the terrible surge of COVID-19 in South Asia - a surge which has also severely impacted global vaccine supplies." He added: "We fully support India in its efforts to battle the virus at home. At the same time, we are making every effort to address COVAX's short term supply shortfall. This includes calling on all countries that have doses to share them with COVAX, a removal of all bans and bottlenecks preventing manufacturing from scaling up and for countries and manufacturers to work together to ensure COVAX can access the vaccines it has procured as soon as possible." On his part, Poonawalla said the company has never exported vaccines at the cost of the people in India and remains committed to support the vaccination drive in the country, pointing out that "the statement was necessitated by the intense discussions on the decision of the government and companies to export vaccines abroad". For good measure, he also said that SII hopes to reinstate vaccine supply to the global COVAX initiative by the end of the year. Since COVAX was established in mid-2020, it has had the support and resources of 192 of the world's economies. With its own battle against the coronavirus taking a sharp turn for the worse, particularly by a rampant unpredictable second wave of the coronavirus, India has severely curtailed exports of COVID-19 vaccines, triggering setbacks for vaccination drives in many other countries. The country is now holding back nearly all the vaccine doses that Serum Institute, one of the largest producers of the AstraZeneca vaccine, produces. It makes roughly 70 million doses of Covishield every month, accounting for nearly 90 percent of the total vaccine that India produces and consumes. From mid-January to mid-April 2021, India was a major exporter of the AstraZeneca vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India. More than 70 countries, from Djibouti to Britain, received vaccines made in India, with a total of more than 60 million doses. According to the Ministry of External Affairs' Vaccine Maitri programme, a humanitarian and commercial initiative undertaken by the Indian government to provide COVID-19 vaccines to countries around the world, between mid-April and end-May 2021, this outgo had dropped down to a trickle of a little over 6 million doses. The outrage in India over exports of vaccines or what was termed as 'vaccine diplomacy', when the country was facing a dire shortage of the antidote in the face of mounting death toll, forced the government's hand to curtail vaccine exports in a big way. Senior government officials told Moneycontrol last month that the government has not restricted both SII and Bharat Biotech from supplying vaccines abroad, and no bans will be instituted on commercial exports. "The government is focused on battling the pandemic with the support of India's domestic entrepreneurs. It lauds the companies for prioritizing the domestic market given the intensity of the second wave. However, they are free to export if they have enough doses," a senior official said. Says Dr MC Mishra, Former Director, AIIMS: "The only way out of this shortage is by producing more vaccines. Both Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech are increasing their capacities." India must first meet its own needs and then look at its global commitments, which have to be honoured and the government is not going to come in the way, he told. The country proposes to increase its vaccine production significantly. The Serum Institute is going for a month-on-month vaccine increase of 10 to 15 percent and by July 2021, is expected to touch the 100-million doses mark. The other indigenous producer of vaccines, Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, whose product Covaxin is a relatively tiny affair, makes about 150 million doses a year. The Department of Biotechnology informed the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change earlier this year that the estimated manufacturing capacity of Covishield is 70-100 million doses every month while Covaxin has a planned production capacity of 12.5 million doses a month. India could have more vaccines in the days ahead. Serum Institute has announced the launch of Covovax developed jointly by the company and Novavax, which is likely to be delayed until September. An official said that the phase II and phase III bridging trials for Covovax had begun. In April, Bharat Biotech announced a scale-up of manufacturing capacity to produce 700 million doses of Covaxin annually. "Manufacturing scale-up has been carried out in a stepwise manner across multiple facilities at Hyderabad, and Bangalore," the company said in a statement. To further increase capacities, Bharat Biotech has partnered with Indian Immunologicals (IIL) to manufacture the drug substance for Covaxin. "The technology transfer process is well underway and IIL has the capabilities and expertise to manufacture inactivated viral vaccines at commercial scale and under biosafety containment," the Hyderabad-based biotech company said in a statement. Naturally, India is desperate for all the doses it can get. While experts have suggested an abating of the second COVID-19 wave, which saw a significant rise in the number of recorded deaths, with the total toll since the pandemic hit India in 2020 crossing 250,000 in May. Of this number, around 40 per cent of the deaths have occurred since the beginning of March this year. In May last month, Asia had reported over 5,600 daily COVID-19 deaths of which more than 4,000 were from India. While figures vary, most experts believe that not more than 5 percent of the country's 1.4 billion population has been vaccinated twice. So, could it hurt India's standing, diplomatically speaking, of not being able to meet its global vaccine guarantees in these extremely trying times? According to former Indian Ambassador Deepak Vohra, fears about India losing face under the circumstances are grossly exaggerated. "In all international dealings, there is the Force majeure clause. It is a common clause in contracts, which essentially frees both parties from liability or obligation when an extraordinary event or circumstance beyond the control of the parties, prevents one or both parties from fulfilling their obligations under the contract. If India had stopped the export of vaccines as part of policy or if the Parliament had disallowed it, it would be different. No one knew there was a second wave coming. All sensible people understand that, and India has been told so in as many words, privately of course," he told. The next few months could, therefore, be crucial for vaccine production and their exports, and how India could cope up with a third wave, if it comes.

