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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Body of 1 miner retrieved

**Guwahati, June 16 :** One body has been retrieved from a coal mine at Umpleng in Meghalaya's East Jaintia Hills district on Wednesday after 17 days of continued search and rescue operations. Navy divers as well as personnel of the disaster response force have been trying to rescue five miners, who have been trapped inside the coal mine since May 30. On Tuesday, preliminary reports indicated that two bodies have been spotted inside the coal mine. On Wednesday, one body was retrieved following continued rescue operations.

### Drug peddlers arrested

**Guwahati, June 16 :** The police have arrested two drug peddlers and seized 24,000 contraband capsules from Merapani in Assam's Golaghat district. Four mobile phones and some cash were also recovered from them. Based on specific inputs, the police reportedly laid a trap and succeeded in apprehending the two peddlers. The duo have been booked under the Narcotics, Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The police recently launched a drive against drugs in Golaghat and since then have apprehended several individuals involved in the drug trade. Many forms of banned drugs have also been seized in the past few days from different parts of the district. Meanwhile, the police also apprehended one drug peddler at Baghor in Barpeta district. 17 vials containing brown sugar were recovered from him. According to sources, legal action has been initiated against him.

### Lockdown in Nagaland extended

**Kohima, June 16 :** As the COVID-19 situation in Nagaland continues to be precarious, the State Government has decided to extend the ongoing lockdown in the State till June 30. The decision to extend lockdown in Nagaland was taken by the State Government's High-Power Committee for COVID-19 in a meeting on Wednesday. The decision of the HPC's to extend lockdown in the State was informed by the panel's spokesperson Mmholumo Kikon. Kikon said: "The HPC in a meeting today has decided to extend the Lockdown till June 30." Also read: Manipur Congress demands 'unconditional public apology' from CM Biren Singh. "Situation is improving but we are still not out of the woods. Positivity rate is declining but still requires to be below 5% and we need to vaccinate more than 50% of the population," Kikon added. Mmholumo Kikon further informed that respective District Task Forces have been directed to work out relaxations or restrictions required as per the local situation.

## Assam Board Exams Might be Cancelled, Final Decision on June 18



### 30:30:40 formula (X, XI & pre-boards) for XII marks?

**Mumbai, June 16 :** Students of Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) Class XII are likely to have their results based on their performance in the finals of class X and XI exams and class XII pre-board tests. Principals told TOI that the CBSE-appointed 13-member committee to recommend the criteria to evaluate Class XII

students seems to be in favour of a 30:30:40 formula-30% weightage will be given to class X and XI final results, respectively, and 40% to class XII pre-board exams. The committee is expected to announce the marking formula after submitting it to the Supreme Court on June 17. Last month, parents had filed *Contd...Page 6*



### Assam Police recovers Rs. 4 lakh from Nagaon residence of GRP SI

**Guwahati, June 16 :** Assam Police on Tuesday seized a good amount of unaccounted gold and cash in Guwahati. The Bharalu Police seized gold worth Rs 50 lakh from two persons and Rs 8 lakh cash from one Government Railway Police (GRP) sub-inspector. The two accused have been identified as Manoj Shah

and Aman Ali. The duo was transporting the gold from Nagaon to Guwahati when a police team caught them. Acting on the information received from the two, the Guwahati West Police detained GRP Sub-Inspector Badri Prasad Bharti who is stationed at Kamakhya Railway Station in connection with *Contd...Page 6*



### As COVID cases go down, tourists slowly return to Kashmir

**Srinagar, June 16 :** The tourism and hospitality sector, which had picked up after last year's unlock, once again suffered a severe blow in the second wave. Kashmir's tourism industry was also badly hit. But now with cases again showing

signs of diminishing, and with vaccination programmes going on, tourists are gradually returning to the Valley, thus making the stakeholders hopeful of a good summer. The government is now allowing all hill towns like Gulmarg, *Contd...Page 6*



**Guwahati, June 16 :** A final decision on Assam Board exams will be taken on June 18 following a cabinet meeting. Assam Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma said. A meeting will be held between Education Department and various other stakeholders will be held on Friday to make the decision. While the final decision is yet to be out, the CM hinted a cancellation of board exams. "It was recommended by the Cabinet not to allow the exams due to prevailing COVID-19 pandemic," Sarma said via a Tweet. A plea was filed in the Supreme Court by four Assam students seeking cancellation of class 10 and 12 exams due to the pandemic situation. The board had *Contd...Page 6*

### Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday releasing the first message in Koo

**Guwahati, June 16 :** Micro-blogging platform Koo launched the app in Assamese with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday releasing the first message in Koo in the language. The Chief Minister in his message in Assamese said, "I am delighted that Koo App has launched it in Assamese language with me joining the platform. The app is enabling the people of Assam to voice their thoughts and opinions in their mother tongue." "Looking forward to engaging with people on the Koo app. I will be Kooing my opinions, announcements and many more updates here. I wish Koo the very best in their future endeavours," Sarma said. Koo Co-



Founder and CEO Aprameya Radhakrishna said that they are happy to have the chief Minister on the platform. "We are even more excited that the first Koo in Assamese is his (CM) and that *Contd...Page 6*

### Amid stand-off with govt, Twitter shares details of interim compliance officer

**New Delhi, June 16 :** Twitter on Wednesday shared with the government details of the interim compliance officer it has appointed as per the new social media guidelines that came into effect on May 26, people familiar with the matter said. The move came

after Union minister Ravi Shankar Prasad hit out at the company for "deliberately" choosing not to comply with the guidelines while officials said Twitter will lose its legal protection from penal action for third party content over the non-compliance. The elec-

tronics and information technology ministry for comments but did not receive a response immediately. There was also no immediate response from Twitter. An official separately told HT that Twitter will be considered an intermediary *Contd...Page 6*

## No home isolation for any Covid19 patient who has no separate facility

**Guwahati, June 16 :** The Assam Cabinet on Wednesday decided that home isolation would not be allowed to any Covid19 patient, who has no separate facility at home. The decision was taken at the Assam Cabinet meeting held on Wednesday under the chairmanship of chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. "It has been decided that home isolation will not be allowed to any #COVID19 patient who does not have a separate facility at home for the same," Assam chief minister Sarma wrote on his Twitter

handle while sharing the decisions of the Assam Cabinet. "It has been decided that home isolation will not be allowed to any #COVID19 patient who does not have a separate facility at home for the same. 5/5@CMOfficeAssam On May 25, 2021, Assam chief minister Sarma during his Dhubri visit announced that the state government was mulling to stop home isolation facility for Covid19 patients. He said the state government would gradually stop home isolation. The decision *Contd...Page 6*

### CBI books fugitive Mehul Choksi for criminal conspiracy, destruction of evidence in fresh chargesheet

**New Delhi, June 16 :** The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has filed a supplementary chargesheet against diamondaire Mehul Choksi and the other 21 accused in the PNB bank fraud case, in which the fugitive has been charged with destruction of evidence. According to reports, the CBI had filed a chargesheet against 18 accused, including Mehul Choksi; however, in the supplementary

chargesheet, the federal agency names four more accused, along with the previous 18 accused. Among the 21 people named in the chargesheet include former officials of Gitanjali and Punjab National Bank. The chargesheet was filed on June 10, under Section 120B r/w 477-A, 201 Indian Penal Code and Section 7 of PC Act. The two of four accused, who have been named in *Contd...Page 6*



## Four more special trains to run in N. F. Railway

For the benefit of passengers and to clear extra rush

**Guwahati, June 16 :** It has been decided to run four more special trains from the month of June and July, 2021 for the benefit of passengers. Among these special trains- one train will run between Dibrugarh - Chandigarh, one will run between Silghat Town - Tambaram and another will run between Silchar - Coimbatore. Moreover, one summer special train will also run between Guwahati and Trivandrum for four trips each to clear extra rush of passengers. Among these special trains: Train No. 05903 Dibrugarh - Chandigarh weekly express spe-



cial will run w.e.f. 05-07-2021 until further advice. The train will leave Dibrugarh at 08-05 hours on every Monday to reach Chandigarh at 13-20 hours on Wednesday. In

return direction, Train No. 05904 Chandigarh - Dibrugarh weekly express special will run w.e.f. 07-07-2021 until further advice. The train will leave Chandigarh at

23-20 hours on every Wednesday to reach Dibrugarh at 07-55 hours on Saturday. Train No. 05630 Silghat Town - Tambaram weekly express special will run w.e.f. 25-06-2021 until further advice. The train will leave Silghat Town at 10-05 hours on every Friday to reach Tambaram at 21-25 hours on Sunday. In return direction, Train No. 05629 Tambaram - Silghat Town weekly express special will run w.e.f. 28-06-2021 until further advice. The train will leave Tambaram at 18-55 hours on every Monday to reach Silghat Town at 04-00 *Contd...Page 6*



ing the Chief Minister about the construction status of the Guwahati-North Guwahati connecting bridge informed that around 37% works of the bridge have been completed. Keeping this in

view, the Chief Minister directed the department to complete the bridge by

### CM reviews construction status of Guwahati-North Guwahati connecting bridge

CM directs to complete construction of  
Guwahati-North Guwahati bridge by 2023

**Guwahati, June 16 :** Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today visited the office of the Chief Engineer, PWD (Roads) (EAP) at Fatisil Ambari in Guwahati and reviewed the implementation status of various bridge construction projects. The Chief Minister reviewed the progress of construction of Guwahati-North Guwahati connecting bridge and proposed Palasbari-Sualkuchi connecting bridge besides

March 2023. Further while taking stock of the proposed Palasbari-Sualkuchi connecting bridge, the Chief Minister directed to make it a four lane bridge and to finalize modalities and DPR *Contd...Page 6*

### PM Narendra Modi calls for 'repair and prepare' amid COVID pandemic, invites world to invest in India

**New Delhi, June 16 :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday (June 16) called for focus on 'repair and prepare' as the nation emerges out of a devastating pandemic. "Over the past year, we have witnessed a lot of disruption in different sectors. Much of it is still there. Yet, disruption does not have to mean despair," he said at V i v a T e c h Summit. "Instead, we must keep the focus on the twin foundations of repair and prepare," he said referring to the need to augment healthcare infrastructure in the country as well as prop up the economy. Indian

economy suffered its worst contraction in decades in the fiscal year ended March 31, 2021, as the pandemic-induced lockdown impaired economic activity. The government, however, continued with the reforms that would help sustain higher growth rates after the world emerges from the pandemic. India implemented huge reforms across sectors - from mining to space, from banking to *Contd...Page 6*





## Marjorie Taylor Greene apologizes for comparing House mask rule to the Holocaust

**London, June 16 :** Marjorie Taylor Greene, the extremist Republican congresswoman, has apologized for her comments comparing the required wearing of safety masks in the US House to the horrors of the Holocaust. "I'm truly sorry for offending people with remarks about the Holocaust," Taylor Greene told reporters outside the Capitol on Monday, saying she had visited Washington's US Holocaust Memorial Museum earlier in the day. "There's no comparison and there never ever will be." Greene's comments were a rare expression of regret by the conservative, who has a record of racist and Islamophobic remarks, as well support for QAnon and other antisemitic conspiracy theories. Her apology came more than three weeks after appearing on a conservative podcast and comparing Covid-19 safety requirements adopted by Democrats controlling the House to "a time and history where people were told to wear a gold star". She said they were "put in trains and taken to gas chambers in Nazi Germany. This is exactly the type of abuse that Nancy Pelosi is talking about". Her comments sparked widespread outrage across the political spectrum, and were condemned by Republican leaders, including the House minority leader, Kevin McCarthy, who called the comparison "appalling". GOP leaders, however, have been reluctant to take concrete action against Greene, a close ally of Donald Trump. After social media posts were unearthed in which Greene suggested support for executing



some Democratic leaders, McCarthy and most Republicans stood by her when the House took the unusual step of stripping her of her committee assignments in February. But as House members returned to the Capitol on Monday after a three-week break, Greene was contrite. "Antisemitism is true hate," she said. "And I saw that today at the Holocaust museum." In 2018, two years before her election to Congress, she speculated on Facebook that California wildfires may have been caused by "lasers or blue beams of light" controlled by a leftwing cabal tied to a powerful Jewish family. On Monday, she told reporters that when she was 19, she visited the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. "It isn't like I learned about it today," she said of the Holocaust, in which 6 million Jews and huge numbers of other people were killed. "I went today because I thought it was important," she said, and wanted to talk about it as she apologized. House leaders have recently said vaccinated people are no longer required to wear masks in the chamber. The US is approaching nearly 600,000 deaths from Covid-19.

## One in five people in parts of EU pay bribes for healthcare, survey finds

**London, June 16 :** Almost a third of residents in the EU relied on personal connections to access healthcare during the Covid crisis, and around one in five in Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Lithuania paid a bribe for such services, a report on corruption has found. Across the EU's 27 member states, nearly two-thirds (62%) of the 40,000 respondents in a survey conducted by Transparency International said corruption in their government was a major problem and three-quarters (76%) said it had been stagnating or getting worse. The authors of the NGO's report, The Global Corruption Barometer - the European Union, said the findings were particularly worrying given that member states are preparing to allocate billions of euros for post-pandemic recovery. The European Commission is expected imminently to approve national plans for the spending of €800bn (£687bn) that will be jointly raised on the financial markets. "The EU is often seen as a bastion of integrity, but these findings show that countries across the region remain vulnerable to the insidious effects of corruption," said Delia Ferreira Rubio, the chair of Transparency International. "During a health crisis, using personal connections to access public services can be as damaging as paying bribes. Lives can be lost when connected people get a Covid-19 vaccine or medical treatment before those with more urgent needs. It's crucial that governments across the EU redouble their efforts to ensure a fair and equitable recovery from the ongoing pandemic." The report paints a picture of discontent about the



cosy relationships between big business and governments and a high degree of direct involvement by citizens in corrupt practices to access public services. While only 6% of people across the region said they had found it necessary to pay a bribe to obtain or access health services, the survey found that 29% had relied on personal connections, with that experience most common in the Czech Republic (54%), Portugal (46%) and Hungary (41%). The highest proportions of people who said they had given a bribe to secure healthcare were in Romania (22%), Bulgaria (19%), Hungary (17%), Lithuania (17%) and Croatia (14%). The use of bribes to access healthcare was also comparatively common in Belgium (10%), Austria (9%) and Greece (9%), according to the survey, which was carried out between October and December last year. Cyprus had the

highest proportion of respondents (65%) saying they believed corruption had increased over the past year, apparently fuelled by scandals related to Cyprus's "golden passports" scheme under which it has been found that dozens of convicted criminals, fugitives and politically exposed individuals have bought citizenship. Less than 20% of people living in Denmark and Finland thought corruption in government was a big problem in their country, while more than 85% of those in Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Italy, Portugal and Spain believed it was. There was no country in which a majority of citizens thought corruption was decreasing. The most positive results came from Slovakia, where 39% of citizens thought there was a decline. During 2020, in the wake of the 2018 murder of Jan Kuciak, an investigative journalist, and his fiancée, dozens of Slovak law enforcement officials were charged with corruption.

