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NEWS

IN BRIEF

Guwahati Planetarium Reopens

Guwahati, December 6 : Guwahati Planetarium reopens on Sunday after nearly nine months of remaining closed due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Recently, a state-of-the-art multi-activity centre worth rupees Rs.12.42 crore was inaugurated within the planetarium premises. The activity centre would -D theatre, Virtual Reality Lab, Tinkering Lab and an auditorium with all modern facilities.

Rhino, Elephant Found Dead

Guwahati, December 6 : A rhino was found dead at Tuplung Forest camp in Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary on Sunday. As per sources, the rhino's horn was damaged when it was recovered. Forensic test results revealed that the rhino was gutted down. On the other hand, one wild elephant was electrocuted today in Chirang's Bijni area. Reportedly, the elephant died from an electric cable, which was used by farmers in paddy fields to protect farm crops from being destroyed by wild elephants. A farmer from Sikajhur had put the electric cable at the site of the incident. Notably, bodies of two rhino calves along with an adult rhino were found in the same area this week.

China turns on 'artificial sun'

Beijing, December 6 : China successfully powered up its "artificial sun" nuclear fusion reactor for the first time, state media reported on Friday, marking a great advance in the country's nuclear power research capabilities. The HL-2M Tokamak reactor is China's largest and most advanced nuclear fusion experimental research device, and scientists hope that the device can potentially unlock a powerful clean energy source. It uses a powerful magnetic field to fuse hot plasma and can reach temperatures of over 150 million degrees Celsius, according to the People's Daily -- approximately ten times hotter than the core of the sun.

Power secy visits Subansiri Lower hydroelectric project

Guwahati, December 6 : Union Power Secretary Sanjiv Nandan Sahai, along with Arunachal Chief Secretary Naresh Kumar, NHPC CMD AK Singh, Union Joint Secretary (Hydro) Tanmay Kumar, the state's Power



Chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal attends Nagaland-Assam delegations meet

Decided to lift blockades on either side of the Mariani-Mokokchung border



Guwahati, December 6 : After a meeting between a high level delegation from Nagaland led by minister of higher education and tribal affairs Temjen Imna Along with Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal and other officials at Guwahati, it was decided that both sides lift their blockades on either side of the Mariani-

Mokokchung border. Informing this through a statement, state BJP unit said the meeting deliberated on the ongoing economic blockade imposed at Mariani-Mokokchung road by various organisations of Assam. It may be recalled that in retaliation, some groups from Nagaland also reportedly imposed blockade

at their side. After the meeting at Guwahati, state BJP informed that both sides would take initiatives to ensure that the blockades on either side should be lifted at the earliest and for which necessary initiatives will be undertaken without delay. State BJP also informed that both sides also appealed to all concerned to refrain from any untoward acts that may vitiate peaceful atmosphere and neighbourly relations. During the meeting, both sides reiterated the importance of living peacefully as neighbours. It was also reiterated that Assam and Nagaland have had a long association throughout history and also acknowledged that neighbourly relations

should not be allowed to turn sore at any cost for the mutual benefit of both sides. Both delegations also stressed on the need for both States have to work together hand in hand so that any issues which crop up should be settled amicably. The delegation from Nagaland also included advisor Horticulture and Border Affairs Mhathung Yanthan while state BJP functionaries attended the meeting as emissaries of Nagaland chief minister. Assam chief secretary Jishnu Barua; addl. chief secretary Paban Kumar Borthakur and commissioner and secretary (Home & Pol Dept.) GD Tripathi also attended the meeting.

Defiant Donald Trump says US election was 'rigged' in favour of Biden

Washington, December 6 : A defiant Donald Trump is showing no signs of surrender and has reiterated yet again his unsubstantiated allegations of widespread voter fraud, claiming at his first post-poll rally in Georgia that he won a "rigged" US presidential election that he lost. Trump alleged on Saturday that the last month's US Presidential election was rigged in favour of his Democratic opponent Joe Biden, who is now the President-elect. "They cheated and they rigged our presidential election, and they're gonna try to rig this election too," Trump told his cheering supporters at a rally in Georgia where he campaigned for his Republican candidates for the Special Senatorial elections. Trump began by falsely claiming he won Georgia in the presi-



dential race. The state has already certified its election results, declaring Biden the winner. In a streak of light across the night sky, samples collected from a distant asteroid arrived on Earth Sunday after being dropped off by Japanese space probe Hayabusa-2. Scientists hope the precious samples, which are expected to

amount to no more than 0.1 grams of material, could help shed light on the origin of life and the formation of the universe. Trump claimed he won an election that he lost. "If I lost, I would be a very gracious loser. If I lost, I would say I lost and I would go to Florida and I would take it easy," Trump said at the rally. Trump was a resident of New York. After becoming the president, he moved his residence from New York to Florida. Thousands of his supporters, not only from Georgia but also from the neighbouring states, as far as California and Ohio, came to hear his speech. This was Trump's first public rally after he lost the election and Biden was declared as the President-elect. "I think they say that if you win Florida and if you

Himanta's words have instilled fear among BTC public : BPF leader Chandi Basumary

Anjali Daimary also slams Himanta Biswa

Baksa, December 6 : Senior Bodoland People's Front (BPF) leader and Goybari (Baksa) candidate Chandi Basumary today tore into Assam Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma over the latter's election campaign in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) ahead of the polls in the



Council. "People are afraid that there will be violence once again. They do not want strife and trouble, they want peace. Therefore, they want Hagrama Mohilary to be the Chief once again. Therefore, we will win the election with an absolute majority," Basumary said today addressing media.

The BPF leader also claimed that the BJP supporters at the rallies are being bussed in from other parts of the state. "This proves that there will be no saffron wave here this time around," he said. Weighing in on Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma flurry of election-related activities in the

BTC in the lead up to the polls, Basumary commented that the leader's incendiary words against the BPF leaders have instilled fear in the minds of the people of the region. "The way he has campaigned has created a fear psychosis in the minds of the people of the region and if it continues, could lead to more violence in the BTC." Chandi Basumary also added that all the communities in the region shall vote for the BPF party and a win for the party is certain. Speaking about his own prospects in the polls, Basumary said that he will win the election against his prime competitor United

Farmers protest: 36 British MPs support agitation against farm laws, want UK to raise issue with India

New Delhi, December 6 : A faction of 36 British MPs from various parties, led by the Labour Party's Tanmanjit Singh Dhesi, have come out in support of the ongoing farmers' agitation in India, asking British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab to raise the matter with New Delhi. The MPs, in a missive to Raab, asked to pressurise India against the recently enacted agriculture laws which 'exploit' the farmers and those who depend on farming. They further urged



the Foreign Secretary to hold talks with the Indian government through the support of Sikh farmers in Punjab and abroad. In his letter, Dhesi, the Labour MP

for Slough, said that last month several MPs wrote to the Indian High Commission in London about the impacts of the three new farm laws. Contd...Page 6

BPF leaders lost trust of public Former MP Biswajit Daimary BPF, BJP Offices Vandalised

Baksa, December 6 : Biswajit Daimary, the former Rajya Sabha MP and Bodoland People's Front (BPF) Working President, who quit the party to join the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today claimed that the former party's leaders have lost the trust of the people which is why the party will lose in the elections that will officially get underway



tomorrow. "The BPF party rose to power three times. Nobody can become the

CEM, or EM with the public's support. In a democracy, when people lose the trust in the leaders, they are bound to lose their influence and posts. This should be a lesson to the leaders. They should realize why they have lost the trust of the people and hopefully, they will do social service so as to once again