## Chief Minister Dr. Sarma

age, the principal amount parked as fixed deposit against each beneficiary would be credited to their bank accounts. Chief Minister Dr. Sarma announced the scheme on May 29 on the occasion of completion of 7 years of the Modi government in power and within 10 days of declaration, financial assistances were transferred to the individual beneficiaries. Chief Minister Dr. Sarma described the day as a very significant one because on the occasion of completion of one month in power, the present State government could render its helping hands to the beneficiaries who lost both their parents due to COVID. He also said that the scheme would help in enabling the beneficiaries to lead a life of dignity in spite of pecuniary hardship that fate might lead them to. Under the scheme, State government would give Rs. 3500 per month per child including Central government support of Rs. 2000. For children below 10 years and adolescent girls with no guardian, State government will take steps to house such children in one of the child care institutions and provide adequate funding towards their upkeep including educational expenditure. Orphaned adolescent girls will be given accommodation in suitable and reputed institutions to ensure their sensitive care and proper protection. One such institution is Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya residential schools. Considering the marriage component of the scheme, State government will extend one-time financial package as marriage assistance. Government will give one tola of gold under Arundhati scheme and an amount of Rs. 50,000 to each girl. For skill development and training, laptops or tablets will be provided to school or college going orphan for undergoing vocational training. All such students will be linked to skill-based education and provided skill training. Moreover, in another announcement, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma said that those women who have lost their husbands due to COVID, State government would give Rs. 2.5 lakh as one-time financial support from Chief Minister's Relief Fund. Besides, the COVID induced widow will also be entitled to the benefits of Arunodesi scheme along with monthly widow pension under the ongoing Indira Miri Universal Widow Pension Scheme.

## Yogi Adityanath reaches Delhi

switched over to the BJP. The visit also comes in the backdrop of growing murmurs in the organisation regarding the handling of the Covid second surge, with several BJP ministers and MLAs going public about the leadership being irresponsive to the people's woes. These claims have coincided with the BJP's underperformance in the recent panchayat polls, which the party had talked up as a semi-final before the Assembly elections in UP next year. These have also led to speculation about a possible reshuffle in the state Cabinet. On Sunday, BJP's UP in-charge Radha Mohan Singh had refuted talks of a possible change in the chief ministership and the state BJP leadership. He had also denied reports of possible expansion of the state Cabinet and said though there are vacant posts in the cabinet, it is CM Adityanath's prerogative to fill them as and when he likes to. Singh also refuted reports of an alleged rift between PM Modi and Adityanath, describing the CM as the most "competent person" to fulfil the PM's dream. "If you look at newspapers, you will see that Modi-ji was the first to greet Yogi-ji (on his birthday). In fact, we are of the view that Yogi-ji is the most competent person to fulfil the dreams of Modi-ji," Singh had said. "Jahan tak sarkar aur sangathan ka sawaal hai, desh mein sabse majboot sangathan Uttar Pradesh mein BJP ki hai. Aur sabse jyada lokpriya sarkar Uttar Pradesh ki sarkar hai (As far as state organization and the government is concerned, the UP unit of the BJP is the strongest in the country and the Uttar Pradesh government is the most popular," Singh had told mediapersons, calling reports of likely changes in the party or the government leadership in UP as a "figment of imagination". Last week, senior BJP leadership, including the party's national general secretary BL Santosh and Singh, held meetings with party leaders as well CM Adityanath. They also held one-to-one meetings with ministers, fuelling speculation of a possible leadership change in the state.

## Chinese national held near India

soon after any concrete revelation during the questioning. A source in the BSF, which is one of the seven Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), said troops of the paramilitary wing intercepted the Chinese national after they noticed him indulging in some suspicious activities that may go against the country's security. As soon as the Chinese national was apprehended, the matter was shared with the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Defence, and dedicated teams of concerned agencies along with the Intelligence Bureau (IB) reached to interrogate the suspect, said a government source. The Chinese national is being interrogated at the moment.