## Factory workers making goods for the west bear brunt of virus surge in south-east Asia

**Bangkok, June 16 :** It was around mid-May when workers at the Cal-Comp factory in Phetchaburi, central Thailand, heard a small group of their colleagues had tested positive for Covid-19. It soon became clear the virus had ripped through the production lines. A cluster associated with the electronics factory has since been linked to thousands of infections. Hwan Htet Paing\*, a worker from the factory, said he was not told the results of his Covid test, carried out on 19 May. Despite this, he was instructed to quarantine inside a

vast hall at his workplace. The floor was covered with tarpaulin sheets and lined with rows of mosquito nets for each worker. Everyone was given a bucket and a cup, and bedsheets to lay across the floor. Fans were handed out to help ease the heat - until the vast numbers of people testing positive meant there were none left. He stayed for 14 days, in the same clothes that he had been wearing when he was sent to the facility. Across south-east Asia, countries that managed to avoid the worst of the pandemic last year are



facing new waves of Covid-19, fuelled by more contagious variants. In several countries in the region, including Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia, clusters have begun in key manufacturing sites. In Vietnam, which virtually eradicated

the virus last year, total cases have tripled since the start of May, reaching almost 10,000, driven partly by outbreaks in factories. Malaysia was forced to impose a lockdown this month after daily cases surpassed 9,000. Much of the country's manufacturing sector has been allowed to continue operating at limited capacity throughout lockdown, despite concerns raised by campaigners. On Friday, it emerged that more than 800 workers at glove maker WRP had tested positive for Covid. "Unfortunately the whole setup of these production lines and factories is not conducive to Covid-19 prevention," said Andy Hall, a specialist in migrant workers' rights. Increased demand for certain goods during the pandemic has placed additional pressure on supply chains. Many such products are destined for Europe: tech gear and printers for people who are working from home, medical gloves for health workers, tinned tuna for people stocking up the cupboards. In Thailand, workers at more than 130 factories have been infected,

rigorous preparations; indeed, his wife, Jill, declared him "over-prepared". The White House insists the president has no illusions about a "Russian reset", but Biden argues that there are some issues - such as arms control and possibly the climate emergency - that the two leaders have to discuss, and is pressing to reestablish a routine strategic dialogue between US and Russian officials. "We're not looking for conflict," the president said on Sunday. "We are looking to resolve



those actions which we think are inconsistent with international norms, number one. Number two, where we can work together, we may be able to do that in terms of some strategic doctrine that - that may be able to be worked together. We're ready to do it." In an NBC News interview broadcast on Monday, Putin said he would consider establishing such a dialogue, depending on how Wednesday's summit went. In the real world, the last week has given little inkling of a coming breakthrough. A Russian court's decision on Thursday evening to outlaw Alexei Navalny's organisation as "extremist" will reassert the issue of human rights in Russia on the summit's agenda. And Russia's backing for Alexander Lukashenko will also lead to a battle over what Moscow claims as a sphere of influence in Belarus and Ukraine, despite the breakup of the Soviet Union more than 30 years ago. "I don't know how you get

around that," said Melinda Haring of the Atlantic Council during a recent roundtable hosted by the Center for National Interest, a Washington thinktank. "Ukraine, Belarus, Russia's domestic politics, Nato expansion, all revolve around who owns what. Do Belarusians get to decide their future, do Ukrainians get to decide their future, or does Vladimir Putin? I think it's an insurmountable problem." Analysts suggested that the upcoming summit would be "boring" and a

carefully-controlled "snoozefest" as both sides attempted something of a reboot following a catastrophic meeting between Putin and Donald Trump in Helsinki in 2017, which Trump insisted on holding without any aides. Top US aides were apoplectic as Trump emerged from one-on-one talks with Putin and rejected his own FBI's assessment that Russia had interfered in the 2016 elections. "President Putin says it's not Russia. I don't see any reason why it would be," he told reporters. One advisor later said she considered faking a medical emergency to end the press conference. In a statement on Thursday, Trump repeated that he had more faith in Putin than in US intelligence, and asked Biden to send the Russian leader his "warmest regards". In his NBC interview, Putin returned the compliment, describing Trump as an "extraordinary, talented individual". The White House does

## Losing 'Freedom Day' is galling for Boris Johnson, but things could get worse

**London, June 16 :** Boris Johnson has once again been persuaded that he must do the inevitable and cancel "Freedom Day" - a decision that will deeply rankle with him. The prime minister is said to have complained to aides over the weekend about briefings to newspapers at the end of last week that a four-week delay was the likely outcome, saying he had technically not made the decision yet. But one thing matters more to Johnson than being able to join crowds in a packed pub on 21 June: not having to close them again a few weeks later. There are some cabinet grumblings, though not from anyone who really has influence. Johnson took the decision at the beginning of his premiership to avoid the weekly cabinet showdowns that plagued Theresa May by appointing loyalists who do not speak out of turn on issues outside their brief. Those who matter - Rishi

Sunak, Matt Hancock and Michael Gove - were unanimous in favouring a delay. Sunak told the quad meeting on Sunday that his own views were well known - they were leaked to the Guardian last week. The Treasury has deliberately "gone long" and extended furlough to the autumn, though some support will start to taper off. Sunak is now firmly

may vote against the restrictions to make the PM dependent on Labour votes but that is an embarrassment rather than a real obstacle. Of all of those Tory MPs who are signed up to the Covid Recovery Group of lockdown-sceptic MPs will oppose delay either. Some are more pragmatic and their main frustration had been with rules that felt arbitrary, such



convinced that reimposing restrictions when they have been lifted does the most long-term economic and psychological damage. And those close to the chancellor say he has not particularly relished being painted as the anti-lockdown hawk when he seems himself more as a pragmatist who will set out the bleak economic picture because it is his brief to do so. From Dominic Cummings and others, we know it was not Sunak who was the bitterest opponent of lockdown in the autumn, but the prime minister himself. Johnson will get a pasting from parts of the rightwing press, especially the Mail and the Telegraph, whose approval he most craves, as well as from many of his own MPs. Those MPs who oppose any delay have limited powers - there will be a vote to renew the restrictions but Labour is likely to back the government. There are other ways of making trouble in parliament on other pieces of legislation but it is unclear if that can be effectively co-ordinated. Enough Tory MPs

as the 10pm curfew or the scotch egg debacle. Perhaps most effectively, those MPs who feel most strongly about ending restrictions can go on the airwaves and gloomily predict that if caution is so needed in the summer then surely new restrictions will be needed in the autumn as the NHS comes under more seasonal pressure. That might start to raise the public's hackles. Johnson's decision to delay for four weeks will break some businesses but will make relatively little difference to how the vast majority are living their lives. Nightclubs, maskless commuting and mass indoor gatherings can probably be foregone for another month without too much tribulation. The real test will be if infection rates continue to climb and hospitalisation rates start to look more worrying. The idea of reimposing restrictions is anathema to Johnson. There are other finely balanced judgments too - on mask-wearing, working from home advice and vaccinating schoolchildren. In the end, this decision may look like the easy one.



# Chief Minister Dr.Sarma takes stock of COVID situation in state

*Asks DCs to back COVID testing with aggressive vaccination*

*Vulnerability mapping should be done in block areas to earmark priority vaccine areas; CM*



**Guwahati, June 15:** Chief Minister Dr.Himanta Biswa Sarma while reviewing the current situation of the COVID 19 pandemic in Janata Bhawan this evening through video conference asked the Deputy Commissioners (DCs) to back their COVID testing policy with aggressive vaccination strategy to sustain the decline of positive cases in the state. It may be noted that the positive cases in the state in line with the

national average over the last few days showed gradual decline. In this backdrop, Chief Minister Dr.Sarma during the video conference with the DCs and SPs asked them not to lower their guard and maintain strict adherence to several restrictions to sustain the downside of the positive cases. Chief Minister Dr.Sarma however, observed that since the positive cases are slowly drifting towards smaller towns, municipal areas

and rural areas, there must be concerted efforts on the part of the DCs to do the vulnerability mapping based on the positive cases in block areas. The DCs thereafter must earmark priority vaccine areas to bring people strictly from the rural areas under vaccination coverage. This strategy will help the districts to reverse the spread of the pandemic to rural and tea garden areas. He also asked the Deputy Commissioners to achieve total saturation in vaccinating the people in their respective districts. He also asked them to prepare district specific strategies to achieve 100 per cent inoculation as he assured them with adequate supply of vaccine doses in the coming days. Taking a look of a chunk of Anganwadi Workers and helpers who are still to be vaccinated, Chief Minister Dr Sarma asked the DCs to vaccinate the left over Anganwadi workers and helpers on an urgent basis. He said, this would help in saving other vulnerable sections like divyangjans, children and lactating mothers who might get the infections from them. The Chief Minister asked the DCs and SPs to completely enforce the restrictions including curfew and inter-district movements to further reduce the positivity rate in their districts. He also asked the DCs of the districts where restrictions have been relaxed following dip in positive cases, to promulgate Section 144 to prevent assembly of people and take steps so that relaxation in the districts is not misused. Chief Secretary Jishnu Baruah, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Samir Kumar Sinha, Principal Secretary Home Neeraj Verma, Principal Secretary Revenue Avinash Joshi, CEO ASDMA GD Tripathi, Mission Director National Health Mission Dr.Lakshmanan and other senior officers of the government were present during the conference.

## Four band saw mills closed after raid

**Guwahati, June 16:** Three illegal band saw mills at Champupara under Kamrup West Forest Division have been shut down and their machines seized after forest officials conducted a raid on Wednesday. The operation was led by Divisional Forest Officer, Kamrup West and his personnel. In another raid carried out by the Forest Range Officer, Hajo and protection squad personnel, one illegal band saw mill at Kalitakuchi Chowk under Hajo Police station was detected and machine seized on Wednesday.

## Covid Claimed Three More Lives in Golaghat

**Golaghat, Jun 16:** Today three persons succumbed to Covid in Golaghat and with these three cases Covid death toll rises to 89 in the district. Dimbeswar Gogoi (70) from Bam Borahi village, Manju Kumari (59) from Doyang Tea Estate and Rajani Das (66) from Mission Compound area in Golaghat succumbed to Covid today. Meanwhile 241 fresh cases of Covid positive were reported today. At present the number of Active Cases of Covid in the district is 1995. However 170 patients got discharged today. Recovery rate is 75 per cent while Covid positivity rate is 4.1.

## 2 more deaths raise toll to 64 in Lakhimpur

**North Lakhimpur, June 16:** Two more persons expired due to Covid-19, thereby raising the total number of cumulative deaths in Lakhimpur district to 62. The Lakhimpur district Health Department informed that Raja Chaudhury (male, 45) of

Dhakuakhania, Angarkhowa, Panigaon and Hira Borgohain (male, 85) of Borgohain Gaon, Japisajia, North Lakhimpur died due to Covid-19. The Department also informed that altogether 131 people were found positive in Lakhimpur district on Tuesday,

thereby increasing the total number of cumulative positive cases to 4989. The Department further informed that the total number of active cases in the district was 1121 while the number of people discharged after recovery was 3804 in the district as on Tuesday.

## One more dies of COVID in Nagaon district, new 156 cases detected

**NAGAON, June 16:** COVID 19 claimed one more life in Nagaon district today, taking the total death toll in the district in the second wave to 75. Besides, 156 more fresh COVID cases were detected today while 264 people who were being treated in various hospitals as well as at homes, were

recovered from the infection of the virus today. Sources claimed that total 2569 COVID cases were cumulatively active in the district while 11,603 COVID patients were recovered from the virus till the time of filing this report. Among those who tested positive today, 125 were immediately admitted

to Nagaon COVID hospital as well as other COVID Care Centres set up at various places in the district while the rest were put in home isolation, sources said. Rapid Antigen Test was conducted on 6850 people while RT-PCR test was conducted on 131 swab samples today, sources added.

## CM reviews functioning of Irrigation and Soil Conservation Departments

*Avoid multiple contractors in a single project and minimise delay in works: CM*

**Guwahati, June 16:** Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today held a joint meeting with Irrigation and Soil Conservation Departments and reviewed the implementation of various projects. He directed the Irrigation Department to propose two big projects to irrigate a total of 1 lakh hectare lands in the shortest possible time. He observed that projects of the department get delayed due to multiple executive engineers working in different aspects like electrical, mechanical etc in the same project and suffer because of the lack of coordination among them. For that reason, the Chief Minister directed the department to make territorial divisions within 10 days where each division will be headed by one



executive engineer. He stressed on reorganising the department into one effective agency for carrying out projects on time. He also instructed to avoid multiple contractors against one project and foreclose all long pending incomplete projects at the earliest. He advocated setting up few big projects instead of several small irrigation projects. The Chief Minister directed to explore possibilities of a big power-cum-irrigation project on Kulsi River. While review-

ing the works of Soil Conservation Dept, the Chief Minister asked the department to assess the demand of gully protection and protective irrigation projects. He directed to complete all ongoing projects at the earliest while working to generate more demand for soil conservation projects. Soil Conservation Minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Irrigation Minister Ashok Singhal, Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Samir Kumar Sinha and other senior officers were present in the meeting.