Awareness cum Training programme with free duckling distribution held at Phuloni



Diphu, December 6 : On Saturday, an awareness cum Training programme with free duckling distribution to beneficiary farmers was organised at the establishment of the Manager, Govt. Duck Breeding Farm cum Demonstration Unit, Phuloni for the Nomati MAC constituency women SHG members and interested

duck farmers. After felicitation to the invited guests by the Manager and her staff, the meeting was presided over by Sjt. Rajendra Swargiyari, G.B. Langhin Bazar. The aim of the programme was briefly delivered by the Manager, Dr. Lonee Dutta. The Manager aware the attendees about the scientific

Farm laws will not be repealed, amendments can be made, says MoS Agriculture

New Delhi, December 6 : Minister of State for Agriculture Kailash Choudhary on Sunday reiterated that the three laws passed by the government are in favour of the farmers, and added that laws will not be repealed, but if necessary, the government will make some amendments to the Acts to acknowledge



agitating farmer's demands. "These laws passed by the government will give freedom to farmers. We always said farmers should have the right to sell their crop wherever they want. Even Swaminathan Commission's report recommends that. I don't think the laws should be

Pfizer Seeks India Approval For Covid Vaccine, First To Do So : Sources

New Delhi, December 6 : American pharma giant Pfizer has sought approval from the country's drug regulator - the DCGI (Drugs Controller General of India) - for emergency use authorisation of its coronavirus vaccine, say sources. The vaccine is ready to be rolled out in the United Kingdom and

Bahrain. This is the first such request received by the DCGI amid the race to find a vaccine for the deadly virus, which has affected over 96 lakh people in India. The drug regulator may give emergency approval if it is satisfied by the results of the trials conducted outside India, sources have added. On

Wednesday, the United Kingdom became the first western country to clear the Covid-19 shot developed jointly by Pfizer and German biotechnology partner BioNTech, which has reported an efficiency of 95 per cent in the third stage of trials. In its application submitted on Friday, Pfizer India sought permission to

"import the vaccine for sale and distribution in the country, besides waiver of clinical trials on Indian population in accordance with the special provisions under the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019," sources have been quoted. The DCGI has "discretionary power to waive localised



Brexit : Johnson and Von der Leyen to take over with direct talks

London : The Brexit talks will enter their final act on Saturday with a shift to direct negotiations between Boris Johnson and the European commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, following the failure to find agreement in London. In a joint statement, David Frost, the UK's chief negotiator, and his EU counterpart, Michel Barnier, said they had not been able to come to terms on the final issues and that the historic trade and security negotiation would be paused. The year-long negotiation had long been expected to end with arbitration between the two political leaders, although there remains no certainty that an acceptable compromise will be found. After one week of intense negotiations in London, the two chief negotiators agreed today that the conditions for an agreement are not met, due to significant divergences on level playing field, governance and fisheries," Barnier and Frost said in the statement. "On this basis, they agreed to pause the talks in order to brief their principals on the state of play of the negotiations. President Von der Leyen and prime minister Johnson will discuss the state of play tomorrow afternoon." It is understood Johnson and Von der Leyen will talk by phone on Saturday afternoon. It is believed that a major bone of contention for the UK side is Brussels' intention to exempt all EU funding from the future state aid rules, a contentious move raised by one of Frost's deputy negotiators some weeks ago but which has yet to be resolved. EU sources were swift to reject



claims from Downing Street, which were briefed to some newspapers, that a demand for a 10-year transition period for phasing in changes for European fishing fleets was an obstacle to a deal. "The UK wants a short transition, we have asked for a much longer one. There is a middle way – and that is not the cause of any problem," a source said. Earlier in the day the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, stepped in to urge both sides negotiating in London to move past their red lines to strike a deal, even as the French government said it could wield its veto if the deal failed to match expectations. Despite concerns being raised in Paris, The Hague, Copenhagen and Rome about the concessions already offered by Barnier, Merkel's government said that further compromise should be made if it would secure a trade and security deal. Merkel's spokesman, Steffen Seibert, said: "For the chancellor, and that hasn't changed in recent weeks, the willingness to compromise is needed on

both sides. If you want to have a deal then both sides need to move towards each other. Everybody has their principles, there are red lines, that's clear, but there's always room for compromise." Sources said both Merkel and Von der Leyen had shown "absolute determination" to push the deal over the line despite the concerns of some over the detail. "The member states will take their time when they get the deal through," said one diplomat. "Agreement at negotiator level doesn't necessarily mean it is a deal." No 10 is keen to secure an agreement in time for legislation implementing the deal to pass through both houses of parliament before Christmas. Government officials acknowledge they may have to ask MPs to sit until 23 December if a deal comes later than the start of next week. On Friday, the European council president, Charles Michel, promised the member states they would have sufficient time to scrutinise any terms settled between the negotiating teams. But the former Belgian prime

minister said both sides had a responsibility to make the talks work. "We'll see in the next two days what the next steps are at this point in the negotiations," he said. "It will be up to the commission to take a position, and when the time comes, and the time has not yet come, it'll be up to the member states to take a position as well. "Earlier in the day, Clément Beaune, France's European affairs minister and a close ally of President Emmanuel Macron, said his country could act unilaterally if the terms were not right. "I think it's also the case for our partners that if there were a deal that isn't good, which in our evaluation doesn't correspond to those interests, we will oppose it," Beaune said. "Yes, each country has a veto, so it's possible. France like all its partners has the means of a veto. We must make our own evaluation of course of this deal, that's normal. We owe that to the French people, we owe it to our fishermen, and to other economic sectors. "I want to believe we will have a good deal, but to get a good deal, you know, it's better to be frank and to say our interests. We have been very clear, sometimes the Brits a little less so, about our interests." A No 10 spokesman had earlier reiterated the UK government's insistence on protecting "sovereignty". There are still some issues to overcome. Time is in very short supply, and we're at a very difficult point in the talks," the spokesman said. "What is certain is that we will not be able to agree a deal that doesn't represent our fundamental principles on sovereignty and taking back control. That includes controlling our borders, deciding on a robust and principled subsidy control system, and controlling our fishing waters." The details of any deal will be scrutinised closely by pro-Brexit MPs, whose support carried Johnson into Downing Street. They say they will not wave through

an agreement that cedes too much regulatory control to Brussels. A senior Tory MP in the European Research Group said: "I think it's more likely than not that we will have a deal by Monday. I'm cautiously optimistic about it, subject to the detail – the devil is in the detail." As far as fisheries are concerned, everybody would have to be satisfied that the fishing industry was happy with the deal. On state subsidies, anything that left us permanently tied to EU regulation would not be acceptable. But I have every confidence the British negotiators are aware of that and are approaching the talks with that in mind." With Labour likely to back an agreement and Johnson sitting on a comfortable majority, it is almost certain to pass, even in the face of a significant Tory rebellion. UK government sources had claimed on Thursday that the negotiations had taken a sudden step backwards after furious French lobbying pushed the EU to make late demands. The apparent hardening of the EU position was said to have destabilised the protracted talks, undoing progress made over the previous 24 hours. Both sides believe Sunday evening or Monday morning is the deadline for the year-long negotiation. Beaune said the risk of a no-deal Brexit remained. "We mustn't hide it because there are businesses, our fishermen, citizens who need to know and so we must prepare for a risk of no deal. That's to say on 31 December there will be no more free circulation, and free access to the UK market and vice versa." But it's not what we want... I still hope we can have a deal but I also say to our fishermen, to our producers, to our citizens, that we won't accept a bad deal." The talks remain focused on the level of access EU fishing boats will be given to British waters at the end of the year and the "level playing field" provisions.