## Renowned Bengali Filmmaker-Poet

Buddhadeb Dasgupta. Through his works, he infused lyricism into the language of cinema. His death comes as a great loss for the film fraternity. Condolences to his family, colleagues and admirers. "Saddened at the passing away of eminent filmmaker Buddhadeb Dasgupta. Through his works, he infused lyricism into the language of cinema. His death comes as a great loss for the film fraternity. Condolences to his family, colleagues and admirers. Bengali filmmaker Raj Chakrabarty, in his eulogy, wrote: "Recipient of numerous National and International honours, legendary filmmaker and renowned poet, #BuddhadebDasgupta has passed away. Sincere condolences to his family and friends." Buddhadeb Dasgupta was known for directing critically-acclaimed films like Uttara, Bagh Bahadur, Tahader Katha and Charachar. Of all the films he wrote and directed, five movies - Bagh Bahadur, Charachar, Lal Darja, Mondo Meyer Upakhyay and Kaalpurush - won the National Awards for Best Film while his 2000's Uttara and 2005's Swapner Din fetched him the National Film Awards for Best Direction. Buddhadeb Dasgupta also won National Awards for Best Feature Film In Bengali for his 1978's Dooratwa, 1987's Phera and 1993's Tahader Katha. His 1998's film A Painter of Eloquent Silence: Ganesh Pyne was given the National Award for Best Arts/Cultural Film and for 1987's Phera, Buddhadeb Dasgupta had won the National Award for Best Screenplay. His poems like Coffin Kimba Suitcase, Govir Araley, Chhaata Kahini, Himjog, Roboter Gaan and Sreshtha Kabita are still considered as some of the best work in poetry.

## JNU library vandalised

prevention of damage to public property. "No arrests have been made in the case so far, police said, adding that a meeting between the students and chief librarian of the varsity was also held in this regard. In a statement, the varsity said, "This (incident) has caused health risk for the library staff and even other students residing in the hostels, since these unruly students return to hostel for lunch/dinner or other purposes." The varsity said "a group of students scuffled with the security staff, broke open the side glass door of the B R Ambedkar Library, entered the main reading room of the building on June 8 and have occupied the space since then". It added that the students did not vacate the library building even during the night. "When no amount of persuasion by the librarian and the security personnel convinced these students against violating the law and COVID-19 guidelines, the JNU Security Office lodged a police complaint in view of the seriousness of the issue. It has been found that these students do not even use mask or follow other COVID-19 related guidelines," the varsity statement said. The curfew imposed by the Delhi Government is still in place and no new guidelines have yet been announced regarding resuming normal academic activities, it said. "The chief proctor office in the mean time has been tasked with taking necessary disciplinary action against these students as per the university rules," it said. The students occupying the space are not permitting the library staff to sanitise the library for making it safer for students who will use the library after restoration of normalcy, it said. "All these students are hereby instructed to vacate the library immediately," it said. A varsity student, requesting anonymity, said, "The library has not opened for a long time which has left PhD students frustrated. Students have their submissions due and have not been able to access the library. The students entered the library but there was no violence."



## Edgbaston provides chance for Root and England to change the mood

London, June 10 : English cricket has not exactly seen eye to eye with the government this week but they join forces at Edgbaston for a pilot scheme in which 17,000 spectators will be in attendance for each day of the second Test between England and New Zealand that starts on Thursday. With this comes a pledge from Joe Root that his side will look to put on a show. Root's players have faced heavy questioning over the Ollie Robinson affair during the buildup - as ever they face the media when crisis descends, while the senior administrators hide behind statements - but beyond this thorny subject there have been queries about the lack of intent shown on Sunday at Lord's. A target of 273 in 75 overs on a sun-drenched final day was eschewed in favour of caution and after time to consider accusations of misreading the mood, not least with supporters finally back in the stands and no World Test Championship points at stake, Root remains unrepentant. That said, despite insisting conditions were too tough and the hunt for an overall series win was a factor, Root maintains his side want to be viewed as a positive one. Given the events of the past week, they could do worse than put these words into practice when the two sides play out their finale in leafy south Birmingham. "We're all very aware we're in the entertainment business," said Root, who is yet to lose a series at home as captain. "We all want to be part of those games, those special games that provide that entertainment. The ones that stick in my mind are the World Cup final, Headingley, Cape Town - the ones that go to the wire, they're the ones you remember as a player and want to have big contributions in. "If the opportunities arise we'll look to be aggressive. I don't want us to be considered a negative team who play a boring brand of cricket. We have exciting players who are

capable of some wonderful passages of play. Hopefully that will come to light this week. "Kane Williamson's calculated declaration - and a decision to delay handshakes come the end - gave his side the moral high ground in the eyes of many. Either way, recent visits by New Zealand have certainly provided an education, be it the attacking zeal imported in 2015 or their gracious handling of defeat after that heart-stopping World Cup



final four years later. The Black Caps will sadly be missing their captain as they look for a first series win in England since 1999. A longstanding elbow issue has flared up and prompted caution ahead of the World Test Championship final against India next week, with the opener Tom Latham asked to deputise once more. Root described Williamson as a "big gun" but, despite the absence of the world's No 1 batsman, the England captain pointed to Devon Conway's sparkling double century on debut last week as reason to be wary of New Zealand's bench strength. Will Young, who signed off from an early season stint at Durham with two centuries, comes in at No 3, while the tourists bring in Trent Boult - possibly affording Tim Southee a break before the big one - and could replace the injured Mitchell Santner with a more full-time spinner in Ajaz Patel. With Ben Stokes and Jos Buttler absent, England's depth is supposedly being explored already