## DC Reviews Vaccination Status of West Siang with Stakeholders



**Aalo 16th June:** The West Deputy Commissioner Shri Moki Loyi took up an elaborate meeting with Health department and other stakeholders to know the status of vaccination drive in West Siang to all age groups at Conference Hall of DC Office on 15th June last. The DC said that preparation of targeted people based on Electoral Roll may give us a less percentage as many people have enrolled their names in the district and taking the vaccine in their place of postings and dwelling. This has to be thoroughly identified along with pregnant women and patients advised not to take the vaccine on medical grounds. The drive has to go on so that the virus is not transmitted to each other in future. The ZPC, Shri Babom Romin disclosed that Panchayat leaders are also playing proactive role in the process of vaccination and cooperate with govt agencies in launching it. ADC Yomcha Shri Hento Karga said that poor network connectivity hinders

online application of vaccination in circles like Liromoba and Yomcha. The Commandant 2nd APP Bn said that 94% of their police personnel have taken the vaccine though it has been poorly reflected in the Vaccination web portal due to communication gap. Stress will be given to all to take the vaccine barring persons with medical grounds. The DMO Dr. Moli Riba, DFWO Dr. Tomar Kamki and DSO Dr. Jombom Kato said that effort is being made to cover all by taking up the vaccination to circles of the district. The left out HCWs and FLWs complete the vaccine by 18th of this month as per the norms. The vaccine has been made available in plenty and people in the age groups of 18 and above will be targeted soon in a big way. The CDPOs who are placed with HCWs along with their Supervisors and Anganwadi workers have been asked to gear up the missed out workers and play keen roles in the vaccination drive.

## Guwahati police raids at the police quarter of SI Barnali Bora at Nagaon

**NAGAON, June 16:** A sleuth from Guwahati police raided the official quarter of one SI Barnali Bora at Nagaon police reserve colony this evening. Guwahati police seized gold ornaments estimated worth of Rs 50 lakhs from one Monuj Shah, a gold marcent of Nagaon and Guwahati police brought him to the quarter of his wife at Nagaon police reserve colony this evening, sources added. Sources claimed SI Barnali Bora is the wife of SI Badri Prasad Baruwati who is currently serving in Guwahati Railway Police. It is pertinent to mention that SI Badri Prasad Baruwati served as Town Sub Inspector a few years ago and also posted in Khotkhoti in Karbi Anglong district.

## Forest Department Officials Attacked by Angry Mob

**Golaghat, Jun 16:** Last night sensations prevailed at Bogidhola Tea Estate in Golaghat when two guards of forest department were attacked by an angry mob. According to the report a group of wild jumbos have been creating havoc in the tea estate and its adjoining areas. Yesterday a woman and her child were killed in the attack of the wild jumbos. This incident created panic among the people. In the night forest department personnel reached the spot to control the situation. But the local people were angry and raised allegations of negligence against the forest department. At last an angry mob of around fifty people attacked two forest guards brutally. In the attack forest guards Rupkanta Gogoi and Jehiruddin Ahmed got serious injuries. The mob also damaged the vehicle of the forest department team. The injured guards were admitted in the hospital. Meanwhile a case has been filed by the forest department officials in Golaghat Police Station in this regard.



Meeting of AGP dignitaries held at Guwahati today

## Dead body recovered at Itakhola

**Biswanath Chariali, June 16:** Sensation prevailed in Itakhola area under Biswanath district when a dead body of one Sanjib Saikia (23) was recovered from Monai sluice gate under Itakhola outpost on Tuesday morning. Sanjib was the only son of one Mohan Saikia, a teacher from No. 2 Itakhola. Sharp

cut marks were noticed on the head and right hand of the body. According to information received from Mohan Saikia, Sanjib had gone out of his house on Monday evening and didn't return to his home. When the family members tried to trace the whereabouts of Sanjib on Tuesday morning,

the dead body was spotted near the sluice gate of Monai. The dead body was sent for postmortem later on. The Itakhola police has already initiated investigation in this regard, but no arrest has been made till filling this report. People doubted, miscreants had murdered Sanjib.

## Singer Santosh Sharma appointed as State Mahila Morcha President of Bharatiya Atal Sena



**Guwahati, 16 June:** Renowned philanthropist and noted Hymn singer Mrs. Santosh Sharma has been appointed as Assam State Mahila Morcha President of Bharatiya Atal Sena (BAS) (Rashtriyaawadi). In an appointment letter issued by National President of Bharatiya Atal Sena Vishnu Singh Jadon said Mrs. Sharma will look after all the issues related to Women in the state along with other social activities. He further said under the leadership of Mrs. Sharma, soon the executive committee of the State Mahila Morcha will be formed. After getting this responsibility Mrs. Sharma said that in the coming days, the Bharatiya Atal Sena (Rashtriyaawadi) Mahila Morcha of Assam Pradesh

will emerge as a strong organization of women. She also sought cooperation from every section of the society. After holding the post Bharatiya Atal Sena (Rashtriyaawadi) State Mahila Morcha distributed ration packets, masks and sanitizers among needy families as part of its first program among economically weaker families during the Corona pandemic at Jalaram Bappa Mandir, Fatasil Apart from this, masks and sanitizers were also distributed on a large scale by the institute to avoid the corona epidemic. Recently Singer Sharma also received Certificate of Appreciation by Naari Harsh foundation as Corona Warriors and Certificate of Kindness by Bhavya Foundation, Jaipur.

No. FA/TP/Tender/BTC SOPD-G/2021-22/3195-98

Dated, Barpeta Road, 04.06.2021.

### SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tender affixing a non-refundable Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight and paise Twenty Five) only with a validity a period of which will subsequently to be converted and drawn up in the printed F.2 Form are invited from the registered contractors Class-I (A), (B), (C) and Class-II category of Assam PWD, Roads & Buildings accordingly to their eligibility for submitting tenders under SOPD-G for the year 2021-22 for the work stated below.

Sl. No.	Name of work	Location	Estimated Amount (in Rs)	Earnest Money (in Rs)	Cost of Bid documents (in Rs)
1	Construction of Waiting Shed at Bansbari Range Office attached to I.B. under Bansbari Range of Manas Tiger Project.	Bansbari Range	4,50,000.00	9000/- (for Genl.) 4500/- (for SC, ST & OBC)	500/-
2	Construction of Water Tank at Bansbari Range Office attached to I.B. under Bansbari Range of Manas Tiger Project.	Bansbari Range	1,50,000.00	3000/- (for Genl.) 1500/- (for SC, ST & OBC)	500/-
3	Construction of Latrine at Bansbari Range Office attached to I.B. under Bansbari Range of Manas Tiger Project.	Bansbari Range	2,75,000.00	5500/- (for Genl.) 2750/- (for SC, ST & OBC)	500/-

The Tenders will be received on 24.06.2021 upto 3 P.M. and will be opened on 24.06.2021 at 3:30 PM in the Office of the Field Director, Manas Tiger Project, Barpeta Road. In the event of any unusual occurrence due to strike, bandh, holiday etc. the same will be received and opened on the next working day at same place and same time.

Details NIT may be seen in all working days during office hours in the office of the undersigned. The Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent from 11.00 Hrs. to 14.00 Hrs. on all working days from 18.06.2021 to 23.06.2021 on payment of Rs. 500/- (Rupees Five hundred) only in the form of Bankers Cheque in favour of **Principal Secretary, BTC, Kokrajhar payable at SBI, Kokrajhar.**

The contractors should submit attested copy of up to date Contractor's Registration Certificate, Labour License, Registration of GST, Annual Turnover, PAN Card, Previous Experience Certificate, Financial Soundness Certificate, Income Tax return etc. along with the tenders.

The Earnest Money should be deposited along with the filled up tender documents in the form of "Deposit at Call Receipt"/Fixed Deposit/Bankers Cheque/Bank Draft of scheduled Bank in favour of **Field Director, Manas Tiger Project, Barpeta Road, Assam.**

The payment will be made on **availability of fund from BTC SOPD-G.**

Sd/-

Field Director, Manas Tiger Project,  
Barpeta Road, Assam.

IPR(BTC)-68/2021



# The vaccine diplomacy

"Vaccine diplomacy" has evolved into a dirty phrase, not least in relation to China and the notion that its government could be exchanging ineffective jabs for geopolitical capital. At the weekend the G7 pledged just 1bn of the 11bn vaccines needed to immunise low- and middle-income countries, suggesting that the west cannot vaccinate the world alone. But, over the past month, international scientific and public health authorities have confirmed an exciting finding: despite the doubts of some critics, vaccines made by Chinese companies actually work. While they may remain ideological adversaries, China and the west now have no choice but to collaborate on vaccinating the world. On 2 June, the World Health Organization finally approved Sinovac for emergency use. Just days earlier, China's largest state-owned pharmaceutical manufacturer, Sinopharm, had released peer-reviewed phase III clinical trial data proving its vaccine's efficacy to western sceptics - and had it published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, no less. Phase III's "golden seal" means that each vaccine is effective enough to be widely distributed. But critical gaps in safety data for patients over the age of 60 remain for both Sinovac and Sinopharm jabs. While significant, these data holes notably did not deter a major approval from the world's highest public health authority. With only 6% of the globe fully vaccinated, the need for doses clearly outweighs the risks the vaccines may pose. Both jabs' efficacy has been publicly doubted; most recently when the UAE began offering a third Sinopharm "booster shot". Vaccines produced in China - alongside the Chinese Military Academy of Medical Sciences' partner producer CanSinoBio - have been largely ignored by the WHO's Covax initiative, a multilateral attempt to vaccinate the developing world. According to reports, Sinopharm and Sinovac could have been clearer about dose availability or production capacity earlier on if they really wanted a bigger seat at the Covax table. But since April, the tragic Covid-19 situation in India has made doses from Covax's largest supplier, Oxford/AstraZeneca, impossible to procure. Particularly in light of the underfunding pledged by leaders of G7 countries, the WHO has had little choice but to ask Sinopharm - and now Sinovac - for help, as the initiative trudges along towards vaccinating the world. If vaccines made in China could support gaps in Covax, then, what's left of China's vaccine diplomacy? Beijing is trying to halt the narrative that it wields doses for political power. The phrase "vaccine diplomacy" now only appears in Chinese media when it's being used to condemn western commentary on the topic; a practice that China's leading state-run news agency Xinhua calls "sinister". Some of the Chinese population are increasingly concerned that vaccine diplomacy is becoming another "wolf warrior", a phrase that many consider overtly demonising of China's influence abroad. Users on Chinese social media giants WeChat, Weibo, and DouYin are actually more inclined to use the phrases "vaccine assistance" or "vaccine donation". Thus far, Chinese vaccination donations abroad have been conducted bilaterally rather than through Covax. However, framing win-win vaccine distribution as topping up Beijing's moral currency reserves is a careful choice linked directly to China's stated foreign policy aims. The language of China's "International Development Cooperation in the New Era" white paper, launched in January, paints China as a developing nation that considers its home-made vaccines as a "global public good". Its draft 14th five-year plan, published in March, alludes to financial motivations for vaccine diplomacy, citing the nation's hopes to become a global pharmaceutical tech leader. Outside the west, coverage has been mixed on the usage of Chinese-made vaccines. Some has been outright political, including coverage of China pressuring Paraguay, Honduras and other nations to cut ties with Taiwan in exchange for doses, or delayed dose distribution of Chinese-made vaccines in south-east Asia. Headlines in the Middle East have reflected a more moderate approach. They have thanked China for its generosity and reflected efficacy scepticism. Amplified anxieties surrounding the blood clot concerns over AstraZeneca pushed many in the region to choose Sinopharm as a "safer dose". Chinese-made vaccines may have increased the nation's soft power abroad; however, reducing the conversation to purely political motivations extrapolated via headlines ignores hard truths. Vaccine hoarding by the west during the pandemic's early months put Covax far behind its target of vaccinating 2.3 billion people by the end of the year. China's vaccine factories can generate 3bn vaccines a year and have already exported 250m while the US is just getting started. Further, Covax's total aim is to vaccinate just 20% of people from lower- and middle-income countries by the end of the year, leaving 80% of the market up for grabs by corporate interests. This could be an extraordinary opportunity to spread global wealth. Manufacturing of Chinese companies' vaccines overseas may benefit diverse economies across Indonesia, Egypt and, most notably, the UAE, where Sinopharm has already been rebranded as Hayat-Vax. When it comes to vaccines, G7 countries' adversarial attitude towards China must take a moral pause. Covax and international governments looking for doses should increase collaboration, rather than competition, with vaccine companies across the world - including those in China. At worst, continuing to question Sinopharm and Sinovac's efficacy may increase vaccine hesitancy. While rightly delayed on the grounds of data, late approval for Sinopharm and Sinovac's vaccines undoubtedly cost many lives globally. After a year and a half of pandemic madness, the world is tired of blurred lines between proof and politics. While the west and China may remain adversaries, global public health initiatives must be careful to keep putting evidence and necessity - rather than geopolitical rivalry - first.