More than 1,200 Google workers condemn firing of AI scientist Timnit Gebru

Timnit Gebru in San Francisco in 2018. Photograph: Kimberly White/Getty Images for TechCrunch. More than 1,200 Google employees and more than 1,500 academic researchers are speaking out in protest after a prominent Black scientist studying the ethics of artificial intelligence said she was fired by Google after the company attempted to suppress her research and she criticized its diversity efforts. Timnit Gebru, who was the technical co-lead of Google's Ethical AI

(Julia Carrie Wong)

team, wrote on Twitter on Wednesday that she had been fired after sending an email to an internal group for women and allies working in the company's AI unit. The email, which was first published by the tech newsletter Platformer, referenced a dispute over a research paper, but more broadly expressed frustration at Google's diversity programs. In it, Gebru argued that "there is zero accountability" or real incentive for Google leadership to change. "Your life gets worse when you start advocating for underrepresented people, you start making the other leaders upset," Gebru wrote. "There is no way more documents or more conversations will achieve anything." Gebru is one of the most well-known and respected Black female scientists working in AI. Before joining Google, she co-authored a widely cited 2018 paper that found higher error rates in facial analysis technology for women with darker skin tones. She also co-founded the non-profit Black in AI that aims to increase representation of people of color in the field. The dispute over Gebru's research arose in November, when a senior manager at Google told Gebru that she would have to either retract or remove her name from a paper she had co-authored, Gebru told Wired. The paper, co-authored by researchers inside and outside Google, contended that technology companies could do more to ensure AI systems aimed at mimicking human writing and speech do not exacerbate historical gender biases and use of offensive language, according to a draft copy seen. "I felt like we were being censored and thought this had implications for all of ethical AI research," she told Wired. "You're not going to have papers that make the company happy all the time and don't point out problems. That's antithetical to what it means to be that kind of researcher." Gebru told Wired that she attempted to negotiate with Google, offering to remove her name from the paper in exchange for a full explanation of the company's objections, as well as

a discussion of a better process for handling such matters in the future. If the company declined, she would arrange to leave at a later date. Google rejected her request, and – after Gebru sent the frustrated email about diversity efforts – the company emailed her team to say it had accepted her resignation. They also cut off her access to company email, Gebru said. Google has maintained that Gebru resigned. Gebru's abrupt departure sent shockwaves through Google and the broader AI research community. Sherrilyn Ifill, president of the NAACP's Legal Defense and Educational Fund, wrote on Twitter that Gebru's firing was "absolutely infuriating" and "a disaster". More than 1,200 Google employees and more than 1,500 supporters from academia and civil society signed a letter of protest. "The termination is an act of retaliation against Dr Gebru, and it heralds danger for people working for ethical and just AI –



especially Black people and People of Color – across Google," read the letter, published by the group that organized a walkout at Google over the company's treatment of sexual harassment and gender discrimination. "Research integrity can no longer be taken for granted in Google's corporate research environment, and Dr Gebru's firing has overturned a working understanding of what kind of research Google will permit. This is also a moment of reckoning beyond Google." Gebru's abrupt departure adds to years of angst, including several resignations and firings, in the AI department and other organizations at Google over diversity and whether the company's efforts to minimize the potential harms of its services are sufficient. Just Wednesday, the National Labor Relations Board issued a complaint accusing Google of unlawfully monitoring and questioning several workers who were then fired for protesting against company policies and trying to organize a union. Jeff Dean, head of Google's AI unit, told staff in an email obtained by Platformer that the research paper "didn't meet our bar for publication".

Ocasio-Cortez hits back at critics who pounced on \$58 'Tax the Rich' sweatshirt

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez had a swift response for conservatives criticizing her for selling a "Tax the Rich" sweatshirt for \$58. The price was right, the leftwing New York Democrat said, because the campaign merchandise was made by unionised workers in the US rather than in China, unlike political wear sold by, for example, Donald Trump. Ben Shapiro, a podcast host, author and successful conservative gadfly, tweeted of the

Democratic party with a primary victory in her Bronx and Queens district in 2018, Ocasio-Cortez has become the rising star of the US progressive left. Donald Trump admiringly compared her to Evita Perón and some observers think she might mount a primary challenge against Chuck Schumer, the minority leader in the US Senate, in 2022. In response to Shapiro, Ocasio-Cortez tweeted a comment from a Business Insider writer which noted



merchandise sold on ocasiocortez.com: "Only the rich can afford this idiotic sweatshirt." "For \$27," Shapiro tweeted over of a picture of a shirt featuring the words "student debt" struck out, "you can buy AOC's bullshit T-shirt rather than spending it paying off loans you voluntarily took". Supporters who bought the shirt, Shapiro argued, would still have student debt and would still be "bearing it alone, since you'll still be paying down that student debt. You'll just be \$27 poorer and AOC's war chest will be \$27 richer." Shapiro also said, "Nothing says economic justice like spending \$65 on a sweatshirt", again over a picture of some AOC merchandise. Since shocking the

union involvement in making her merchandise. Republicans, she added, were "freaking out because we don't use slave-wage labour for merch that funds grassroots organising." But what's the difference between Trump's merch and ours? Ours is made in the US. (And for [Republicans] who joke that we should give for free, we actually do – just volunteer.) "Still, this is America, a country where no passing hoo-hah or flimflam was ever deemed too insignificant for the purpose of turning a buck. By day's end, the Daily Wire, the website Shapiro founded and of which he is now editor emeritus, was selling merch of its own. Its slogan? "Insert Woke Slogan".

(Martin Pengelly)

Detained former Saudi crown prince at risk after social media attack, say lawyers

Mohammed bin Nayef – the detained former Saudi crown prince and interior minister – has been the victim of a sustained and coordinated attack from inside Saudi Arabia on social media that risks endangering his personal safety, lawyers acting for him have warned. The lawyers have written to YouTube demanding it take down a video, saying the content claiming he had been plotting to bring down Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman runs the risk of inviting serious retribution and harm to him. YouTube has not yet acted on the complaint. Separately, it has emerged that an apparently spontaneous surge in the number of tweets ahead of the US elections claiming Mohammed bin Nayef was part of a Democrat-led "deep state" plot to destabilise the Saudi Arabian royal family was orchestrated largely through bots run by supporters of Bin Salman, research shows. The two developments serve to underline the perilous state of the 60-year-old Bin Nayef, who was close to the Obama administration and to then-vice president Joe Biden. The former interior minister, seen as critical to bringing al-Qaida under control inside Saudi Arabia in the wake of the 9/11 attacks in New York, has been under house arrest since March. He was ousted as crown prince in 2017. A cross party group of British MPs has been denied access to him but is due to produce a report on his welfare before Christmas. The report is likely to call on the incoming Biden administration to press for his release. In the letter to YouTube, the lawyers point out the claims in the



video that Bin Nayef has been at large and at one point seen next to Biden are totally false, and part of an elaborate conspiracy theory that he is working to undermine Mohammed bin Salman. They point out "the true position is that our client has been detained against his will and without charge since March 2020 where he remains to this day. Our client has limited access to his family or lawyers and has been prevented from seeing a personal doctor who has been responsible for his treatment for many years." Such communication as our client does enjoy is undoubtedly monitored. Both our client and our client's family are concerned for their safety, and it is not known whether the lives of our client and our client's family are in jeopardy." The letter describes the video's suggestion that he is plotting against the Saudi state as completely unfounded. "His loyalty to the crown prince had never wavered and he continues to support the established monarchy." The Twitter campaign inside Saudi Arabia also alleges Mohammed bin Nayef had been part of the plot against his cousin, Bin