in order to expose inexperienced players to pressure situations ahead of the Ashes later this year. And yet the caution of last week seemed to come in part down to a lack of faith in the newcomers Dan Lawrence and James Bracey being able to batten down the hatches had a more proactive approach backfired. How they would have fared is clearly an unknown but the upshot is both head into the second Test off the back of first-innings



ducks. Zak Crawley had a second attempt but could only follow his first-innings two with the same score and another ill-judged shot; England's No 3 is struggling to recreate the poise and class witnessed during his 267 against Pakistan last summer, even if you sense it will return. Asked if this now meant a shootout for places before the India series in August, when Stokes and Buttler should be back, Root replied: "I see it as an opportunity to go out and score Test runs for their country and I hope they view it like that. "The greater headache comes lower down. Root praised Robinson's ability to keep the old ball moving sideways at Lord's but the well-crafted 42 he made at No 8, one that along with 132 from Rory Burns spared collective blushes in England's first innings, means his absence leaves a potentially long tail. Warwickshire's Olly Stone seems likely to replace the rested Mark Wood as the pace option,

while Jimmy Anderson is poised to claim a record 162nd cap. But while Stone's steadfast 43 in a successful chase of 333 against Stuart Broad and Nottinghamshire earlier this season shows he can wield the willow - and he also owns a company that produces it for bat-makers - a first-class average of 15 offers few guarantees. How much this influences a final call between the spin of Jack Leach or the more all-round cricketer in the seamer Craig Overton remains to be seen. The forecast is for hot weather and this was the old stomping ground of the spin coach, Jeetan Patel. But then England have also noted how Essex's Simon Harmer, the best in the country, went wicketless when Warwickshire chased down 275 at home earlier this season. However, Overton's return during such a week as this would also elicit a reaction given an allegation of using racist language in 2015, even if the 27-year-old maintains his innocence. It may be why Root was reluctant to commit 24 hours out, admitting his team could well be "lopsided" as they look to alter perceptions.

## Ollie Robinson suspension a 'learning opportunity', says Heather Knight

London, June 10 : Heather Knight says the suspension of Ollie Robinson from international cricket over a series of historical tweets has been a "learning opportunity" for her England side before they face India next week. "What's gone on for the last week or so is a very clear reminder of the role models that we are, and the responsibility that we have as England cricketers to have a positive impact, and represent the sport, and what we want the sport to be, in a very good light," the captain said. "It shouldn't really need saying that cricket should be a game for everyone and should be inclusive and welcoming, and everyone should feel like they're able to take part. If there's an 18-year-old boy now that realises that sort of opinion isn't acceptable, then I think that can only be a positive." Knight hoped the addition of Sophia Dunkley to the squad of centrally contracted England players would help send a positive message. Dunkley is the first non-white female player to hold a central contract since they were introduced in May 2014, and only the second black woman - after Ebony Rainford-Brent - to play for England. "I'm sure Sophia doesn't see herself as a role model, but she massively is," Knight said. "That's really important. We talk a lot in women's sport about how you can't be what you can't see - that's similar in Dunks' situation. I'm absolutely



chuffed for her: she's a great girl, she works really hard and I hope she maximises this opportunity. "The England squad for next week's women's Test against India at Bristol includes the uncapped 23-year-old seamer Emily Arlott. Central Sparks' Arlott has been included on the back of a dramatic quadruple wicket maiden in the third round of the Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy. To make the final XI, she faces stiff competition: Anya Shrubsole, who missed out on England's winter tour to New Zealand due to a knee injury, is now back to full fitness, while Freya Davies, Tash Farrant and Kate Cross, who shared the third seamer spot between them over the winter, have all enjoyed good starts to the season.

## 'Miles from Modric': Declan Rice's rise from fanzone to England leader

London, June 10 : Declan Rice has a confession and it is one that greatly troubled his small audience of newspaper journalists. "Do you know what - until this day, I have never had a beer and I am 22," the West Ham and England midfielder says. "That is the truth, never had a pint. Don't drink it." Well, you can imagine the scene. Astonishment, soul-searching. Does he ever drink at all? Maybe a spirit here and there, Rice replies. "But a pint? No," he continues. "People get surprised. I just don't like the smell of it so I have never gone near it. Will I have one if we win the Euros? Yes. I'll give it a try - but I will probably spit it out." Rice has sacrificed plenty on his journey to the top, which has ramped up in earnest over the past few seasons. "When I moved from home [in Kingston-upon-Thames] to West Ham at 14 [after his release from Chelsea], that was a sacrifice," he says. "Obviously, loads of parties with best friends. Going out on weekends, the drinking side of it - seeing all of my mates partying, sending me videos while I'm stuck in hotels. There's loads of things." To Rice, it has long since felt worthwhile but especially now as he enters Euro 2020 as a certain starter in defensive midfield. The speed of Rice's rise is best reflected by the fact that he was on holiday in Dubai during the last major tournament - the 2018 World Cup - when he watched some of England's games in a fanzone under a massive dome. Rice had just enjoyed his breakthrough season at West Ham but, in his own words, he was "not established". Did he imagine back then that he could be here now? "Not really, no," he says. "I don't think you ever would." Rice is a fun interviewee, open and engaging, and what shines through is his enthusiasm, his fearlessness with regard to seizing the moment. At such a