# India's Taliban outreach will mean different carrots for different levels of commanders

 Tara Kartha

Reports that India has opened formal channels of communication to the Taliban, thereby changing its decades-old policy, created something of a stir in strategic circles. Clearly, with about 50 per cent of US troops already out of Afghanistan, the clock is ticking. Standing staunchly by Kabul is all very well, but the reality is that the Taliban are not going anywhere, and will be part of any future dispensation in Afghanistan. That's the central pivot of all decision-making. That, and what the Taliban want themselves. That's tricky, since it depends just who the 'Taliban' are at this point in time. Deciding on just who the Taliban are requires a bit of a drill-down. First, the 'Taliban' effectively means some 60,000 core fighters, give or take, with several thousand in a situation of flux. Added to that are support groups or facilitators, which some sources number in tens of thousands, as well as local militias who may support them for gain. An increasingly large part of these 'professional' fighters have never known any other life. Others are 'part-time' fighters, going back to till their fields or 'regular' jobs, especially in districts where the Taliban are more or less in control. To both, being a Taliban means more income, and clout in their villages. Controlling these are district or local commanders, whose job it is to ensure collection of taxes in the name of a 'shadow government'. Services have to be provided to the local population, which in turn ensures the Taliban a steady supply of recruits, ensuring numbers are sustained in the fighting season. Both these tiers can go on fighting till the end of their lives if necessary. But what they want is a move from shadow to substance; and they're likely to get just that in large parts of Afghanistan even if negotiations stall. India's announcement of further aid of \$80 million in November last year for some 150 projects signals an acceptance of the reality that for any



development project to succeed, good relations with ground-level fighters are vital. These are not people with ties to Pakistan or anyone else. They're simply likely to go where their interests are protected. With projects in all 34 provinces, Delhi has already recognised that. Second, there are the Taliban field commanders, who have created their own fiefdoms causing considerable unease in the Leadership Council. A seasoned analyst points out that at Doha, Mullah Baradar opted for "reduction in violence" rather than a ceasefire, since he was uncertain whether commanders would actually obey the leadership. Many have acquired their own "business interests". Apart from the 'opium economy' valued at some \$4 billion or more, are mining operations. Reports indicate that some 75 per cent of Afghanistan's mines are with the Taliban and other strongmen. Talc mining is second only to narcotics in value, while the gold and lapis lazuli mines in Badakhshan have shaped the conflict there. Commanders function like corporate honchos, and neither the Taliban leaders nor anyone else can get them to stop fighting unless their interests are assured. The advantage is that their independence gives negotiators a little leeway. The more the divisions, the greater the space for persuasion. Third, are those at the Taliban's leadership level, extending from the Amir Hibatullah Akundzada, who is ostensibly the sole leader, to the Rahbari (or Quetta) shura, and some 16-plus commissions that oversee military, intelligence, and other functions including health, and increas-

ingly a sophisticated media cell. Lower down are the shadow governors and their 'staff' who manage a range of tasks. The resilience of the structure largely held while Mullah Omar was heading it. But the manner in which his death was hidden for years, the huge finances, and years of Pakistani dominance, which included imprisoning those who went against their wishes, has meant that the organisation is not quite as united as it likes to make out. That brings matters to Mullah Baradar, one of those who founded the Taliban, but was nevertheless held prisoner in 2010 by Pakistani intelligence. He was released in 2018 a physically weakened man, but still commands considerable respect, despite attempts to sideline him at Doha. He is reportedly one of those whom Delhi has reached out to. There could be others from the old guard, like Noorullah Noori, released from Guantanamo Bay together with five others. Or even Mullah Yaqub, son of Mullah Omar who has consolidated his power as head of the military commission, and who is favoured by Baradar. This is not just about Delhi picking anti-Pakistan insurgents, though that is eminently desirable. So far, the Taliban have not shown any interest in India, and indeed its spokesperson last year denied social media reports that the Taliban would turn to India soon, stating that it has no interest in the internal affairs of other countries. As fissures appear in the apparent monolith, it's time for a quiet reach out. What the Taliban want is continued aid without the interference that characterises its neighbour. It's doable. In addition, there

is no denying that the Doha Agreement between Washington and the Taliban, gave the latter a clear diplomatic standing, despite repetitive denial of recognition in the text. Insurgent leaders have been adding frequent flyer miles flying to major foreign capitals including Beijing. Rubbing shoulders with China, while Delhi fumed from the sidelines was hardly a policy. Which is why Delhi was present at the start of the Doha talks in September, when a 20-member Taliban delegation was in attendance. An Indian representative was also present at the signing of the Doha agreement. Under S. Jaishankar - a foreign minister who thinks on his feet - the shift had begun already. And to give the Taliban leadership their due, they have made it clear that while welcoming aid, they do not want any foreign power on their land, Islamic or otherwise. That was most apparent in the strong rebuff to Turkey's recent offer to stay back in Afghanistan and guard the airports and embassies. Islamabad won't have a free run in the country so easily, though it still holds the dominant hand and will probably continue to do so. Now comes the difficult part. A recent UN report reiterates the Taliban's continuing close connections with al-Qaeda, who are present in some 15 districts. Also present is AQIS (al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent), its regional affiliate. There is some discreet distancing now. But that could change in days. Apart from that are remnants of the Islamic State, and a slew of Pakistani groups and fighters, all of whom entrenched under some level of Taliban patronage. That's mostly the Haqqanis. While diplomacy will rightly focus on protecting the rights of women and minorities in Afghanistan, the security establishment will look for assurances on these dangerous elements. That will require links all the way from the top to the bottom, with each level requiring a different carrot to cooperate. All this while keeping Kabul reasonably happy and traditional friends in the loop. It's a chess game with more players than pieces, set in a scene of violence that is likely to rise alongside negotiations. It could all fall apart at any time into civil war. Nothing is ruled out. Hunger games indeed.

# No great choices between the two ex-diplomats' camps. Both equally incoherent

 Bharat Karnad

It is hard to know if the poet Horace, in 23 BC, was being satirical or optimistic about the future of Rome with his cry "carpe diem quam minimum credula postero" - 'seize the day, trusting as little as possible in the next one' - after Augustus Caesar had vanquished his domestic foes, ended the Republic and began the Empire by pacifying Iberia, conquering Egypt and installing himself as the pharaoh. Horace came to mind with three recent, probably unrelated, events. In his column (The Times of India, 29 May), BJP Rajya Sabha MP Swapna Dasgupta fulminated against the "left liberal" and "global 'woke' fraternity" for slamming Narendra Modi's management of, and his government's performance during, the Covid-19 pandemic and hinted darkly at the "Old Establishment" forging "alliances with foreign entities" to pull down India and besmirch the Prime Minister. But there is also a minuscule group of socially liberal right-wingers that has been lambasting Modi 2016 onwards for something a lot worse - for not even making an effort to deliver on his election slogans and promises. "Minimum government, maximum governance", "Government has no business to be in business", and "atmnirbharta", they argue, have remained just rhetoric in the Modi oeuvre, even as conservative precepts touting individualism and the rapid privatisation of the public sector are ignored. On 2 June, a government order proposed to dock the pensions of retired intelligence officers and the like who reveal some skulduggery or cloak-and-dagger business in their memoirs, and tasked the current heads of departments they worked in to decide what revelation breached which sensitive information threshold. While unexceptionable - the vetting requirement is standard in CIA and MI 6, for example - department heads in the Indian context, however, are likely to play safe and redact all interesting stories. This may preserve national secrets but render a potential bestseller-manuscript dull on ar-

rival, and aspiring memoirists sans fat book contracts. The vetting directive and the shrill reaction to criticism generally suggest a thin-skinned Modi regime that wants to ensure its advertisements about itself are not publicly shredded. Unfortunately, such actions don't burnish India's democratic credentials or the Prime Minister's personal reputation. A day later on 3 June, four foreign service stalwarts - Kanwal Sibal, Shyamala Cowsik, Veena Sikri and Bhaswati Mukherjee - fronting for something called 'Forum of Former Ambassadors of India' (FFAI) published an apology for Indian foreign policy post-2014 in The Indian Express. It started with an attack against "those who were at the helm of our foreign and security policies in the past", "relentlessly" criticising "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foreign policies". This article drew interest in part because Jyoti Malhotra highlighted in her 8 June column in ThePrint that FFAI is patronised by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) - the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party's ideological fount and political bedrock. These critics of Modi the FFAI is at loggerheads with, it turns out, are members of the Constitutional Conduct Group (CCG), which like FFAI, is of recent vintage. The former founded in 2018 is more settled with a proper Constitution, etc; the latter, currently better placed, is still finding its feet, its defence of Modi's record marking its public debut. If CCG has in its ranks former National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon and ex-Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, who served Manmohan Singh and, by Dasgupta's reckoning, constitute the "Old Establishment", FFAI is led by Sibal, Foreign Secretary for a couple of years in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government. At one level, this seems to be an intramural fight to influence the public perceptions of Modi and his policies. There is, however, nothing to choose between the quality of CCG's defence of the Manmohan Singh-era foreign policies, when the strategically debilitating civil nuclear cooperation deal with the United States was formalised, for example, and the policies of the successor BJP government during which the three "foundational accords" were signed with America, and the Quadrilateral (India, US, Japan, Australia) to contain China in the



Indo-Pacific articulated. They are both equally incoherent and disjointed, reflecting the confusion at the heart of Indian foreign policy. (For substantive critiques of the foreign and national security policies under Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi, refer respectively to my 2015 book *Why India is Not a Great Power* (Yet) and my 2018 book *Staggering Forward: Narendra Modi and India's Global Ambitions*.) Indeed, Sibal, et al, in trying to argue that CCG's criticism is unwarranted because its leading members had a hand in crafting Manmohan Singh's policies that Modi has persisted with, acknowledge that the BJP government has, Gulf countries apart, done absolutely nothing new in the foreign policy field, there being "clear continuities", as they put it, in Modi's approach to the neighbourhood, the United States, China, Russia, and the Quadrilateral - the "security diamond" (not "Indo-Pacific" they claim was) conceived by Shinzo Abe in 2007. But FFAI's assertion, for instance, that "The Modi government has paid far more attention to its neighbours than the previous government", does not mean relations with most of them have improved, nor that Modi's "109 visits abroad, visiting 60 countries" other than as a record of his travel, really benefited India. These are the sorts of elementary mistakes CCG and FFAI representatives make in overstating the alleged successes of Modi and Manmohan Singh in external affairs. Trouble is FFAI seeks protection from brickbats for the BJP government on the ground that in the throes of the Covid-19 pandemic it

deems a "national calamity", the country has to be "united". This self-serving argument, smacking of the desire to ingratiate itself with Modi seeks, in effect, blanket immunity from criticism for those in power because India, after all, faces some calamity or the other all the time. Both the Congress and BJP governments can be seen to have failed if the 'India First' metric - originally conceptualised by this analyst in 2002 ('India First', Seminar, Issue 519, 2002) which Modi flogged in his first election campaign - is used to judge Indian foreign policy. This is so because the 'India First' tilt, predicated on overturning the regional and international status quo, has been missing. Reason why a heavyweight India has all along boxed in bantamweight-class, and desperately needs disruptive foreign and military policies to carve out an independent strategic space and role for itself with appropriately re-configured armed forces. But this sort of thinking is anathema to risk-averse Indian policymakers whether in the BJP or Congress, and their sympathisers in FFAI or CCG. More damagingly, Indian regimes, of whatever ideological stripe, have stayed stuck in the subordinate State mindset, cementing the country's standing as a pawn on the global chessboard. Preoccupation with the risk/reward calculus of band-wagoning with the US or Russia or China has resulted in nothing meaningful being done to make India, a nation with natural heft, a player. Or, to help the country to seize the moment.



## Buy these three stocks with strong support on charts; ICICI Direct sees as much as 15% upside



**Mumbai, June 16 :** Domestic headline indices, Sensex and Nifty recently reached fresh all-time highs once again. Dalal Street has been in control of bulls for the majority of the trading sessions since April last year. Although there have been corrections, none has lasted long enough or been sharp enough to invoke fear among investors. However, trading cautiously when markets reach record highs might be the correct way forward. Amid this, domestic brokerage and research firm ICICI Direct has handpicked three shares as its 'Gladiator stocks' that find strong technical support on the charts along with robust fundamentals. Tata Motors share price has seen a sharp recovery from March 2020 lows when it tanked to trade at Rs 64 per share. "The auto index is seen breaking above its last five month's consolidation signalling resumption of up move. Among large-cap auto stocks, we remain constructive on

Tata Motors as it formed a higher base above the major support area of Rs 280 and is seen resuming its primary uptrend, thus offering a fresh entry opportunity," ICICI Direct said in a report. They added that Tata Motors recently registered a breakout above the last four month's consolidation range of Rs 342- 279, thus opening upside towards Rs 405. Franklin Templeton Franklin Templeton CEO, fund managers fined Rs 15 cr by SEBI; forensic audit reveals discrepancies Gold Rate Today, Gold Price Today in India Gold Price Today, 15 June 2021: Gold below Rs 49,000 ahead of US Fed meet; analysts advise 'sell on rise' Fundamentally, Tata Motors is leading the charge among domestic auto OEMs in the transformation of electrification. The company is a market leader in the domestic CV space which ICICI Direct believes is set to witness an impending cyclical upturn following about two years of laggard performance. Tata Motors has also upped its game in the PV segment and garnered a strong favourable customer response. Buying is advised between Rs 348-358, with a stop loss at Rs 324. At current levels, the stock would need to jump 15% to reach the target price in the 3-month time frame. The stock has performed well in the last few months, recouping past seven months decline in just 3 months.

## Microsoft Teams for Free Personal features in Microsoft Teams

**Guwahati/ New Delhi/ Mumbai, June 16 :** Microsoft Teams, a chat and collaboration platform for all is already a leading solution for working professionals. Now, one can also connect with others through Microsoft Teams. Users can download the iOS, Android, or desktop app to get started. The new features are designed to ensure easy and prompt conversations with others. Users can use Microsoft Teams in Assamese and will get access to all features of Teams and can any time change the language back to English. With Microsoft Teams, one can now speak to 300 people for 24 hours straight without any worry about phone bills. The app has features like Video Calling, Together Mode, Chatting and Polling. Microsoft Teams is available for free download on any iOS or Android device. 2. Microsoft Teams in Assamese Guwahati/ New Delhi/ Mumbai, June 2021: Microsoft Teams is a chat and collaboration platform for all. It is already a leading solution for working professionals. Now, one can also connect with others through Microsoft Teams. Users can download the iOS, Android, or desktop app to get started. The new features are designed to ensure easy and prompt conversations with others. Microsoft Teams is available for free download on any iOS or Android device. A user can use Microsoft Teams in Assamese too and will get access to all features of Teams and can any time change the language back to English. With Microsoft Teams, one can now speak to 300 people for 24 hours straight without any worry about phone bills. The app has features like Video Calling, Together Mode, Chatting and Polling. 3. Personal features in Microsoft Teams Guwahati/ New Delhi/ Mumbai, June 2021: A chat and collaboration platform for all, Microsoft Teams is already a leading solution for working professionals. Users can download the iOS, Android, or desktop app to get started. Now, one can also connect with others through Microsoft Teams. The new features are designed to ensure easy and prompt conversations with others. A user can use Microsoft Teams in Assamese and will get access to all features of Teams and can any time change the language back to English. With Microsoft Teams, one can now speak to 300 people for 24 hours straight without any worry

about phone bills. The app has features like Video Calling, Together Mode, Chatting and Polling. On any iOS or Android device, Microsoft Teams is available for free download.