(Patrick Wintour)

Salman, that was uncovered by the crown prince. The tweets began two days after a call by Donald Trump in the final weeks of his election campaign for the release of more emails written by Hillary Clinton, some of which were supposed to show the Obama administration was plotting to undermine the Saudi royal family. However, new research shows that at least 40% of the tweets denouncing the plot and the role of Bin Nayef were generated by what an independent agency has described as "bot-like behaviour". The agency also claims the bots were seeking to pushing false narratives online and as the false narratives trend, persuade news outlets to pick up the story. The tweets, marked #HillaryEmails, sought to claim there had alleged been an effort to establish a "deep state" in Saudi Arabia, adding that Bin Nayef had been involved along with the then CIA director, John Brennan, and Clinton. The tweets claimed Bin Salman discovered the plot to bring down King Salman, and this led to the necessary downfall of Mohammed bin Nayef. The claims first appeared on Arabic Twitter accounts and at one point became the top-trending Twitter hashtag in Saudi Arabia, with more than 170,000 tweets. They were also repeated in Arabic-language media,

most prominently Sky News Arabia. The Twitter campaign began after Trump, desperate for a way to eat into Biden's poll lead, called for more of Clinton's emails to be released. Examining the Twitter campaign, Chris Padilla, the chief executive officer of digital reputation management specialists Legendary, said: "Given that our research estimates that over 40% of the accounts engaging with the HillaryEmails hashtag displayed bot-like behaviour, it is clear that the campaign is following a standard sequencing for disinformation campaigns." A false narrative is published online, bots propagate it with great speed and reach causing the narrative to trend, and because it trends news outlets pick it up and cover it. "On 13 October, Sky News Arabia ran an article entitled "The Clinton Secrets ... how did the attempt to penetrate Saudi society fail?", the claim that new messages relating to Clinton's time as secretary of state were declassified but adding that they revealed that she had "communicated with some individuals inside Saudi Arabia" and that she had sought to measure her strength, also alleging that the emails include the names of figures in Saudi who support the Muslim Brotherhood. No official explanation has ever been given by the Saudi government as to why Mohammed bin Nayef has been detained, but a shifting list of allegations have been used ranging from the coup attempt, addiction, corruption, treason and conspiracy with the Obama administration.

3 police stations from NE among top 10 in India

Dimapur, December 6 : Police stations of three North-eastern States made it to the top 10 police stations India for 2020 announced by Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), with Thoubal district police station of Manipur leading the table with number one position. According to a PIB release, Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang and Sikkim's East District bagged the third and seventh positions respectively. Other police stations that made it into the top 10 list included Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh,



Goa, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Uttar Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Telangana (see table). Government of India selects best performing police stations across the country every year to incentivize more effective functioning of police stations and bring healthy competition among them. This is in accordance with the directions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing director generals of police during the 2015 conference in Kutch, Gujarat. This year's survey for best police stations was conducted under challenging circumstances by MHA as it was difficult to access police stations located in remote areas during COVID-19 pandemic due to various restrictions on movement. Consequently, the survey was conducted in accordance with the guidelines of the government. The objective was to rank the top 10 police stations out of the 16,671 in the country through data analysis, direct observation and public feedback. The ranking process commenced with shortlisting of the best performing police stations in each State on the basis of addressing property offence, crime against women, crime against weaker sections and missing persons, unidentified found person and unidentified dead bodies, with the last parameter having been introduced this year. The number of police stations selected initially from each State comprised of three from each State with more than 750 police stations, two from all other States and Delhi and one from each Union Territory. Altogether 75 police stations were selected for next stage of the ranking process. In the final stage, 19 parameters were identified to evaluate the standards of service delivery and identify techniques of improvement in policing. Citizens who were approached for feedback included 4,056 respondents, covering approximately 60 people at each shortlisted location. The annual ranking of police stations recognizes the hard work of police personnel and encourages them, besides providing a feedback on many aspects of policing in the country for future guidance. It also provides a picture of the state of physical infrastructure, resources and deficiencies at the level of police stations. The annual exercise of ranking of police stations works as a constant guide for improvements.

Prices of vegetables skyrocketing in ICR

Itanagar, December 6 : The winter often offers a bountiful supply of vegetables, making it possible even for low wage earners to survive. However, Itanagar and Naharlagun have a different story to tell. The prices of vegetables have skyrocketed in the Itanagar capital region (ICR). The prices vary from vendor to vendor, but all at high rates. It is alleged that the vendors sometimes fix the prices of vegetables themselves for their own profit. "Rs 30-40 has no value in Itanagar. We cannot even buy one kilogram of potatoes with Rs 30. How can poor labourers like us survive in such an expensive atmosphere?" said Mridul Pegu, a daily wage earner. It is said that most of the vegetables come from either Assam or Meghalaya,

Assam is just 30 kilometres from Itanagar. However, the vegetable vendors in Itanagar often charge double the prices in Assam," said a middle-aged man who was bargaining for two kilograms of tomatoes at the Akashdeep vegetable market. "None of the vendors is abiding by the prices regulated by the district administration. The vendors are fixing prices at their own whims," said another customer. The ICR district administration had updated the prices of vegetables and meat in July. Since then, there has been no review of the prices of essential commodities and vegetables. On being asked why vendors are openly defying the administration's price regulation, a shop owner, G Gosh said, "If we go by the DC's rate, the



except the local greens and herbs, which are mostly brought from Bomdila, Seppa, Sagalee, Yachuli, Palin, Ziro, and other parts of the state. The residents of the ICR have been left with no choice but to buy vegetables at unregulated and exorbitant prices."

vendors of the capital region would be deserted." He claimed that the vendors have to pay exorbitant charges for transporting vegetables from Assam to Itanagar. It is said that the prices of vegetables depend entirely on the increasing transportation fares.

Meghalaya to use underground power cables

Shillong, December 6 : The Meghalaya government would start work on converting overhead power cables to underground ones in the mountainous state capital and two other important towns of the State. "Underground cabling is something adopted by many countries abroad and isn't a new concept. We have already completed underground cabling on a pilot basis in the Police Bazaar area," Power Minister James Sangma told journalists at press conference on Thursday. He informed that the State Government would start work to have 100 per cent underground electric cables in Shillong, Tura in West Garo Hills district and Jowai in West Jaintia Hills district. The Power Minister said that the project would be taken up considering various factors. "Overhead electric cable apart from being an eyesore is also risky, especially during the windy seasons the wires touch each other and cause short circuits leading to power failure and also pose risk to the public," Sangma said. On the other hand, the power department has to periodically trim tree branches which grow near electric wires. "The power department officials have to take permission to cut these branches," he informed, hinting to delay in work. "We have decided that underground cabling is the solution. It reduces risk, improves the aesthetic look and the maintenance cost of such cables is also less," he added. The power department would also "renovate and modernize" existing dams, some of which like the Uiam dam (1957), needs renovation. He said that work would be completed within the next six months and a preliminary study has been done which showed that the