young age, he is already a leader in the England set-up and talks with verve about taking on the very best, starting with Luka Modric and Croatia on Sunday. He watched Modric pull the strings in their World Cup semi-final win over England three years ago. Now he has the opportunity to stifle him. Jordan Henderson jokes with teammate Declan Rice during an England training session at St George's Park on Wednesday. "Then, I was miles away from Modric," Rice says. "But I've got stronger, bigger, more confident and I really want to put myself up against him. He's a world class player but it doesn't faze me at all. And hopefully as we progress, we start to face the top, top teams, the world-class teams like France. You always want to play against those players." I feel like I have come out of my shell playing for England. It took me the first couple of games but as I've got more confident, like with [getting] the [captain's] armband at West Ham, I took it into England to have no fear. On the pitch I'm vocal. I try to show my leadership - whether that is even just a chat, I try to help. "Rice mentions his happiness at how his best friend, Mason Mount, has just won the Champions League with Chelsea. "I've tried to nick his medal already," Rice says. "When did he first show it to me? On Facetime straight after the game. He called me from the changing room. Every time we

them as a central pair, although he did so in a 3-4-3 formation against Iceland last November. "It is definitely something we are familiar with," Rice says. After Croatia, England face Scotland and it is a match for which Rice's West Ham manager, David Moyes - a proud Scot - will have absolutely no divided loyalties. "He used to come up to Jesse Lingard and me in the gym and batter us, saying: 'You two better not be playing against Scotland,' winding us up," Rice says. Rice is champing at the bit, remembering the 2018 World Cup and the scenes, for example, when Kieran Trippier scored the opening goal against Croatia. "You saw all the fanzones in England going crazy," he says. "That's what I want to be a part of now." Whether Rice would play in the tournament was in doubt after he ruptured the lateral collateral ligament in his knee against Poland on 31 March. The doctors initially said it could be 10-12 weeks out and they did not know if surgery would be required. "I called my dad and then [Mark] Noble [the West Ham club captain] to say I think I'm done," Rice says. But after the knee specialist offered him reassurance, it said everything about Rice that he was back by the middle of May. "As soon as I started my rehab, it was six weeks, no days off and I really smashed it out," he says. "I've done everything right which gives me the best chance to perform."

## Koepka says DeChambeau feud good for golf and will not harm US's Ryder Cup



London, June 10 : Brooks Koepka has insisted his feud with Bryson DeChambeau will not hinder the US team's Ryder Cup chances. Koepka even claimed the public spat between two of golf's star names is "good for the game" owing to the interest it has generated. A leaked video of Koepka being disparaging towards DeChambeau emerged after the recent US PGA Championship. The

two players subsequently traded blows on social media, with Koepka promoting a free beer opportunity for anybody who was ejected from the Memorial Tournament last weekend for shouting his name at DeChambeau. In response, DeChambeau implied Koepka should be disciplined by the PGA Tour. Barring injury, Koepka and DeChambeau will be part of Steve Stricker's Ryder Cup team at Whistling Straits in September. Koepka has denied his DeChambeau feud could harm the home team's chemistry. "I don't see why it would," the four-time major winner said. "There's only eight guys that are playing, four guys are sitting. I play with one other guy. Let's say I don't play with Bryson or Bryson doesn't play with me, he takes care of his match, and I would take care of my match. I don't know how that has any effect. What you do off the golf

course doesn't have any effect on the golf course." Koepka added that he "doesn't live with regrets" when asked whether he would rather the interview that triggered this scenario had not been released. DeChambeau had been speaking to his caddie as he walked behind the podium Koepka was speaking on. "It was just very, very loud," said Koepka. "I think it's good for the game," he added. "I really do. The fact that golf's on pretty much every news outlet for about two weeks pretty consistently. I think that's a good thing. It's growing the game." I get the traditionalists who don't agree with it. I understand that, but I think to grow the game you've got to reach out to the younger generation. I don't want to say that's what this is, but it's reaching out to a whole bunch of people. It's getting golf in front of people. I think it's good for the game."

## Bale does Baku: Wales a long way from home as Euro 2020 warmup hots up

London, June 10 : The scene where Max Verstappen's Formula One car veered into the safety barriers at 200mph on Baku's street circuit last Sunday is in full view from Wales's base on the promenade and, up in their hotel rooms, players have been gearing up for the start of the European Championship by going full throttle on the F1 PlayStation game, inspired by the Netflix series Drive to Survive. "We all ordered our own steering wheels and pedals," says the defender Chris Mepham. "There are seven or eight of us involved. Jonny Williams did one race but was never to be seen again... he wasn't great. It's a good laugh and it's something that puts a smile on our face." Beyond a ticket booth on a boulevard off Fountains Square and signage off Neftchilar Avenue, formerly Stalin Avenue, and on flyovers above busy roads, there is little evidence that a major tournament is in town.