## IndiaFirst Life Introduces Micro Bachat Plan in a New Avatarto Provide Enhanced Security & Savings

**A non-linked, participating, limited pay, and affordable micro-life insurance policy with an optimum mix of protection, safety, and guaranteed returns to secure life's certainties**

**Delhi, June 16 :** IndiaFirst Life Insurance Company Limited (IndiaFirst Life), promoted by Bank of Baroda and Union Bank of India, has introduced IndiaFirst Life Micro Bachat Plan. This non-linked, participating, limited pay, micro-life insurance policy is designed to offer dual benefits of security and disciplined savings to secure life's certainties. The competitively priced, low premium size makes this plan an ideal choice for ensuring security and savings. Providing financial support to the insured's family, in case of any eventuality, the plan ensures constant life cover benefits despite missing a premium. Additionally, to take care of the liquidity needs, the loan facility on the policy can be availed with a shorter pay commitment of 5 years. Rushabh Gandhi, Deputy CEO, IndiaFirst Life Insurance Company Limited

said, "With the objective of offering micro insurance solutions to customers in the hinterlands where the inflow of income is erratic and cyclical, we are delighted to introduce IndiaFirst Life Micro Bachat Plan in its new avatar. A perfect combination of security, protection, and disciplined savings, this simple and affordable plan is available through our Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) and the Common Service Centers (CSCs). We service customers across 98% pin-codes in the country through our diversified distribution network and this new plan will help us get closer to our stated objective of 'Insurance for



All." IndiaFirst Life Micro Bachat Plan takes care of the insured's liquidity needs through its loan facility. The policy can be purchased online or offline as per one's convenience. This limited premium paying, and participating plan provides a shorter pay commitment of 5 years while offering savings and protection in a single policy up to 15 years. The company offers a diversified suite of 44 need-based offerings (products & riders) catering to varied customer segments across the country.

About IndiaFirst Life Insurance Company Ltd: Headquartered in Mumbai,

IndiaFirst Life Insurance Company Limited (IndiaFirst Life), with a paid-up share capital of INR 663 crores, is one of the country's youngest life insurance companies. It is promoted by two of India's largest public-sector banks - Bank of

Baroda and Union Bank of India, which hold 44% and 30% stakes in the company, respectively. Carmel Point Investments India Private Limited incorporated by Carmel Point Investment Ltd, a body corporate incorporated under the laws of Mauritius and owned by private equity funds managed by Warburg Pincus LLC, New York, United States also holds 26% stake in IndiaFirst Life. The company's key differentiator is its simple, easy-to-understand products that are fairly priced and efficiently serviced. For details, please visit <https://www.indiafirstlife.com/>

## Nifty at fresh high of 15,900, Sensex hits all-time high; RIL, Infosys top contributors

**Mumbai, June 16 :** Share Market News Today | Sensex, Nifty, Share Prices LIVE: Domestic equity market benchmarks BSE Sensex and Nifty 50 were trading at record high levels on Monday amid mixed Asian cues. BSE Sensex hit a record high of 52,835.51, while Nifty 50 scaled a fresh all-time high of 15,889.60. IndusInd Bank, Tech Mahindra, Asian Paints, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, HCL Technologies, Bajaj Finsv, Infosys. On the flip side, Dr. Reddy's Lab, Titan Company, Bajaj Finance and L&T were top index laggards. Barring Nifty Pharma index, all the Nifty sectoral indices were trading in the green, lead by Nifty Realty index. Nifty Bank index was up 0.78 per cent. Elevated global commodity prices, highly taxed auto fuels and unfavourable base effect propelled wholesale price inflation in May to 12.94%, the highest in the current series with 2011-12 base year, showed the official data released on Monday. Retail inflation, too, spiked to a six-month high of 6.30% in May, as food inflation returned, aided by a 30.84% rise in oils and fats, and price pressure in fuel & light surged (11.58%). Domestic headline indices, Sensex and Nifty recently reached fresh all-time highs once again. Dalal Street has been in control of bulls for the majority of the trading sessions since April last year. Although there have been corrections, none has lasted long enough or been sharp enough to invoke fear among investors. However, trading cautiously when markets reach record highs might be the correct way forward. Amid this, domestic brokerage and research firm ICICI Direct has handpicked three shares as its 'Gladiator stocks' that find strong technical support on the charts along with robust fundamentals. Pandemic-induced

growth in e-commerce adoption and digital payments, which has enabled seamless cross-border trade, represents a \$526 billion opportunity in exports for small businesses to benefit, according to a PayPal study. Of this, nearly 60 per cent of exported items are goods

end of the IPO price band is slightly better than the peer companies. Similarly, the company has one of the best ROE & ROCE of 23.8% and 24.8% respectively. Company has a very healthy balance sheet with negative Net Debt/ Equity. We believe that the upcoming expansion



which represents a \$313 billion market for India's local artisans of tribal products, handicrafts, or small exporters of gems & jewellery. Tightened cost control measures aided EBITDA and PAT. Given the criticality of its component offerings in India as well as globally, the company enjoys a higher gross/EBITD margins of 59%/28% respectively. Low leverage despite capex intensive nature of the business has boosted its return ratios (ROE of 17%). Its deep-rooted relationships with OEMs (10-25 years) makes it a compelling growth story. With increased penetration of Battery electric vehicles, the company could see an uptick in content per vehicle over next few years. At the upper price band of Rs 291, the offer is priced at 74.1x/55.6x/41.4x EPS on FY21/22e/23e EPS on our estimates. We assign a SUBSCRIBE rating to the offer. INDSECFY-2021 PE of 31.2x and EV/EBITDA of 17.8x, at upper

plan in Bangalore & Chennai can be funded through internal accruals and minimum amount of debt. We are assigning a "Subscribe" recommendation to the issue. CPI inflation surprisingly surpassed the RBI's target band, amid higher food and core inflation, despite weak demand. We expect the RBI to continue to focus on supporting growth as a large part of the increase in inflation is supply-driven and hence transitory in nature. As growth starts normalizing from July, RBI's ability to ignore inflationary risks will be restricted, prompting gradual monetary policy normalization from October. Kotak Institutional Equities Capital markets regulator SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) has fined Franklin Templeton Trustee Services; FT AMC CEO Sanjay Sapre; and seven others to the tune of Rs 15 crore, in the matter relating to the abrupt closure of six debt mutual funds

schemes last year. SEBI in its order said that the evidence seen by it does not indicate that the Trustees had exercised high standards of service, exercised due diligence, ensured proper care and exercised independent professional judgment to address risks. Earlier last week, SEBI had fined Franklin Templeton and asked it to return Rs 512 crore in management and advisory fees to investors. The index continues its bullish trajectory and seems headed to 15900-16000. Despite multiple sessions of nervousness, the Nifty has been successful in respecting the 15700-15750 levels of support. As long as we do not break that on a closing basis, this trend is here to stay. The best way to ride this trend will be to accumulate long positions on dips. That would be the most prudent way of being a part of the larger trend. Manish Hathiramani, proprietary index trader and technical analyst, Deen Dayal Investments Videocon share price hit 5% upper circuit on BSE even as the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) approved Vedanta Group's Twin Star Technologies' resolution plan for Videocon Industries Ltd. As per the resolution plan, Videocon Industries will be delisted. Gold prices in India were struggling on Tuesday, as yellow metal in the international market steadied. Investors awaited the US Federal Reserve meeting for further clarity on rising inflation and monetary policy going forward. On Multi Commodity Exchange, gold August futures were trading Rs 20 up, at 48,543 per 10 gram, as against the previous close of Rs 48,523 per 10 gram. Silver July futures, on the other hand, were down Rs 521 or 0.72 per cent at Rs 71,358 per kg. On the initial day of the bidding process, Shyam Metals' initial public offering was oversubscribed by investors. On the other hand, Sona Comstar's IPO was subscribed 11%. Of the two, Sona Comstar is the larger offering -- over 5 times the size of Shyam Metals. Retail investors were upbeat on both the IPOs, tuning out to be the largest bidders so far. After a long pause, the IPO market saw two fresh public offerings open for subscription yesterday amid volatile market momentum. So far in this financial year, investors have seen only two other IPOs hit the street. Domestically, broad dollar strength and rising oil prices have hurt the rupee in past trading sessions. Besides that, a spike in India's retail price inflation to a six-month high of 6.3% in May, breaching the Reserve Bank of India's target range after five months; while a jump in wholesale prices by 12.94% in May could further dent investor sentiments. However, the only ray of hope to support the rupee is the FII inflows on account of upcoming IPO's and QIP's that could cap sharp losses thereon. Overall, we expect the USDINR pair to form a base near 73.20-30 and rebound sharply above 73.80-74.00 levels in upcoming days. Amit Pabari, managing director, CR Forex Advisors

## This World Music Day, Lift Up your spirit, with MTV BEATS, Vh1 and MTV#LiftUpWithMusic



**Delhi June 16 :** Did you know that music is still the no.1 stressbuster for youth, trumping sleep or talking to friends/confidantes? As per MTV Youth Study 2021, youth chose music 44% of the times when under stress in 2020, compared to 20% in

2018-19. As it is truly said, 'Where words fail, music speaks.' While we continue our struggle with coming to terms with the new normal, that has limited human interaction as much as leaving us feeling forlorn, the biggest respite has been courtesy music. With

an endeavour to celebrate this power and beauty of music that binds us therapeutically and helps us lift up our spirits, this year, some of the leading artists across India have decided to come together for World Music Day Lift Up on MTV BEATS, Vh1 and MTV

#LiftUpWithMusic. Hosted by the euphonic Jonita Gandhi, this music concert will be the one-stop destination for unplugged music, positive affirmations by artists, interactive sessions, candid conversations, and more, on Monday, 21st June. \* MTV Beats- 12 PM, 6 PM, 10 PM. \* Vh1 - 12 PM and 9 PM. \* MTV - 2:30 PM, 8:30 PM World Music Day Lift Up will be a one-of-a-kind musical extravaganza, featuring 32 ace musicians, such as Shilpa Rao, Sonamohapatra, Shaan, Jubin Nautiyal, Salim-Sulaiman, Raftaar, Sachin-Jigar, Shreya Ghoshal, Armaan Malik, Amaal Mallik, Rochak Kohli, Tulsi Kumar, Shalmali, Arjun Kanungo, Akasa, Asees Kaur, Harshdeep Kaur, Dhvani Bhanushali, Sachet-Parampara, Ankur Tewari, Bhoomi Trivedi, Vishal Mishra, Nikhita Gandhi-Shashwat Singh, Anusha Mani-Sangeet Haldipur, Shashaa Tirupati, Payal Dev, Stebin Ben, Avanti Nagral, Raghav Meattle, Kamakshi Khanna, Yashraj, Kayan, Zephyrtone, Trishes and L-Fresh The Lion, who will

perform unplugged versions of their favourite songs, and talk about how a song helped lift up their spirits during the lockdown and acted as a catalyst in the process of healing through the pandemic. Excited to host World Music Day Lift Up, Jonita Gandhi said, "The ongoing pandemic and lockdown continues to present us with unprecedented tough times. Having said that, I believe it also gave us a chance to reignite our passion for music in ways that have been truly fulfilling. World Music Day Lift Up on MTV BEATS, Vh1 India and MTV India is a perfect platform for all of us to share our experiences with a universal emotion that binds us together- music. This one's dedicated to our concerted love for songs and melodies." All set to spread amity with their musical prowess, Salim-Sulaiman said, "Music is synonymous to healing. In the times we're living in, it is imperative to channel your energies in the right direction and not let negativity deter your spirits. Our love for

the craft has kept us going during this pandemic-induced lockdown. We're happy to be able to do our bit for World Music Day Lift Up on MTV BEATS, Vh1 India and MTV India. Looking forward to an interesting celebration replete with great music and inspiring stories." Ankur Tewari added, "This year, the celebration of music will be different yet special for each one of us. Music has been instrumental in helping people relive the good old days and at the same time, instill positivity for a better tomorrow. World Music Day Lift Up on MTV Beats, Vh1 and MTV India echoes a beautiful emotion and I'm thrilled to be a part of it. A fun and uplifting sessions awaits all of us." When it comes to being emotionally healthy, music surpasses all other forms of relaxation, by miles. So, get set to relax and immerse yourself into the musical spectacle, that is, World Music Day Lift Up on MTV Beats, Vh1 and MTV #LiftUpWithMusic. Don't miss out:



## Contd. From Page 1

## CM reviews construction status

for the project. The alignment of the bridge was also decided in the meeting while modalities of fund allocation, technical details were also discussed. Moreover, reviewing various projects under "Asom Mala", Chief Minister Sarma directed to ensure timely completion of all roads and bridge projects. He also asked to prepare DPR for bridges over Ghunasuti river in Lakhimpur and bridge connecting Kumarikata with Jalah over Pagladia river. MP Pallab Lochan Das, Commissioner & Special Secretary of PWD (Roads) Rajesh Kemprai and other senior officers of the department were present in the meeting.

## Assam Board Exams Might

earlier postponed the exams but later stated it may conduct these tests in physical mode in July and August. Later, the government also said that the board exams may be held between July 15 and 20 for two to three papers if Covid positivity rate by drops below 2 per cent by July 1. The petition claimed that the statements made by the Chief Minister of Assam has created a situation of havoc and panic among the students and parents. They have been pushed into a state of dilemma and their mental condition has been devastated. The plea sought immediate intervention in the matter in the interest of safety and health of the students. Apart from the board exams, CM Sarma also said that four new Forensic Laboratories will be set up, one each at Assam Medical College and Hospital, Dibrugarh, Silchar Medical College and Hospital, Tezpur Medical College and Hospital, and Bongaigaon Civil Hospital. Social Welfare Department will be empowered to procure rice directly from Food Corporation of India (FCI) for Supplementary Nutrition Programme under ICDS to reduce costs, he tweeted. Statutes of Madhabdev University at Narayanpur, Bhattadev University at Bajali, Pathala, Birangana Sati Sadhani State University at Golaghat, and Rabindranath Tagore University at Hojai has also been approved by the cabinet.