efficiency of these dams would improve with renovation. The State Government has also decided to replace old wires with aerial bunched cables in rural areas in the ADB Phase-II programme. The aerial bunched cables will be insulated and hence mitigate almost all risks and also reduce theft. The government is also planning to upgrade 2,214 kilometre of distribution lines in the state to minimize losses and improve efficiency of electricity transmission to the houses of consumers, he added. Reacting to criticism from various circles due to the poor power scenario in the State, Sangma claimed that there have been 'reduced' power-cuts ever since the National People's Party (NPP)-led government came to power in 2018. "A simple indicator of the current government's success is shown by the fact that the state has been witnessing reduced power cuts ever since the NPP-led government came to power in 2018. We aspire to bring it to zero power cuts, and so far we have been successful this year," he said. Maintaining that power cuts for "months at stretch" during the previous Congress-led government, especially during the winter was 'normal', James asserted, "We stay committed to ensuring every student studies not in the light of candles but under uninterrupted power." "It is necessary to be totally transparent and open with the public, as the NPP-led government believes in being answerable to the people," he said and issued elaborate clarifications on the Asian Development Bank (ADB)-funded power projects in the State. "The government managed to bring in the ADB grant worth 132.8 million dollars for the state of Meghalaya to overcome its power-related



issues," he said. However, despite the NPP-led government achieving 100 percent electrification for rural and urban households in Meghalaya, billing efficiency is only about 67.35 percent and more than 75 percent of meters are outdated," the power minister said. "The installation of smart meters will enhance the ease of usage for the customers. The citizens will be able to make prepaid payments from the comfort of their homes, and have access to their usage charges. This removes the need for meter readers," Sangma pointed out. Under the Saubhagya Scheme, Sangma said with the combined efforts of all contractors, 2,146 villages have been electrified in a record 1.5 years with all registered users covered under the scheme. "This happened despite the stretched manpower due to the pandemic," he said. Revealing that the total outstanding dues as on date that industries owe to the power department is Rs 180 crore, the power minister said that the NPP-led government came up with a plan

wherein the defaulting industries could save either 30 percent of their total outstanding dues or 100 percent of their delayed payment charges (DPC), whichever is higher. "The arrangement has been undertaken to ensure that the settlements can take place in a gradual manner, for the state to recover the losses and also to ensure that industries which have been defaulting for a long time, have an incentive to pay up," he said. "In Meghalaya, previously not a single megawatt worth of solar power was produced. After the NPP-led government came into power, 90 megawatt worth solar power has been sanctioned and initiated. Focusing on more power generation, we will be adding 100 megawatt of solar generation in the next six months for which the tendering process is presently going on," the power minister informed, adding that Meghalaya has received the highest sanction for this from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).

AAPSU, orgs seek complete ban on non-APST participation in panchayat, municipal elections

Itanagar, December 6 : The All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) has reiterated its demand for a complete ban on participation of non-tribal and non-indigenous people in the panchayat and municipal elections. Addressing reporters here at the press club, AAPSU general secretary Tobom Dai informed that the union held a meeting with Chief Minister Pema Khandu, Panchayati Raj Minister Bamang Felix, BJP president Bijuram Wahge and BJP general secretary Zingnu Namchoom on Thursday and conveyed to them that "the participation of non-tribal candidates in the panchayati raj elections is unacceptable." "We

Panchayati Raj Act, 1997; upholding the spirit of the Daying Ering Recommendations of 1965; and a complete ban on issuance of domicile certificates and their usage in local body elections and other uses in the state. Claiming that the candidates in Diyun, Lekang and Vijoynagar are not being asked for certain documents by the returning officers (RO), Bagang requested the State Election Commission to instruct the ROs to maintain the same check-list for candidates in all locations and districts. While the AAPSU president said that the union was happy to learn that the BJP has withdrawn its non-indigenous candidates from Vijoynagar in Changlang district, he said that "no non-tribal should contest

convenor Maji Tayem said that he had filed a PIL in the Gauhati court, "wherein the court was of the view that if a non-APST person who is not eligible to contest in the assembly is automatically debarred from contesting the panchayat elections within Arunachal Pradesh under ST reserved constituencies and the HC also stated that it is the responsibility of the returning officer to check such cases." The Save Arunachal Youth Association (SAYA) has demanded that the state government immediately cancel the BJP tickets issued to non-APSTs in Lower Lekang and Upper Lekang zilla parishad constituencies and various gram panchayat segments. Addressing reporters at the press club here on Thursday, SAYA president Likha Rajnik claimed that Jugesh Taye in Upper Lekang and Bijoy Neog in Lower Lekang are contesting for the zilla parishad member seats, while Topon Sonowal (Dharampur-I 4/4), Ajoy Phukan (Dharampur-I 4/1), Modhu Deori (Dharampur-II 18/2) and Bidyawati Deori (Dharampur-II 18/3) are contesting for gram panchayat member seats in Lekang circle of Namsai district. Rajnik appealed to the State Election Commission to take serious note of the matter. "If tickets to the Vijoynagar seats can be withdrawn, why can the tickets to these seats not be cancelled?" he asked. Condemning the state government and the BJP, Rajnik said that appointment letters issued to these candidates should be withdrawn, as well. He cautioned that if the party tickets and membership appointment of the non-indigenous candidates are not withdrawn in a day's time, "the SAYA could create law and order problem in the capital." He also said that the association would submit a similar letter to the BJP president, as he is the ticket-issuing authority of the BJP.



have informed the government that there are many defects in the panchayati raj election manual, which has prompted such an issue that is intruding into the rights of the ethnic people of the state," Dai said. AAPSU president Hawa Bagang also informed that the union has submitted a memorandum to the government, "which has been accepted by the government to formulate a policy." The memorandum seeks a complete ban on participation of non-indigenous people in panchayat and municipal elections; a policy decision or amendment to the Arunachal

the elections in the future, either." Meanwhile, the All Arunachal Abo Tani Association (AAATA) has asked the state election commissioner (SEC) to take steps to debar any non-APST candidate from contesting in the upcoming panchayati raj (PR) election. In a representation to the SEC, a copy of which was submitted to the panchayati raj secretary, the AAATA said, "It is amply clear that non-Arunachal Pradesh Scheduled Tribe (non-APST) persons are disqualified for being chosen as a member of the panchayat, as provided under Article 243 F of the constitution of India as well as Section 57 (j) of the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act." AAATA

Students of Manipur University threaten stir on non-appointment of VC

Imphal, December 6 : Students on Manipur University on Thursday threatened to launch agitations if the Union ministry of education failed to address the doldrums in the administration of the Centre-run varsity by December 4. The administration of Manipur University which is under the Union ministry of education is functioning



without a regular VC or VC in-charge after court appointed administrator Jarnail Singh was relieved from his office on November 30 last. The former Manipur chief secretary joined Manipur University as administrator to discharge the functions of the VC of the Centre-run varsity in October 2018 following an order of the High Court of Manipur. His appointment as administrator of the varsity came after large-scale protests by students and teachers for around six months, demanding removal of Prof AP Pandey as VC who was eventually dismissed in February this year. Even three days after Jarnail Singh was relieved as administrator, Union ministry of education was yet to appoint a regular VC or make an interim arrangement for carrying out the normal administration of the varsity. The failure on the part of the concerned Union ministry to come up with a concrete step irked students of the varsity. An irked Manipur University Students' Union (MUSU) today demanded that the ministry must appoint a regular VC or VC in-charge interim arrangement by December 4. In case of failure to do so, MUSU president M Bobby warned the ministry of intense forms of agitations from December 5. Addressing a press conference at MUSU office in MU campus, the president alleged that normal functioning of the varsity was severely affected due to the absence of the VC. Students were facing problems while obtaining certificates and other documents even as staff members in the administration were not discharging their duties properly in the absence of a responsible administrator, he alleged. "Has any of the varsities in the country run without a responsible administrator for such a long time," he asked, alleging that failure to appoint a regular VC or make an interim arrangement was nothing but indifference towards students of the state. Citing various reasons, including a pending case in the court, the president said that there was no possibility of appointing a regular VC immediately and therefore the Union ministry should make an interim arrangement like appointment of VC in-charge.