Wales are steadfastly preparing for their Group A opener against Switzerland at the Olympic Stadium on Saturday but, for now, Baku - a city awash with five-star hotels, plush rooftop bars and designer shops - screams Bvlgari rather than Bale. Wales fans - a few hundred are expected to make the 3,000 mile trip - are yet to arrive. The waterfront, where a gentle wind rolls off the Caspian Sea, is spotless but remnants of the F1 race on Sunday are dotted along the bay, from the finish line to concrete barricades, grid markings, and advertising hoardings featuring Verstappen and his Red Bull teammate Sergio Pérez. Every now and then a train whizzes beside a cacti garden towards the Maiden Tower, a Unesco world heritage site on the edge of the cobbled "Old City". Wales's success at Euro 2016 was built on a healthy balance between work and play. On

Tuesday the squad enjoyed a recovery session in the swimming pool and, while players such as the defender Ben Cabango have brought consoles to play Call of Duty, others have opted for table tennis or snooker. Tom Lockyer has been practising a few card tricks on teammates and Adam Davies, fresh from taking on the mantle of squad DJ from Chris Gunter, doubles up as the card shark. "I don't know if he [Davies] is doing something with the cards, but in every game he seems to come out on top," says Mepham. "Even the lads are starting to say: 'Are you fixing the cards or something?' It's all a good laugh." The squad have already been confined to a strict bubble for three weeks, including a training camp in the Algarve, but are happy to amuse themselves for a while longer yet. "We're going to be here for a long time - hopefully a very long time," the

midfielder Joe Morrell says, smiling. "So you have to recover right and get ready for the next day but it's not enjoy yourself because it's not every year you're at a European Championship. We have plenty of things to do." Wales have been preparing for matches against Switzerland and Turkey by training at 2pm local time - when temperatures are at their hottest, around 30C. Gareth Bale and Aaron Ramsey are among those familiar with warmer climes, while the 20-year-old midfielder Dylan Levitt spent four months on the Croatian coast last season, on loan at Istra 1961 from Manchester United. "It's good to get out here early and acclimatise a little bit because it is pretty hot," says Morrell. "It's going to be something we're going to face in the two games we've got. The week in Portugal helped us prepare." Support staff at the Football Association of Wales



have done their best to make their surroundings in Azerbaijan, which borders Iran, feel like home for the next nine days before they fly to Rome to play Italy in their final group game. As well as the essentials, goodies including baked beans and Welsh cakes were packed on to a lorry that made a six-day journey from Cardiff to Baku. Either side of the gated entrance to their training base, the Tofiq Bahramov

Stadium - named after the referee known to England supporters as "the Russian linesman" who awarded Geoff Hurst's second goal in the 1966 World Cup final - are the flags of Turkey and Azerbaijan. Inside, the words of Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau, the Welsh national anthem, are written along the main stand. The players' entrance, which has steps down into the tunnel, is bedecked in red.



# 'Claims could run into billions': the interests at stake if Olympics in Japan were cancelled

**London, June 10** : The least divisive statement in the saga surrounding Tokyo 2020 - assuming, as many people now do, that it will happen in just over 40 days' time - is that it

ing date. The IOC and organisers stand to lose billions of dollars if Tokyo 2020 falls victim to the coronavirus for a second time. Japan has officially spent \$15.4bn on

compensate the IOC for any losses resulting from claims by third parties. "Tokyo could be in breach of the host city contract if they refuse to host the Games," said Leon Farr, a senior associate at Onside Law, a London-based firm specialising in sports. "In theory, the IOC could sue Tokyo for its losses, including any claims the IOC receives from Olympics broadcasters and sponsors who didn't get what they paid for. Those claims could run into billions of dollars." The prospects of an IOC-led cancellation are practically nil. The organisation depends on selling broadcasting rights for almost 75% of its income, with another 18% coming from 15 top sponsors. According to one estimate, the IOC could lose about \$3.5-\$4bn in broadcast revenue if the Tokyo Games were called off. This week, the IOC's biggest single source of income - the US broadcaster NBCUniversal - confirmed it was stepping up preparations for 7,000 hours of Olympic coverage across eight networks and multiple digital platforms. Japan's prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, who has indicated that not even the elected government of a sovereign nation can stop the IOC, also stands to gain from the Games. His Liberal Democratic party (LDP) is practically guaranteed victory in this autumn's general election. But Suga must first see off potential challengers at a leadership election in September, and has reportedly calculated that a relatively trouble-free Olympics would boost his chances of leading the party to the polls a month later. Farr, however, believes cancellation is still a possibility. "Despite the legal risks, the reality is that we remain in a pandemic, and the Japanese government will not hesitate to step in if it believes the Games cannot be held safely," he said. "If the Covid situation deteriorates further, the Japanese may simply decide that the political, human, reputational and economic risks of hosting the Games outweigh the financial costs of cancellation and the threat of legal claims from the