## 30:30:40 formula (X, XI &amp; pre-boards)

a PIL in the SC seeking cancellation of CBSE Class XII exams due to the pandemic. CBSE was the first to cancel Class XII exams on June 1. Several state boards, including Maharashtra, later cancelled their exams. Principals have told the committee that they are in a position to mark students based on tests and exams conducted in schools during the academic year 2020-21. CBSE schools in Mumbai were unable to conduct offline exams and practicals throughout the year as no physical class was held, while those in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) managed to conduct offline tests and practicals when they were permitted to do so by the state from November last year. Schools that could not conduct their practicals have been directed to hold online practical tests and orals. The internal assessment marks of Class XII have to be uploaded on the CBSE system by June 28. "More weightage should be given to the Class XII periodic tests, pre-board marks, and internal assessments," said a principal, adding that incorporating Class 11 marks will be unfair as students do not take standard XI seriously. A city college principal said that CBSE can evaluate students from 2018-19 onwards as they continue their education in the same school after Class X. "State students migrate from school to college and marking them for Class X performance will be tedious," said the principal, indicating that the state should not adopt the formula if implemented. Students and parents are anxious about the CBSE assessment formula. "It was better to take an exam and get marks rather than be evaluated for previous years," said a parent. States are looking at a uniform marking formula for all Class XII students. HSC students in Maharashtra are still awaiting their evaluation formula.

## Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday releasing the first message in Koo

he launched the Assamese on Koo," Radhakrishna said. He hoped that the people of Assam would love to interact with him and each other on Koo and exchange thoughts around various topics. "Assam is a large state with a population of over 30 million and the people have a high affinity towards their language. Koo will be one of the few platforms where they will be able to connect with each other, exchange thoughts in Assamese and make new friends too", he added. Koo Co-Founder Mayank Bidawatka said that they have enabled the Assamese keyboard on Koo making it very easy for them to connect with each other in their mother tongue. "People will be able to create and share their thoughts in audio and video formats too, apart from text. This multi-modal creation is unique to Koo and this launch empowers the people of Assam to communicate and interact in their native language", he added. The users can connect with the chief minister on his handle @himantabiswa. Koo was founded in March 2020, as a micro-blogging platform in Indian languages and is available in multiple Indian languages with people from across different regions expressing themselves in their mother tongue. "In a country where just 10 per cent of India speaks English, there's a deep need for a social media platform that can deliver immersive language experiences to Indian users and help them connect with each other. Koo provides a stage to the voices of Indians who prefer Indian languages", the founders pointed out.

## Amid stand-off with govt, Twitter

once it follows the new Information Technology (IT) rules. The official said Twitter will no longer be protected from penal action under Section 79 of the IT Act, which absolves social media firms of liability for third-party content, if it did not do so. The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules were notified in February. They require significant social media intermediaries, which have five million users or above, to appoint a chief compliance officer, nodal officer and grievance redressal officer. Until Wednesday, Twitter was the only major social media firm that had not shared the details of the compliance. WhatsApp, Facebook and Google shared the details in May. Twitter on Tuesday said it has appointed the interim chief compliance officer and the details of the appointment will be shared directly with the ministry. The decision came after the government gave Twitter one last chance to comply with the new rules as the microblogging platform did not make immediate appointments of key personnel, mandated under the new guidelines. Twitter assured the government last week that it is in the advanced stages of finalising the appointment of the chief compliance officer and would submit additional details within a week. Twitter this month conveyed to the government that it was "committed to complying with the new rules", even as it raised concerns regarding the safety of its employees in the country and intimidation by the police. It sought a week to comply with the new guidelines after the government issued it an ultimatum saying Twitter would have to face "unintended consequences" including losing its legal protection from criminal liability for user content. The guidelines also require companies such as Twitter, WhatsApp, and Facebook to change how they regulate content and adopt features such as traceability of messages and voluntary user verification. Twitter and the government have had disagreements over content takedown orders and the company's actions against prominent people linked to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party for violation of its terms of use. Against this backdrop, the new IT rules hardened the stand-off last month, with Twitter earlier asking for three months to comply, raising concerns over the "core elements" of the norms, and flagging potential threats to the safety of its employees after a visit by the Delhi Police. The new rules have been contested by several parties, including WhatsApp which has argued that the traceability provision mandated in the guidelines would violate end-to-end encryption. Raman Chima, Asia Pacific policy director, Access Now, a digital civil rights organisation, said the government does not have the sole authority to device how intermediaries are able to make use of the legal protection granted to them by Parliament. "Whether the government's rules are constitutional and whether partial or incomplete compliance impacts this legal immunity provided in law will ultimately be decided by judges, and not just by the executive branch."

## PM Narendra Modi calls for

atomic energy, he said. "This goes on to show that India as a nation is adaptable and agile, even in the middle of the pandemic." "India offers what innovators and investors need," Modi said. "I invite the world to invest in India based on the five pillars of talent, market, capital, eco-system and culture of openness." Stating that India's strides in the world of tech and start-up are well-known, he said the country is home to one of the world's largest start-up eco systems and several unicorns have come up in recent years.

## Assam Police recovers Rs. 4 lakh

the gold recovery case. Speaking to News Live, Guwahati Commissioner of Police Munna Prasad Gupta said, "Acting on a tip we arrested two persons, Manoj Shah and Aman Ali and recovered gold worth Rs. 50 lakh from them. On interrogating them the two revealed that they bought the gold from one GRP Officer Badri Prasad Bharti. Soon after that, we detained Badri Prasad and also recovered Rs. 8 lakh cash from his vehicle". "Next, a team of Guwahati police raided the official residence of GRP Sub-Inspector Badri Prasad Bharti and questioned his wife Bornali Bora who is also a GRP Sub-Inspector stationed at Haibargaon, Nagaon. On searching the premises the police team recovered around Rs. 4 lakh cash on Tuesday night," said MP Gupta. Barnali, on the other hand, claimed to the media present during the raid that some of the cash recovered from the residence was her personal cash and a little bit of it was a gift from her father who was a government servant. The police have also raided a business establishment Gems & Jewelry Nagaon, in connection with the case and have arrested the owner as Manoj Shah and Aman Ali work in this jewelry shop.

## CBI books fugitive Mehul Choksi

the chargesheet by the CBI are Sagar Sawant and Sanjay Prasad. Both are PNB Employees and two private people. Dhanesh Seth and Sunil Verma, who were employees of Mehul Choksi. Sunil Verma is the former international head of the Gitanjali Group of Companies. The CBI found out during the investigation that 165 LoU (Letter of Undertaking) and 58 FLC (Foreign Letter Credit) were issued by the PNB bank, Brady House and these two named officials of the bank helped Choksi to get these LoU and FLC. Officials of PNB took illegal gratification for issuing the LoU and FLC. CBI had registered the case on February 15, 2018 against Mehul Choksi, his companies, 10 Directors and officials of PNB bank on the complaint of bank itself. It was alleged that accused persons had hatched criminal conspiracy and defrauded PNB to the tune of Rs 7080.86 crore by fraudulently issuing letters of undertaking to overseas banks for obtaining buyers credit and also issuing foreign letter of credit in favour of the three companies of Mehul Choksi without any sanctioned limit or cash margin and without making entries in the CBS system of the bank. Investigation revealed that during the period from 2015 to 2017, accused officials of PNB issued large no of LoU and FLC in a conspiracy with Mehul Choksi. Mehul Choksi fled from the country before being arrested. Choksi already had citizenship of Antigua, so he escaped to the island and hid there until he was caught and arrested in Dominica for entering illegally into the country.

## No home isolation for any

of the Assam Cabinet comes as 34 more patients lost their lives due to Covid19 infection. On Tuesday, the state recorded a total of 3,415 new Covid19 cases. The new cases were confirmed out of 1,32,929 tests conducted across Assam on Tuesday. Of the new cases, a total of 204 new positive cases were from Kamrup Metro district. The overall Covid19 positivity percentage in Assam stood at 2.57% on Tuesday. The state's recovery rate on Tuesday stood at 90.31%. The Assam Cabinet on Wednesday also decided not to allow the pending Class 10 and Class 12 final examinations to be conducted in the state due to the prevailing Covid19 situation. Sharing the decision of the State Cabinet, chief minister Sarma tweeted that a final decision regarding the Higher Secondary Leaving Certificate (HSLC) & Assam High Madrasa (AHM) Examinations and the Higher Secondary final examinations will be taken on June 18. The meeting on Friday will be held between the education department and various other stakeholders including students' organisations in the state.

## As COVID cases go down

Pahalgam and Sonmarg to open up for tourism and making sure that all COVID protocols are followed. The hotels and houseboats around the Dal lake are also getting ready to welcome visitors. Tourists can be seen taking shikara rides around the lake and enjoying pleasant weather. To lure visitors back to the state, several discounts are being offered. Many hotels have slashed their prices by 50%. "We have been here for the past 10 days and Srinagar is slowly opening up. The gardens are yet to be opened to the public. We could also travel to Gulmarg and Pahalgam, but the gondola ride wasn't operational when we visited a few days back. We also got to book rooms at hotels at half the price. Overall, it was a very nice experience, though many places of tourist attraction are yet to open," says Rounak, a tourist from Mumbai. One thing that tourists are missing is the beautiful gardens. "If more and more people start visiting, I am sure the authorities will open up everything," says Forum R, a tourist. All the tourists arriving at the Valley are being asked for their vaccination certificates as well as the COVID-19 test results. Tourists have also been asked to make sure that they follow all the COVID protocol. "We got our RT-PCR test and antigen test done, and all got all permission and e-passes. It's a wonderful experience here and we are very excited to travel to Kashmir," says Manoj Kumar, a tourist from Rajasthan. Another tourist from the desert state, Sarvind Yadav shares, "We started from Jaipur and we went to Leh and then, we came here. With COVID cases going down, it's good that the government is opening up tourism activities. Many people's livelihoods are dependent on this." The lifting of restrictions in the Valley has brought smiles on the faces of tourism stakeholders. However, caution is required. As Abdul Razak, a shikara owner, points out, "Things are improving, but we have to win the war against the pandemic. We appeal to tourists to come here after being vaccinated, we won't allow them to take shikara rides without being vaccinated. We check the certificates first and then take them around. We have ourselves got vaccinated. Tourists should come and we are hopeful that they will. But we have to keep our distance, wash our hands frequently and follow all COVID protocols."

## Four more special trains to run

hours on Thursday. Train No. 02516 Silchar – Coimbatore superfast special will run w.e.f. 22-06-2021 until further advice. The train will leave Silchar at 20-10 hours on every Tuesday to reach Coimbatore at 12-00 hours on Friday. In return direction, Train No. 02515 Coimbatore – Silchar superfast special will run w.e.f. 27-06-2021 until further advice. The train will leave Coimbatore at 21-45 hours on every Sunday to reach Silchar at 16-50 hours on Wednesday. Train No. 06185 Trivandrum – Guwahati superfast summer special will run for four trips from 19 th June to 10 th July, 2021. The train will leave Trivandrum at 18-00 hours on every Saturday to reach Guwahati at 09-00 hours on Tuesday. In return direction, Train No. 06186 Guwahati – Trivandrum superfast summer special will run for four trips from 23 rd June to 14 th July, 2021. The train will leave Guwahati at 06-45 hours on every Wednesday to reach Trivandrum at 23-10 hours on Friday. 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. It may kindly be noted that, 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 these regards.



Agartala- Tripura Pradesh congress protest

## FFA Covid Vaccination Camp in Golaghat

**Golaghat, June 16 :** Film Fraternity of Assam (FFA) today organized a Covid 19 vaccination camp at Paanch Ali in Golaghat. Today more than two hundred persons were vaccinated in the camp. Assamese film stars like Biki, Gunjan Bhardwaj, young director Suvrat Kakaty along with several other film and cultural activists from Golaghat have offered support and assistance in the vaccination camp. Health department authorities of Golaghat has made arrangements for Covid testing and vaccination. The FFA has already organised similar vaccination camps in Guwahati, Nagaon and Jorhat and today it is organized in Golaghat.

33<sup>rd</sup> BN, ITBP Contributed Rs 1,00,000/- (One Lakh Only) Towards Chief Minister's Relief Fund"

**Guwahati, June 16 :** Sh. Amrit Mohan Prasad, I.P.S. Addl. Director General, Eastern Command HQs, ITBP along with Sh. Manish Kr. Commandant, 33rd Bn, ITBP Called-On the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma and handed over a cheque of Rupees 1,00,000/- (Rupees One Lakh only) towards Chief Minister's Relief fund in order to support Government's effort to fight COVID-19. Hon'ble Chief Minister expressed his gratitude for the generous contribution of ITBP at the time of crisis. The ADG EC HQ ITBP also apprised the CM of various Civic Action Programmes (CAP) that ITBP conducts and also offered help under Ayushman Bharat Scheme to the people of Assam. 2. The Hon'ble CM discussed about "Border Issues, enquired about the general well-being of The ITBP Troops and assured all possible help from The Assam Government.



## Indian Army exploded a bomb at Itakhola

**Biswanath Chariali, June 16:** A team of bomb experts from the 4 Core, Tezpur had blasted the bomb that was recovered from Dhobi Khola Bridge under Itakhola PS of Biswanath on Tuesday evening. According to the information, a villager had spotted a bomb lying over Dhobi Khola Bridge on that evening and immediately informed the Itakhola police. The police team, who had reached the site and separated the bomb from that area and intimated the recovery of the bomb to the bomb squad. A team of bomb squad from the Indian army reached Itakhola and blasted it in an open field at around 3 pm on Wednesday causing no harm to anybody.