FNR calls for avoiding politicking for short-term gains

Dimapur, December 6 : To meet the transforming needs of "contemporary realities", Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR) suggested both Naga leaders and Government of India (GoI) should avoid politicking for short-term gains and show statesman-like character and diplomatic qualities based on sincerity and respect. In a statement, the forum asserted that Nagas are united in historical and political rights even if opinions and approaches are divided, claiming that Nagas are learning to use differences to heal and build understanding and for cooperation. And it would be beneficial for all, including GoI and neighbours to encourage and support

a reconciled and healed Naga people, it added. Pointing out that the failure of 16-Point Agreement led New Delhi to sign the Framework Agreement with NSCN (IM) in 2015 and the Agreed Position with NNPGs in 2017, FNR alleged that yet the recent public display to idolise the 16-Point Agreement revealed the true hand behind the gestures of peace. If the intention was to win the hearts of Nagas, this policy and approach demonstrated lack of acumen and prudence, it stressed. FNR said all throughout Naga historical and political rights provided the common ground upon which Naga leaders entered into a relationship of forgiveness, trust, respect and

reconciliation. It claimed that its focus was on reconciliation and peacebuilding using nonviolent approaches and dialogue. And between 2008 and 2014, over 300 meetings were held with Naga political groups, church, tribe and civil society organisations and the public. The meetings were designed to address differences by nurturing a consciousness for honest discussions, trust building and kindle healing and reconciliation through forgiveness and mutual respect. It also identified difficulties, challenges and opportunities for Naga reconciliation, the statement read. In the course of identifying reasons and circumstances for disunity, the 16-Point

Agreement of 1960 and Shillong Accord of 1975 with GoI and formation of "Revolutionary Government of Nagaland" in 1968 were seen as historical events that decisively fragmented the Naga political movement and induced situations for division and disunity.



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The Trump rule and few facts

In the month since the election, the president and his legal team have come no closer in their frantic efforts to overturn the result, notching up dozens of losses in courts across the country, with more rolling in by the day. According to an Associated Press tally of roughly 50 cases brought by Trump's campaign and his allies, more than 30 have been rejected or dropped, and about a dozen are awaiting action. The advocacy group Democracy Docket put Trump's losses even higher, tweeting on Friday that Trump's team had lost 46 post-election lawsuits following several fresh losses in several states on Friday. Trump has notched just one small victory, a case challenging a decision to move the deadline to provide missing proof of identification for certain absentee ballots and mail-in ballots in Pennsylvania. Five more losses came on Friday. The Trump campaign lost its bid to overturn the results of the election in Nevada and a Michigan appeals court rejected a case from his campaign. The Minnesota supreme court dismissed a challenge brought by GOP lawmakers. And in Arizona, a judge threw out a bid to undo Biden's victory there, concluding that the state's Republican party chairwoman failed to prove fraud or misconduct and that the evidence presented at trial wouldn't reverse Trump's loss. The Wisconsin supreme court also declined to hear a lawsuit brought by a conservative group over Trump's loss. Trump's latest failings came as California certified Joe Biden as the official winner in the state, officially handing him the electoral college majority needed to win the White House. Secretary of State Alex Padilla's formal approval of the state's 55 pledged electors brought Biden's tally so far to 279, according to a count by the Associated Press — just over the 270 threshold needed for victory. The Republican president and his allies continue to mount new cases, recycling the same baseless claims, even after Trump's own attorney general, William Barr, declared this week that the justice department had uncovered no widespread fraud. "This will continue to be a losing strategy, and in a way it's even bad for him: he gets to re-lose the election numerous times," said Kent Greenfield, a professor at Boston College Law School. "The depths of his petulance and narcissism continue to surprise me." Trump has refused to admit he lost and this week posted a 46-minute speech to Facebook filled with conspiracy theories, misstatements and vows to keep up his fight to subvert the election. Judges in battleground states have repeatedly swatted down legal challenges brought by the president and his allies. Trump's legal team has vowed to take one Pennsylvania case to the US supreme court even though it was rejected in a scathing ruling by a federal judge, as well as an appeals court. After recently being kicked off Trump's legal team, the conservative attorney Sidney Powell filed new lawsuits in Arizona and Wisconsin this week riddled with errors and wild conspiracy claims about election rigging. One of the plaintiffs named in the Wisconsin case said he never agreed to participate in the case and found out through social media that he had been included. In his video posted Wednesday, Trump falsely claimed there were facts and evidence of a mass conspiracy created by Democrats to steal the election, a similar argument made by his lawyer Rudy Giuliani and others before judges, which have been largely unsuccessful. Most of their claims are rooted in conspiracy theories about voting machines, as well as testimony from partisan poll watchers who claimed they didn't get close enough to see ballots being tallied because of Covid safety precautions. "No, I didn't hear any facts or evidence," tweeted the Pennsylvania attorney general, Josh Shapiro, a Democrat, after watching the video. The US will pull out nearly all its estimated 700 troops in Somalia over the next few months, the latest in a series of short-notice withdrawals ordered by Donald Trump in his last few weeks in power. A Pentagon statement on Friday said that some of the troops would be repositioned in neighbouring countries while others — it did not say how many — would leave the region altogether. "The US is not withdrawing or disengaging from Africa. We remain committed to our African partners and enduring support through a whole-of-government approach," the statement said. "While a change in force posture, this action is not a change in US policy. We will continue to degrade violent extremist organizations that could threaten our homeland while ensuring we maintain our strategic advantage in great power competition." Most US troops are in Somalia to train the country's special forces unit Danab to fight al-Shabaab extremists. The announcement comes a month after a CIA officer died during a failed raid targeting an al-Shabaab bombmaker. But the withdrawal order also fits a pattern of Trump's lame duck period. He also ordered force levels in Afghanistan and Iraq cut to 2,500 in each country by mid-January, a few days before Joe Biden enters the White House. Analysts have suggested the main motive is to be able to claim to have fulfilled his campaign promise to stop America's "endless wars", while leaving the messy consequences of rushed withdrawals to his successor. "Al-Shabaab will see the US drawdown as a victory, a critical step in its mission to expel foreign forces from Somalia and seize control of Somalia," said Tricia Bacon, a former state department expert on Somalia and counterterrorism, now an associate professor at American University. "The US drawdown will hinder Danab in particular, which has been the most effective Somali force against al-Shabaab, in significant part because of US support." "This is a decision that would be prudently left to the incoming administration, rather than done in the final days of the outgoing one," Bacon said. Jim Langevin, the Democratic chair of the House subcommittee on intelligence and emerging threats, denounced the withdrawal as "a surrender to al-Qaida and a gift to China". Benjamin Friedman, the policy director of the Defense Priorities thinktank, welcomed the move as a step in the right direction in reducing US exposure abroad. "It seems to be a shift away from a broader effort to fight on behalf of the Somali government against al-Shabaab to a more focused counter-terrorism mission," Friedman said. "But the change is not necessarily a step toward ending American military involvement in Somalia's civil war."

Farmers' problem is income, more than prices. Solution lies in setting up factories

The problems that farmers face have more to do with incomes than prices. Wheat is procured by the government at just under Rs 2,000 per quintal; you can get it in international markets at the same price. Rice, of which India is one of the leading exporters, presents a different picture: India offers the lowest prices for its rice in the international market. Yet, that price is attractive enough for farmers to grow excessive quantities of paddy, even in states where water tables have dropped precipitously. They should be switching to other crops, especially if the paddy procurement price is unattractive. That they don't do so tells us a story. Unlike rice, Indian sugar is uncompetitive in global markets and was exported last year with the help of a massive government subsidy equal to 30 per cent of the cost! This year, when no subsidy was announced, there were no exports. The subsidy really goes to the farmer, who is being paid too much for sugarcane.