IOC. "When the trickle of athletes arriving in Tokyo turns into a deluge next month, more than 11,000 competitors will find themselves in a "Covid-secure" bubble from which there will be no escape until their Olympic adventure ends, prematurely or with a medal. Some will probably have to sit out the opening and closing ceremonies, while interaction with their peers in the Olympic village will be kept to a minimum, despite the provision of 160,000 condoms that embarrassed organisers have belatedly claimed are intended to be taken home - unused - as safe sex souvenirs. The experience promises to be equally challenging for the public. If Japanese sports fans watching at home turn up the volume on their TVs, they might just be able to make out the exertions of runners entering the home straight or the buzz of bicycle wheels on Izu velodrome's wooden track. Japan now has little time to make a decision on domestic spectators, with reports suggesting that those who have been fully vaccinated or can produce proof of a negative Covid-19 test will be allowed to attend events. But even they may be reduced to "cheering" their Olympic heroes in near-silence as an extra precaution against the spread of the virus. While Olympic officials insist that only "armageddon" will prevent Tokyo 2020 from going ahead, the pandemic has exposed the IOC's ruthless instinct, said Jules Boykoff, a professor of political science at Pacific University and the author of *Nolympians and Power Games: A Political History of the Olympics*. "The IOC has long been a profit-gobbling cartel, and one of the most pervasive yet least accountable sport infrastructures in the world," he said. "It is notorious for looking out for its own interests ahead of those of the host city, and the Tokyo Games are confirming this in grim, yet vivid terms. I can't think of another moment when it was so glaringly obvious to the general public that big money is fuelling the five-ring juggernaut."



will be an Olympics like no other. Overseas fans have been banned; athletes will spend what for many will be the pinnacle of their career sealed off from the outside world; GPS-tracked journalists hoping to escape their hotel rooms for a late-night fix of ramen risk being put on the next flight home. Since their unprecedented postponement in March last year, as the coronavirus began its surge around the world, the Games have been stripped of almost every vestige of what makes them the most anticipated event in the sporting calendar. The prospect of an Olympics-lite going ahead while the coronavirus continues to infect hundreds of thousands a day worldwide has many wondering why the International Olympic Committee (IOC), with the blessing of local organisers and the Japanese government, is pushing ahead with them. The official line is that cancellation would be too cruel a sacrifice to impose on thousands of athletes who have spent years training to compete on the Olympic stage, possibly for the last time. But in explaining their motives for persevering in the face of opposition from the Japanese public, health experts and even a member of the Japanese Olympic Committee, IOC officials have avoided any mention of the irrepressible force driving the Games towards their 23 July open-

ing date. The IOC and organisers stand to lose billions of dollars if Tokyo 2020 falls victim to the coronavirus for a second time. Japan has officially spent \$15.4bn on the Olympics, although government audits suggest the real figure is much higher. All but \$6.7bn has come from Japanese taxpayers. The cost of cancellation to Japanese organisers could reach ¥1.8tn yen (\$16bn), according to a recent study by Takahide Kiuchi, an economist at Nomura Research Institute. But that could pale in comparison to the damages the Games could inflict on the world's third-biggest economy if they turned into a super-spreader event and forced Japan to declare another coronavirus state of emergency, Kiuchi said. Organisers would have to reimburse Japanese sponsors, which have invested a record \$3.3bn in the event, on top of the estimated \$800m they have already forfeited in ticket sales due to the ban on foreign spectators. When Kaori Yamaguchi, a judo bronze medalist in Seoul in 1988 and member of the Japanese Olympic Committee, said last week that organisers had been "backed into a corner", many concluded she was referring to the lopsided host city contract signed by the IOC and organisers when Tokyo won its bid in 2013. Only the IOC has the authority to cancel the Games. But if Japan decided to turn them into a practical impossibility by, for example, imposing watertight travel restrictions on all overseas visitors, it would have to bear the costs and

## Euro 2020 team guides part 21: France

**London, June 10** : This article is part of the Guardian's Euro 2020 Experts' Network, a cooperation between some of the best media organisations from the 24 countries who qualified. theguardian.com is running previews from two countries each day in the run-up to the tournament kicking off on 11 June. France's record (W10 D2 L1) since they qualified for the Euros speaks for itself, especially since the sole defeat came in a friendly against Finland in which Didier Deschamps played his second string. The quality of play and entertainment levels have been questionable but when it comes to key games, the world champions keep winning with their typical collective self-belief, clinical finishing and individual flair. After a 10-month break imposed by the pandemic, Deschamps used last autumn's Nations League matches to try three different systems - 3-4-1-2, 4-4-2 with a diamond midfield and 4-4-2 - and to consider a few younger players. "I can't