## Donation vaccine storage at Biswanath

**BISWANATH CHARIALI, June 15:** Known contractor and social worker Udai Aditya Goswami met Biswanath D.C Pranab Kumar Sarma on Tuesday and handed over a cheque of Rupees two lakhs fifty thousand to Dr. Surjya Kamal Bora, ADC, Biswanath for construction of Covid vaccine storage at Biswanath Chariali. Notably, Goswami had already donated a total of eleven lakhs to the CM fund to combat Covid 19. Further he had brought an ambulance for the needy that would be formally handed over very shortly, informed Goswami.



## Active Cases of Covid Crosses Two Thousand in Golaghat

**Golaghat, Jun 16:** Today 200 fresh cases of Covid positive were reported in Golaghat. At present the number of Active Cases of Covid crossed two thousand mark and today it is 2021. However 170 Covid patients got discharged today. No Covid death reported today in Golaghat.

## Supreme Court closes case against 2 Italian Marines in India after payment of Rs 10 cr

**New Delhi, June 16 :** The Supreme Court on Tuesday directed the closure of criminal proceedings in India against two Italian marines, accused of killing two fishermen off the Kerala coast in February 2012. A vacation bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and M R Shah quashed the FIR and proceedings emanating from the case against the two Italian marines. The bench said that as per the international arbitral award accepted by India, the Republic of Italy shall resume further investigation in the case. The top court termed the Rs 10 crore compensation paid by the Republic of Italy over and above the payment already made as 'reasonable and adequate'. It said that out of the Rs 10 crore compensation, Rs 4 crore each shall be deposited in the name of heirs of two deceased Kerala fishermen and two crore shall be given to owner of boat.



South African teams set to play in European Champions Cup next year



**Free town, June 16 :** South African teams will be able to take part in the European Champions Cup as early as next year following the launch of the United Rugby Championship in place of the Pro14. The Bulls, Lions, Sharks and Stormers will join 12 teams from Ireland, Italy, Scotland and Wales in the revamped URC next season with at least one of the former Super Rugby franchises guaranteed to qualify for Europe's elite competition for the 2022-23 campaign. The competition format will see four regional pools of four, with teams playing each other home and away, plus one fixture against each of the other 12 sides. The top eight teams in a single table after those 18 regular season encounters will then enter a straight knockout phase. The highest-ranked team in each of the four groups will earn a Champions Cup place for the following season with the remaining four spots going to the four highest-placed league teams who have not already qualified.

That paves the way for South African teams to come up against Premiership opposition in Europe - a move welcomed by the Sale and Springboks scrum-half Faf de Klerk. "I think it could be great, getting that experience of playing in different countries, in different weather conditions, it's going to put the players through different tests they haven't faced before," he said. "It'll be really tough, it'll be different and it may take a few games, or seasons, to really get the gist of the whole thing. But it's a real step forward for South Africa rugby." The URC is set to begin in September without 21 rounds of matches in total and no clashes scheduled with autumn internationals or the Six Nations. The Springboks are due to be in Rugby Championship action when the URC kicks off, however. Indeed, the new URC structure means South Africa internationals could face 11-month seasons with only February off. South Africa last year announced their commitment to the Rugby Championship through to 2030, thereby ending speculation they were due to join the Six Nations, even if the URC would appear to make that a more appealing proposition. "South African rugby has for many years imagined a future aligned with northern hemisphere rugby," said the South Africa Rugby chief executive Jurie Roux.

France win heavyweight clash with Germany thanks to Hummels own goal

**Paris, June 16 :** All that talent, all that expectation, and in the end it came down to a first-half own goal scored by Mats Hummels. An awkward deflection off his shin and into the top corner beyond Manuel Neuer was the only time either goalkeeper was beaten. But do not think that the story of this game between the last two World Cup winners, the opening night that could have been the climax of the entire competition, can be told so easily. Do not believe, either, that France will be removed easily. After a difficult first half in which they nonetheless had chances, Germany went for France here and might even have succeeded, particularly when Serge Gnabry's shot bounced over, but there was no way through even in the tense, noisy final minutes. In fact, the more Germany came at them, the more France broke, Kylian Mbappé an unstoppable force. Twice France might have ended this only to have goals from Mbappé and Karim Benzema ruled out, ultimately celebrating victory by a single goal. If that said something about German limitations - "We were not clinical enough," Joachim Löw said - there is certainly something about Didier Deschamps's side. They have a strength, assuredness and variety no one else has, a resilience to go

with the technical quality that meant they were the ones still standing at the end of an enthralling evening in Munich, the exceptional Paul Pogba thumping at his chest. This was better than the scoreline suggests, as a match and a meeting; not a classic, maybe, and France in particular will probably get better, but it was a proper occasion that sounded like one too. Nor, even

hour. But even with the riches up front it is the core of the French side that leaves a sense of impenetrability. They have a defence Löw called "just outstanding" and a midfield of N'Golo Kanté, Adrien Rabiot and Pogba, who has that lovely tiptoed bounce and an eye for a pass which became increasingly important here. Pogba might have had the opening goal, Havertz saw a shot blocked by Raphaël Varane. Opportunities were not lacking, then, but when Pogba bent a gorgeous ball to Benzema to bring down on the chest it fit the idea forming that France were comfortable, as if aware of their superiority and convinced, if only at some subconscious level that they would win, by control or by counter. Mbappé underlined that when he put Ginter in a position no one wants to be in, exposed and watching the Paris Saint-Germain striker skipping past him. He did so again at the start of the second half when a sharp first-time pass released Rabiot, who struck a post. There was still a match out there though and Germany were in it, Gnabry hitting a bouncing volley just over the bar from close range. The volume rose and Germany rose with it. Kimmich then delivered a wonderful cross that saw Robin Gosens fly in, wipe out Pavard, and fall into the six-yard box, where he accidentally blocked Kroos's shot. This was different now, a momentum building: Löw's side were faster, more aggressive. But that threat was never realised and France's threat never goes away, an open field invariably an open invitation. Mbappé's seemingly effortless superiority was now showcased repeatedly. Another clever Pogba ball allowed him to bend into the corner only for the flag to go up. Then he burned past Hummels but was finally caught as he was pulling the trigger. And another run seemed to have wrapped it all up when he rolled into Benzema to score. Again, though, the flag was raised. It was tighter and more nervous than it might have been but defending is just another thing France do well and it is hard to avoid the suspicion that this win was just the start.



though this was Munich, did it feel like a home game: this was two sets of fans, chanting at each other across the turf, every tackle a shout, every run a roar. It began with the Marseille beltied out, a call to arms that was heeded. The first chance was a header from Hummels, the first clash Pogba on Toni Kroos, the first card handed to Joshua Kimmich, the first slide tackle from Matthias Ginter, loudly cheered. All that and they had been playing only seven minutes. Another five and there was a first glimpse of Karim Benzema plucking the ball from the sky, a soft subtle touch that may have elevated the world champions to an even higher level. Just after that, France opened Germany up for the first time, Benjamin Pavard racing up the right. Then Mbappé brought the first save from Neuer, still inside quarter of an

too, heading over a corner from Antoine Griezmann, a footballer quick footed and quick in thought too, liberated and linking it all together. Even when France were not dominating, there was something about them that expressed the idea that they could accelerate at will, that they almost play within themselves and that they will get you some way. What no one expected was that it would be this way, Hummels providing an unfortunate finish to a neat move which culminated in a glorious ball from the outside of Pogba's boot to Lucas Hernandez, who burst in to cross, the ball smashing off Hummels's shin and past Neuer. Immediately, Thomas Müller headed just past a post at the other end. A great chance also dropped for İlkay Gündogan, but the Manchester City midfielder put it wide on the bounce. And Kai

Cristiano Ronaldo still relentlessly pursuing Ali Daei and second Euros

**London, June 16 :** He celebrated like it was his first goal for Portugal rather than his 105th. That undampened, naked desire is what keeps Cristiano Ronaldo going and makes him continually relevant. His emphatically finished penalty polished off doubt where there had been plenty. His smoothly finished second, leaving him just three short of Ali Daei's international goal record, re-emphasised his ruthlessness. Hungary didn't deserve this, but Ronaldo happens. It marked another to his litany of records, playing and scoring in a fifth European Championship, and it will mean something to him - but it's not the record he is really after. Daei's high-water mark is the one he wants, along with another European title. Once, his breaking of that biggest of records in this tournament would have been treated as an inevitability. Now many doubt it, despite four goals in his last five Serie A games for Juventus, helping the outgoing champions to scrape a Champions League place. He had finished the season in much better (and healthier) form than back in 2016. Such has been the criticism he has taken for his part in Juve's slide from the top - as if it was his responsibility to keep an eye on the balance sheet rather than Andrea Agnelli and Fabio Paratici - that it went unnoticed in some quarters that he was Serie A's top scorer in 2020-21. The first time that Superman had looked like Clark Kent was in 2014. That year Ronaldo shouldn't, in retrospect, have gone to the World Cup, he later admitted. As was clear to anyone familiar with his pattern of working who watched those first few Portugal training sessions in Brazil, as he gingerly jogged and stretched out on a yoga mat, he wasn't anywhere near fitness, "but my team needed me" he insisted in the eponymous 2015 documentary on his life. It was a watershed. For Euro 2016 Ronaldo was much fitter but certainly not 100% and had been running on fumes during extra time in the Champions League final against Atlético in Milan, despite stepping up to ram home Real Madrid's winning penalty in the shootout. But



Fernando Santos, having succeeded Paulo Bento after the group-stage failure of 2014, had grasped the need for an approach that fully involved his superstar while being less reliant on him. Santos's use of a 4-4-2, with the willing and familiar Nani moved infield as his strike partner, spared Ronaldo unnecessary running. It worked well enough that Portugal recalibrated effectively after losing him in the final itself. Today Ronaldo remains an icon, but this is not the most iconic version of him. The once sacrilegious suggestion that Portugal might have to move past him in the near future is now part of football discussion - less so in Portugal, it should be said. What is clear is while he can still be decisive, he cannot do so on his own. Yet in the first half here, as the plainly superior Portugal continually banged their head against Hungary's defensive brick wall, it felt as if they really did need him all over again. On the occasion of his 176th cap in a boiling Budapest - both in terms of temperature and atmosphere - it was no easy task, but he was willing as he was before. Hungary had caused Portugal problems on the road to the 2016 title. On that afternoon in Lyon Santos's side had been ruffled and, trailing three times, threatened with the prospect of elimination before squeezing through as a third-placed qualifier. Ronaldo, naturally, rescued them with not one but two second-half

equalisers. "After our third goal, Cristiano was really pissed off," Hungary's then goalkeeper, Gabor Kiraly, told Mais Futebol in a recent interview. "Then I understood just how much he loves football. He's not just interested in showing off cars, apartments and the good life. Is all that good? Of course. But he works so hard. In those Euros he showed his spirit and what a great person he is." That persistence was needed here. There had been chances, reminiscent of so many other times that he has marked out his territory before making his move, none more as the skied finish from Bruno Fernandes's cross flew wildly over as half-time approached. Ronaldo's other four Euros had already run the full gamut of emotions, from those painful teenage tears on the Estádio da Luz pitch after defeat to Greece in the 2004 final to ecstasy in lifting the trophy in Saint-Denis five years ago, an occasion that had looked like ending in bitter regret again after his contribution was curtailed by injury. In the second half here he drifted into another arena, that of a frustrated spectator, as Hungary were fired higher by their cacophonous support and Ronaldo's supply line dwindled to zero. Help eventually came from the pacy Rafa Silva, introduced for Bernardo Silva to open up Hungary twice, as Santos foresaw. Ronaldo, as ever, was ready to receive. When it's time to eat, he rarely needs asking to the table twice.

Feuding Brooks Koepka and Bryson DeChambeau kept apart in US Open

**London, June 16 :** Fans hoping to see golf's biggest feud move from Twitter to the tee box will be disappointed after Brooks Koepka and Bryson DeChambeau were drawn in separate groups for the opening two rounds of this week's US Open. Koepka did little to disguise his contempt for DeChambeau during a TV interview at last month's US PGA Championship, rolling his eyes as his rival walked behind him. The golfers then proceeded to trade barbs on social media, although how real the animosity is, is up for debate. Indeed, on Tuesday Koepka admitted the story was good for the game. "Pretty much everything you look at online, it's got this in the headline, or it's up there as a big new story. To me, that's growing the game. You're putting it in front of eyeballs, you're putting it in front of people who probably don't normally look at golf, don't play it. It might get them involved. I don't know how it's not growing the game." DeChambeau's agent, meanwhile, denied reports his client had declined an offer from the USGA to pair the two together. "The USGA did not reach out to Bryson regarding a potential pairing with Brooks Koepka," Brett Falkoff told ESPN. "Bryson is fully focused on defending the US Open at Torrey Pines this week." Koepka also confirmed he had not been approached by the USGA about playing with DeChambeau. "It doesn't matter to me, I play my own

game. I don't care who I'm paired with ... What happens inside the ropes, it won't bother me," he said. Whatever the truth, Tuesday's groupings went with tradition. DeChambeau, the defending US Open champion, will play alongside the current US amateur champion, Tyler Strafaci, and the winner of this year's Masters, Hideki Matsuyama. Koepka is in a group at Torrey Pines with fellow former US PGA champions Collin Morikawa and Justin Thomas. The two are unlikely to see each other on the course in the opening rounds. Koepka's group starts at 7.29am local time on Thursday, while DeChambeau will not tee off until 1.14pm. They could still be grouped together in the final two rounds if they are on similar scores. Other notable pairings include a trio of former Open champions - Henrik Stenson, Francesco Molinari and Shane Lowry - and a group of former US Open champions, Dustin Johnson, Rory McIlroy and Justin Rose. Phil Mickelson, who became the oldest major winner in history with his victory at the US PGA in May, is in a group with Xander Schauffele and Max Homa. If Mickelson wins at Torrey Pines, located in his hometown of San Diego, this week it will complete his career grand slam. "It's a unique opportunity

because I've never won a US Open," Mickelson said on Monday. "It's in my backyard. I have a chance to prepare properly, and I wanted to put in the right work. So I've kind of shut off all the noise. I've shut off my phone. I've shut off a lot of the other stuff to where I can focus in on his week and really give it my best chance to try to play my best." Mickelson added that he had put extra work into studying the course for this year's tournament. "I put a lot of time in on the greens, because even though they're not at tournament speed, I needed to relearn and see the breaks and know what the ball does on these greens," Mickelson said. "Because when you see the way the ball rolls, you know where you have to be for your approach, and you know what kind of shot if the best shot to hit into certain approaches. DeChambeau won his first major at last year's US Open, where he finished six shots ahead of second-placed Matthew Wolff. Koepka is a two-time champion at the US Open, having won the title in 2017 and 2018.



Royal Ascot: Poetic Flare at his best yet in St James's Palace Stakes victory

**London, June 16 :** "With the kind of business we run," Jim Bolger said after the St James's Palace Stakes on Tuesday, "the horses have to earn their corn." The Flat season is barely three months old but if his County Carlow



yard has an Employee of the Year award, they might as well engrave Poetic Flare's name on it right now. Bolger's workaholic three-year-old was making his fourth Group One start in the space of just 46 days but came up with his most impressive performance yet to add the St James's Palace Stakes to his win in the 2,000 Guineas at Newmarket on 1 May. He was just half-a-length in front of Lucky Vega back then but had four-and-

a-quarter to spare over the same opponent on Tuesday, as Kevin Manning was able to coast through the final 100 metres having wrapped up the victory with an irresistible burst of speed a furlong out. Bolger suggested after Poetic Flare's Classic success that he was the first horse he had trained that might be able to win all three Guineas in England, France and Ireland. As it turned out he was unplaced in Paris and edged out by Mac Swiney, another Bolger-trained runner, at the Curragh, but the 79-year-old trainer's belief in his colt was fully rewarded here. "I have to admit, genuinely, that I was expecting a performance like that," Bolger said. "I would have taken anything but that's what I expected, as he'd improved so

much and he was so well." He's exceptional, I haven't had one that could take everything that he's taken. I couldn't make him hardy if he didn't have it in the genes, but obviously it's in the genes and we recognised that and we were able to get the very best out of it. "I wouldn't call it a knack because he's the best horse I've bred, and he's the first one to take it like that. Teofilo might just have done, his close relation, but he didn't get a chance to prove it at three [due to injury]." There is no sign that the well is about to run dry where Poetic Flare is concerned - quite the opposite, in fact, if his performance on Tuesday is any guide - and he could be back in Britain at the end of July to contest the Sussex Stakes at Glorious Goodwood, a race that is also a

possible target for Palace Pier, the winner of the opening Group One Queen Anne Stakes on Tuesday. "I'd welcome competing with the older horses," Bolger said. "He's entered in the Sussex Stakes and that's a real possibility." With St Mark's Basilica, the recent French Derby winner, also being lined up for a possible run in the Sussex, it promises to be a memorable renewal. Most bookmakers rate Palace Pier as being a shade of odds-on to win if all three turn up, with Poetic Flare at around 4-1 alongside St Mark's Basilica. In addition to winning two Classics, Bolger has also been in the headlines recently after accusing the Irish authorities of being lax in their efforts to keep steroids and other performance-enhancing drugs out of

the sport. The trainer said that a "level playing field" was needed in Irish racing, after suggesting that drugs are the "number one problem" facing the sport in October last year. Having initially declined to comment on Bolger's claims in an Irish newspaper over the weekend, the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board issued a statement on Monday in which it "reaffirmed" that "it is committed to the highest standards of integrity within Irish racing". The IHRB also pointed out that there have been "significant increases in testing over the last number of years", adding that its "focus is on risk-based and intelligence-led strategy which directs us to get the right sample from the right horse at the right time.



# Voracious Frankie Dettori passes Royal Ascot milestone on Palace Pier

**London, June 16 :** Frankie Dettori, the king of Royal Ascot, paused just moments after he won the opening race of the week and then, rightly, he lifted his left hand to pat the gleaming neck of his imperious horse, Palace Pier, the hot favourite, had not needed to prove why he is one of the highest rated horses in the world, as he cruised home to win the Queen Anne Stakes by a length and a half. But there was still a thrill in seeing a great horse, with his old master in the saddle, race so serenely across the sunlit turf as a semblance of normality returned to racing. Dettori then brought the same hand to his lips and blew a kiss in celebration of his 74th winner at Royal Ascot. He wagged a finger and then

2015 at the age of 63. It was another reminder of the extraordinary longevity of the 50-year-old Dettori, who is now second in the list of all-time winning jockeys at Royal Ascot. Only Lester Piggott, who recorded a scarcely credible 116 victories, is way out in the distance. Piggott, the definitive Old Stoneface, and Dettori, his flamboyant successor, have always seemed so different when these contrasting eras of racing are compared. But the core truth is that Dettori's insatiable thirst for Grade One glory has always resembled Piggott's relentless ambition. This slice of Royal Ascot history unfolded in front of a relatively muted crowd of 12,000 as racing stepped back towards the old way

The latter, in particular, will be more riotous than the low hum that only occasionally broke out into a real bel-low on Tuesday. The top hats and fascinators, the champagne flutes and picnic baskets, were in full view. But Ascot felt spacious. Usually it is crammed with 45,000 racegoers and it is hard to move. With a quarter of the normal crowd allowed, it felt a little surreal. Palace Pier won in front of a relatively muted crowd of 12,000 at Ascot. Dettori is such a compelling figure he still ensured Royal Ascot began with an accomplished bang as he maintained his rich vein of form in the Group One races that are now his primary focus. His victory on Palace Pier meant he has won four Group Ones in the past 45 days. It is an impressive strike rate - especially as it includes winning the Oaks on Snowfall by 16 lengths earlier this month. He now believes Palace Pier could outstrip even Dubai Millennium as the best horse he has ever ridden over a mile. When he rode Palace Pier to yet another Group One win at the Lockinge Stakes last month, Dettori enthused: "He's a beast. I love him." He was even more exultant at Ascot. "Wow, wow, what can I say? He has shown again he is the best miler around. You can rely on Palace Pier. It's like getting one of the proper guys to take the first penalty and they will put it in the back of the net. He is one of the best horses in the world and everything went right." Despite an unfavourable draw, starting on the outside in a field of 11, Palace Pier settled into fourth place before he soon powered smoothly away from his outclassed rivals. "Palace Pier is the best miler in the world," Dettori said. "He goes on any ground and

does what you ask him to do. He comes from behind or he can be up there." In a fitting bookend to his 74 victories he matched his debut win at Royal Ascot in the very same race. "Thirty-one years ago I rode my first Royal Ascot winner on Markfof distinction in the Queen Anne. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since then." Dettori has had some dark days - from being pulled out of the burning wreckage of a light aircraft by his fellow jockey Ray Cochrane 21 years ago testing positive for cocaine and being banned from racing for six months in 2012. He looked to be in even deeper trouble earlier that year when his long association with Sheikh Mohammed's Godolphin stable ended. Dettori felt he had been forced out by those who believed he was heading for the scrapheap of fallen jockeys. His resurgence has been remarkable. The return of a crowd suited the Italian showman. He did his usual flying dismount from the back of Palace Pier and said: "You cannot imagine the colours, the people screaming. Royal Ascot with people is amazing and this meeting is a big part of my life. I couldn't ask for anything more." Of course the voracious veteran will not settle for just one victory this week. He has set his sights on becoming the leading jockey at Royal Ascot for the third year in a row. "I am still getting the same kick and I am pretty relieved everything went smooth. I have a lot of big rides this week and it takes the pressure off." Assuming his 75th winner arrives later this week, the noise will almost certainly be more raucous as racing, and Royal Ascot, gets used to the clamour and commotion of a live crowd again.



gently touched the neck of Palace Pier again. The finger went back to his mouth and he tapped his pursed lips twice as he sent a couple more kisses into the languid summer air. Dettori had moved one victory ahead of his old rival, Pat Eddery, the 11-times champion jockey who died in

of life and with the meeting being used as a test event for sporting events beneath the shadow of Covid. Next month the last weekend of Wimbledon will host capacity crowds, while both the semi-finals and the final of Euro 2020 will be watched by 45,000 fans at Wembley.



## As Mithali & Co play first Test in 7 years, it may herald mainstreaming of women's cricket

**New Delhi, June 16 :** Maybe, it's symbolic that Mithali Raj would be leading the India Women in whites, in the team's first Test in seven years. Mithali always seemingly bore a grudge against the apparent non-recognition of women's cricket in a cricket-mad country. Back in 2017, ahead of the ICC Women's World Cup opener against England, she was asked about her favourite men's cricketer. "Do you ask the same question to a male cricketer? Do you ask them who their favourite female cricketer is?" Mithali had snapped back. Tuesday, however, wasn't the occasion to begrudge anybody. On the eve of India Women's one-off Test against England Women at Bristol, Mithali chose to look at the positives. "I feel this Test match and even the pink-ball Test, which is in Australia in the coming months, it's just the beginning of having three-format bilateral series," the captain said at the pre-match press conference. A Test match after a gap of seven years, followed by a day-night pink-ball affair in Australia a few months down the line, suggests the mainstreaming of Indian women's cricket. The India Women will play three ODIs and as many T20Is apart from the Test during their English sojourn. As regards to the longer format, they are short on game time compared to their England counterparts. Mithali herself is a case in point. She made her international debut in 1999 and more than two decades into top-level cricket, the 38-year-old top-order batter has played only 10 Tests. Her last Test was in November 2014 against South Africa. Medium pacer Jhulan Goswami, too, has played 10 Tests in her almost 20 years in international cricket. A comparative analysis with a men's Test regular would be irrelevant and completely out of place. But a comparison between Mithali and England Women's all-rounder Katherine Brunt will help put things in perspective. Katherine has played 12 Tests, coming into international cricket five years after the India Women's captain made her debut. The current England Women's captain Heather Knight has already played seven Tests in about 10 years of international cricket. "I won't say we haven't been getting recognition.

Women's cricket has been getting recognition once we came into the BCCI fold in 2006. I would agree that not so much of interest was shown at that time, but a lot of things changed after the 2017 World Cup final. Everybody took cognisance that women's cricket has arrived, but unfortunately, we never thought of Test cricket, which I always wanted," former India Women's captain Diana Edulji, who was also a member of the Supreme Court-appointed Committee of Administrators (CoA), told. Edulji said that as a member of the CoA, she tried to make women's Test cricket a regular part of the roster. "I tried my level best to make the other members convinced (about) the same way Australia and England play. A lot of countries don't want to play Test cricket. They don't have that money, they don't have time... So I said whenever any team comes to India, we should have at least one Test match. We can cut down on the T20s; we can cut down on the ODIs. I wanted the same pattern in which the (women's) Ashes is played - one Test, a few ODIs and T20Is and then take the whole points and the winner is decided." Unfortunately, that didn't materialise, but I'm glad that now it has materialised and we are going to play from tomorrow. This is a pattern that we should have. A beginning is made again and I think the girls should take full advantage of the situation. The result shouldn't matter as long as they play good cricket." The India Women stand on the cusp of a record. If they win the Test against England, Mithali and Co would pull clear of Australia by winning four Tests on the spin. They are on a three-match winning streak, over a period of 15 years. In 2006, when they played against England, India Women had eight debutants. The current side at least has eight players who have played this format before. England Women have 11 players with previous Test match experience. "Seven years back, the scenario was very different for women's cricket," Mithali said. Among the likely debutants, 17-year-old Shafali Verma is probably the most talked about, thanks to her aggressive batting style. But a statutory warning came from Edulji: "She is a match-winner. I only hope they don't tinker with her game.

## England Women forced to play India Test on used men's T20 cricket pitch

**New Delhi, June 16 :** England Women have been rebuffed in their request to play on a fresh wicket in their Test match against India on Wednesday and will instead have to compete on a pitch used for a men's game last week, a situation labelled "not ideal" by the captain, Heather Knight. England's first Test against India for seven years will take place at Bristol on a pitch first used for Gloucestershire's T20 Blast match against Sussex last Friday. It will also be the second consecutive home women's Test allocated a used wicket, after England's Ashes encounter at Taunton in 2019. "We found out last week," said Knight. "We tried to get it changed, but it was a little bit too late for that to happen. It's not ideal but it is what it is. We're going to have to perform as best we can on the wicket we're given." It is also the second time in three days that pitch selections for women's cricket have come under scrutiny. The former England player Alex Hartley of Thunder criticised the choice of a used wicket for her side's match against Central Sparks at New Road, Worcester in the

Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy on Saturday. Hartley labelled the pitch, which had already been used for a four-day Worcestershire County Championship game, as "just not good enough". Knight was more philosophical. "At Taunton there was a lot of talk about the pitch and



it didn't actually do too much, so we're going to have to wait and see how it plays," she said. "I'd much prefer us to be playing on a fresh wicket, but it's not something we can change now. We've got to go out there and get our heads around play-

ing on the pitch we've been given." The England and Wales Cricket Board issued a statement on Tuesday apologising for the pitch. "We are all disappointed that the wicket for the Test match against India will have had 37 overs played on it," it read. "We know that En-

gland Women deserve a fresh wicket and we're sorry that we were unable to provide that in this instance." With the Test only being added to the calendar in mid-April, coupled with the lack of available first-class grounds, we knew a fresh TV pitch was go-

ing to be a challenge. We accept that this issue shouldn't have arisen and we will make sure it doesn't happen in the future." Despite the pitch, both sides will be keen to push for a positive result. The match will be the first element of a points-based series played across all three formats - identical to that used for the Women's Ashes - and while the three ODIs and T20s which follow will be worth two points each, a win in the opening encounter is worth four points. India's captain, Mithali Raj, who last played a Test in 2014, called for the multi-format points-based system to be adopted across all women's bilateral series. "This is just the beginning," she said. "Maybe in the coming years it might also lead to a [women's] World Test Championship." England are likely to field at least one Test debutant, the batter Sophia Dunkley, though it remains to be seen whether the uncapped seamer Emily Arlott - who was a surprise call-up to the squad last week - can fight her way into the final XI. Knight herself will be able to add to England's bowling stocks with her part-time off-spin after recovering from a back injury.

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