was the sudden, incredible call-up for Karim Benzema, out of the national team since October 2015 because of his alleged involvement in a sex-tape blackmail case, which he denies. Benzema's involvement could change the whole dynamic but it was not a kneejerk call, as Deschamps explained when he announced his 26. "We met some time ago and shared a long conversation," he said. "I thought long about it and decided, as I always do, what was best for the team. We won without Karim, but he is at his peak and also a different player, we know each other well and he can make this team better. I just have to find a new and right balance but I have no doubt about him and I am lucky to have intelligent players." Otherwise France's strengths remain the same: a solid defensive unit protected by N'Golo Kanté and Paul Pogba, effective transitions and an incredible attack with a lot of speed, experience and skill. The key questions are what impact Benzema's return will have



think of anything worse than a team that ticks over and cannot reassess themselves," he said. "You also have to surprise your players and upset their routine once in a while." In November, Deschamps reverted to his favoured 4-4-2 and won 1-0 in Portugal in France's most accomplished performance in the past three years. It seemed clear that plan A for the Euros would look pretty much the same as it did in Russia. The only minor changes are that Samuel Umtiti and Blaise Matuidi, who is now playing in the MLS, have made way for Presnel Kimpembe and Adrien Rabiot, the latter back in favour after refusing to be on the standby list for Russia 2018. Oh, and then there

on and off the pitch and how fresh and fit the most influential players (Lloris, Varane, Kanté, Griezmann, Mbappé and Benzema) will be after such a bizarre and demanding season. After leading Monaco to a Champions League final (2004), taking Juventus back to Serie A (2007) and clinching the title with Marseille (2010), Deschamps took the reins for France in 2012 and kept doing what he is known for: winning. With a contract running until the end of the next World Cup, he is already France's longest-serving manager and boasts an impressive record of P111 W73 D20 L18. He lives in Eze, a village on the French riviera near Monaco, and stays quiet and focused on football aside from a few charitable activities, including donating to Opération Pièces Jaunes, which helps children needing long-term hospital care. France's prime minister, Jean Castex, recently needed someone to boost the Covid-19 vaccination campaign. Whom did he turn to? Kylian Mbappé of course. Bright, charismatic and likable, he acts as a role model to all youth and, coming from Bondy, one of the poorest Parisian suburbs, he is a symbol of success for the underprivileged. With more than 50 million followers on Instagram and six million on Twitter, no other France player is more present on social media. Because of a thigh operation, Ousmane Dembélé played only nine games last season for Barcelona and only returned to the pitch in September 2020. Peripheral as France won the World Cup, he has now fully recovered and his amazing speed and one-on-one skills could have a big impact. "He is back at his best and more mature, he has a lot to offer and I like his versatility," Deschamps says.

## Djokovic shuts out French Open silence and boos to set up Nadal semi-final

**London, June 10** : Novak Djokovic moved into the semi-finals at Roland Garros for a 58th showdown with Rafael Nadal, surviving a third-set hiccup to beat Matteo Berrettini 6-3, 6-2, 6-7 (5), 7-5 in a match soundtracked by cheers and silence after the players were forced to leave the court so spectators could be persuaded to go home as the national curfew approached. A rowdy crowd had convened for the first night session with fans allowed at this year's tournament due to the relaxation of restrictions in France and a later 11pm curfew. Although they roared for his opponent, they witnessed Djokovic tear past Berrettini with relative ease for much of the match as he established a two-set lead. The



world No 1 then conceded only three points on his serve to set up a third-set tie-break. Djokovic seemed to be en route to victory in the breaker after executing a supreme backhand

opportunity and on his first set point he nailed a forehand winner to take it. As the match rolled into a fourth set, what followed was an absurd sign of the times. With the hour ap-

proaching 11pm, the umpire, James Keothavong, instructed the crowd to leave at repeated changes of end. Tennis has become familiar with matches disrupted by time cut-offs after similar problems at the Australian Open and recently in Rome, but not with the sight of a crowd refusing to move. The French spectators resounded with boos and remained in their seats, leading to a drastic, ad-hoc resolution. At 10.56pm, with the score 3-2 to Djokovic, the players were forced to go back into the locker rooms so that the fans would finally depart from the stadium. As those that remained took photos by the empty court and showed little urgency in leaving, the players did not return for 15 minutes. They reappeared

to finish the match in silence, with Djokovic snatching a break at 6-5 and closing out the win. As he celebrated loudly to nobody but his team, his screams echoed across 15,000 empty seats. "I didn't mind actually leaving the court because I felt like I needed a little bit of a break and reset," said Djokovic. "It's unfortunate for the tournament, for the crowd, to have that curfew. It was a lot of intensity. I just felt under tension the entire time. I felt like I missed some of the chances to end the match in the third set. I didn't want to give him too much opportunities to dictate the match. The reaction in the end was just me liberating that tension that was building up for the entire match."

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