So, as with rice, he grows more of it than the country needs. Rice and cane are water-intensive crops, and India is short of water. Prices should be engineered to reduce the acreage devoted to these two crops, but farmers are too powerful a political force to be ignored — as is evident right now all around Delhi. Since both crops get a guaranteed purchase price, why wouldn't farmers agitate to keep the deal they have? If the government caves in, the

farmers will go home, but the country will not get the agricultural reform it badly needs — if nothing else, then to prevent a bigger water crisis than already exists. If the government offered to match global prices, would the agitating farmers go home? Paddy growers might, sugar growers won't, while those growing crops like rubber will want to retain heavy

TN NINAN

import tariffs as protection. So different rules for different crops will continue, as they should. But however the government deals with the agitating farmers, crop rationalisation is essential, as is the need to improve productivity virtually across the board. Finally, too many people work on the land, so income per head is low and farmers feel poor and nurse a sense of grievance. Indeed, most of them are poor because half the workforce is in agriculture, producing

only one-seventh of national income. The solution lies not in farms but in factories. Labour-intensive manufacturing would absorb surplus labour, which would be more productive on the shop floor and get paid more. India is an outlier in its failure to engineer this fundamental transition in a developing country's job market, away from dependence on land. If fewer hands were employed on the farms, incomes per head would rise for those who stay engaged in agriculture, and farmers would be less worried about assured product prices. In the absence of proper manufacturing jobs, people have been turning to sub-optimal occupations. The economic census records the existence of 58 million "establishments", of which more than 70 per cent had no paid staff, only the owner. More than half operated from within homes, or outside the home but without a fixed structure. Most of these are not enterprises in any meaningful sense of the

term, they just reflect underpaid artisanal work or desperate survival strategies. Without proper jobs, the crisis will spread beyond the farms. Someone should start a campaign to get the Bharat Ratna awarded to F.C. Kohli, who died a few days ago at 96. Only M.S. Swaminathan (in agriculture) and Verghese Kurien (dairying) have changed people's lives and India's economic trajectory more than Kohli did. At Tata Consultancy Services, he laid the foundations of the software services industry, which has become India's largest exporter, employing millions. His interests and work went beyond that, to promoting electrical engineering education, designing courses in systems engineering, and developing software that he said could eradicate illiteracy through 40 hours of training on a basic computer. He was low-key and would pass unnoticed in an airport. But his record matches those of M. Visvesvaraya and A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the only engineers so far to be awarded the Bharat Ratna.

Women are taking lead in vaccine development, Therein lies a lesson

The early history of vaccines is a male-dominated field. The science, which is currently showing spectacular results, is now led by women. Therein lies a lesson about the allocation of talent. Consider the history of the mRNA vaccine, which is the technological basis of both the Moderna and Pfizer/BioNTech vaccines, the two leading vaccine contenders for the U.S. To oversimplify, mRNA vaccines teach cells how to make a protein that triggers an immune system response, rather than injecting live or dead virus material. If done properly, that makes the vaccine quicker to develop, safer to use, and easier to manufacture at scale. In addition to its forthcoming role in fighting Covid-19, the mRNA vaccine platform can probably be adapted to fight other viruses, and other mRNA products may have additional uses, such as helping to treat skin disorders. The core work behind the mRNA approach comes from Katalin Karikó, a Hungarian-born émigré who came to the U.S. to work on RNA-related issues. Her

career had its fits and starts, including problems with raising research money and a bout with cancer, but she persisted. She ended up working with Drew Weissman, and they figured out how to inject RNA material into humans without causing excess inflammation, which previously had been the critical barrier to making progress. Karikó ended up working with BioNTech, a German start-up founded by Uğur Şahin and Özlem Türeci, a husband-and-wife team whose parents were Turkish guest workers in Germany. Then there is the vaccine from Novovax, which is based in Gaithersburg, Maryland. The Novovax results are not yet published, but early word is that they are very promising. This vaccine also is based on new ideas, using an unusual moth cell system to crank out proteins in a highly innovative manner. Novovax's team is led by Gita Patel, an immigrant from Gujarat, India. Her vaccine team is identified as "all-female." Patel is from a very poor family;

her father almost died of tuberculosis when she was 4 years old, and she often had to beg for bus fare. The common theme here is one of outsiders, as women and immigrants have been prominent at crucial points. Phase One of Moderna's trial, for example was led by Lisa A. Jackson at the University of Washington. Moderna's co-founder and chairman, Nour Afeyan, is a two-time immigrant. Born in Lebanon, his parents later migrated to Canada and then he moved to the U.S. The swift development of all these vaccines could end up being the biggest scientific advance in decades — and it has been driven by people who, in another era, never would have had a chance. This is a positive development, a sobering truth — and a warning about the future. In business, academia and other fields of science, women do not have roles nearly as prominent as they do right now in vaccine development. Given what women have



contributed to vaccines just this year, think what kind of impact they could have in other areas. The argument is not that women and men will achieve the exact same outcomes. There may well be reasons that talented women are drawn more to vaccine development than to other areas. Still, the recent and unprecedented impact of women in this field means that there are other endeavors which society cares about that would greatly benefit from more involvement by women.

TYLER COWEN

Manmohan Singh blundered with Anna movement. Modi is making the same mistake with farmers



There is a well-known rustic north Indian story of '99 pyaj aur 100 joote'. Ninety-nine onions or a hundred shoes. A man was asked to choose between two forms of punishment for his misdeed: Sau pyaj khao ya sau joote khao (Either eat a hundred onions or get a hundred shoe laces). He chose to eat onions but could not go beyond 99, and thus ended up with a hundred shoe strikes as well. This is exactly what happened to the UPA-2 government while handling the Anna Hazare movement. It first chose the path of

indifference and repression but could not carry it beyond a point. That was followed by its humiliating capitulation. The government ended up with the worst of both worlds: it looked weak and immoral. Something similar is happening to the Narendra Modi government. For once, PM Modi's sharp political acumen has gone missing over the last ten days. The government began with imperious arrogance. It did not feel the need to consult farmers' organisations, not even those within its own fold, before announcing sweeping changes in the

legal architecture of Indian agriculture. It brushed aside desperate pleas for stakeholder consultation before the ordinances were converted into laws, short-circuiting all parliamentary procedures. It turned a blind eye to all the warning signs: big and small protests all over the country on 9 August, 24 September, and 5 November. And it just stood and watched the unprecedented farmers' mobilisation in Punjab. Finally, short of shooting at the farmers, it tried everything to foil the farmers' march to Delhi:

YOGENDRA YADAV

barricades, boulders, digging up roads, water cannons, and tear gas. It did not work. Even after the farmers camped on Delhi's borders, the government's response was to place conditions for talks. That did not work. It tried the usual tricks in the unconditional talks that followed: divide, distract and divert. Farmer leaders did not fall for these. No wonder, the second round of talks also remained "inconclusive". The

government's intransigent behaviour has meant that so far these talks have seen little meaningful talk. The government insists that it will discuss anything except the repealing of the three farm laws. The farmers are determined that they cannot discuss anything else, they shall not settle for anything less. Just as the Manmohan Singh government failed to read the nature of the Anna movement and the depth of its popular support, the Modi government is also a victim of false images around the farmers' movement, often created by its own spin

events of 26 November have catapulted this agitation in the national imagination. There is significant mobilisation from Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. And now that Rajasthan is free of its Panchayat elections, one should expect mobilisation from that end as well. Covid restrictions prevent farmers from other parts of India to come in big hordes, but I have noticed farmer leaders from all over the country flocking to the protest sites. The protest enjoys the support of practically every noticeable farmers' organisation. So much so that the RSS-backed Bharatiya Kisan Sangh has been forced to extend moral support to the movement. This is now a national movement. Second, this is not a movement of middlemen carried out by opposition parties and covertly supported by 'Khalistanis'. This is a farmers' movement. Farmers all over the country may or may not join this movement. They may not be fully aware of what it is about. Yet they now share a sense that the Modi government is

doing something big and something bad to the farmers. Reports from neighbouring states hint at popular upsurge not very different from the Anna movement: panchayats in Haryana are passing a resolution asking one member from each household to join the movement, villagers are offering food to agitators, roadside dhabas are offering free meals, and some petrol pumps even offered free diesel. Third, this is not just about MSP (minimum support price). Sure, a price assurance matters to the farmers and could have gone a long way in allaying their anxieties. But things have moved beyond that. The government's reported offer of giving assurance to maintain the current level of procurement at MSP is unlikely to cut any ice now. Every farmer organisation in this movement is wedded to the idea of repealing the three farm acts. They will simply not settle for anything else. Actually, it is not even about these three laws.

Trump running out of time to solidify immigration agenda after US election loss

Washington, December 6 : President Donald Trump's administration is pushing to finalize new immigration restrictions before his term ends in January, according to three senior homeland security officials, a last-gasp effort in a policy area that was a central focus during his four years in office. The moves come even as Democratic President-elect Joe Biden has pledged to rescind many of Trump's immigration policies. By finalizing rules that have just been proposed, or issuing last-minute orders, the administration could slow down Biden's efforts to undo many of Trump's signature measures that have made it harder for immigrants to enter and settle in the United States. A central goal for Trump's last few weeks in office is replacing a lottery system used to award H-1B visas to skilled foreign workers, according to officials with the US Department of Homeland Security, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss government operations. Instead, a new selection process would favor visa applicants with higher-paying jobs. The Trump administration argued in a proposed version of the regulation released in October that the change is needed to better protect US workers. White House senior adviser Stephen Miller - considered the architect of Trump's hard-line immigration agenda - told Reuters over the summer that the regulations meant to drive up wages in the H-1B program would be politically unpopular to reverse. Other measures that could

be hurried to the finish line include new rules to restrict access to asylum and a regulation that would allow federal immigration officials to collect DNA from family-based visa applicants and the US citizens or permanent residents who sponsor them. Another measure would tighten visa rules for international students, cultural exchange visitors and foreign journalists. The



changes would take the form of regulatory actions that are crafted by agencies and do not require congressional approval but need to follow legal processes outlined in federal law. News reports have also surfaced about a possible Trump executive order to weaken the constitutional right to citizenship for all people born in the United States. A senior homeland security official told Reuters, however, the effort did not appear to be a priority for the White House. Acting DHS Deputy Secretary Ken Cuccinelli is spearheading the last-ditch immigration ef-

fort, one official told Reuters, as the president continues to promote unfounded claims of widespread voter fraud and has not conceded his Nov. 3 election defeat. The White House and DHS declined to comment. Trump is not the first president to engage in a last-minute policy push, according to Republican strategist Alex Conant. "Every outgoing adminis-

tration tries to do as much as they can before the clock runs out," he said. "There are a lot of true believers in this White House who think immigration is bad for the country and are spending their last hours in power trying to cement their policies." Most of Trump's immigration plans are unlikely to be finished, however, before he leaves office and the ones that are hastily pushed through will be vulnerable to court challenges. A federal judge on Tuesday blocked two different fast-tracked Trump rules targeting the H-1B program. The judge said the administration failed

to show "good cause" to skip regulatory steps that typically take months or longer. Rules that have not taken effect by the time Biden takes office on Jan. 20 could be delayed and eventually rescinded, according to three experts in government regulations. Any work in Trump's final month in office will also likely be slowed down by the Christmas and New Year's holidays and possible departures of Trump appointees, which is typical for outgoing administrations. One closely watched policy area will be any final Trump actions related to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, which was instituted by President Barack Obama, whom Biden served as vice president. The Supreme Court in June thwarted Trump's attempt to end DACA, which offers deportation relief and work permits to some 646,000 "Dreamer" immigrants brought to the United States as children but who lack legal status. After the ruling, the Trump administration said it would still consider ending the program and then issued an order that narrowed its scope. Even though a federal judge ruled against that move in November, the administration could try other last-minute avenues to hamper the program. "Nothing would surprise us," said Frank Sharpy, executive director of the pro-immigrant America's Voice. Biden has promised to send legislation to Congress that would provide a path to citizenship to the estimated 11 million immigrants living in the country illegally, including those enrolled in the DACA program.

The Rajinikanth factor in Tamil Nadu polls

Chennai, December 6 : After years of flirting with politics and dropping hints about his own political ambitions, Rajinikanth, Tamil cinema's biggest living icon - he remains that, although he has competition from some of the younger actors -- has finally announced that he will launch his own political party in January. After years of flirting with politics and dropping hints about his own political ambitions, Rajinikanth, Tamil cinema's biggest living icon - he remains that, although he has competition from some of the younger actors -- has finally announced that he will launch his own political party in January. Timed with the state assembly elections scheduled for next summer, his entry will create a new dynamic in a state where the line between art, stardom and politics has always been blurred. The Dravidian political move-

ment saw a range of figures - CN Annadurai and M Karunanidhi, both established writers; MG Ramachandran, the tallest Tamil actor of his time; Jayalalitha, the Karnataka-born Brahmin actor who built on MGR's legacy - who straddled these diverse worlds. In recent times, Kamal Haasan and Vijayakanth have made unsuccessful forays into the political theatre. But, Rajinikanth's cult following places him in a different category. The issue, however, for the new entrant is that there are certain entrenched patterns and players within state politics, hard to challenge and harder to displace. How he navigates the cross currents of deep identity-based resentment against the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the state with his own perceived proximity to the party with which he is widely expected

to ally; how he builds a new party organisation to take on the well-oiled machines of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam; how he distinguishes himself in



what is already a crowded political landscape with a range of smaller players catering to diverse sub-castes; and how he delivers a message of bringing change will be the key determinants of his political future. But there is little doubt that irrespective of whether he succeeds or not, Rajinikanth's entry will shape the nature of politics in an important state that sends 39 MPs to the Lok Sabha.

A house, or two, for Priyanka Gandhi to help lift UP Congress' flagging fortunes

New Delhi, December 6 : After Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra was asked to vacate her government-allotted bungalow in New Delhi's Lodhi Estate last June, party workers in Uttar

Pradesh were thrilled to hear reports that she was scouting for a house in Lucknow. They saw in this move the Congress general secretary as well as the Gandhi family's willingness to sweat it out

in the Hindi heartland, where the party is virtually defunct. Priyanka, the general secretary in-charge of UP, was said to have zeroed in on a house belonging to late Congress leader Sheila Kaul. However, the grapevine now has it that she has changed her plans due to security concerns, and her team is actually looking for two rented houses - one in Lucknow and the other in Prayagraj. Priyanka Gandhi's personal secretary Sandeep Singh is leading the search for the two houses, and recently visited Prayagraj to meet some local leaders and see a house that will also have a small war room for eastern Uttar Pradesh. Congress leaders in Lucknow have been given to understand that Priyanka will be visiting UP every month from January 2021, having not visited the party's state headquarters since December 2019. The Congress is struggling to remain relevant in UP politics - in the recent assembly by-elections, it polled 7.53 per cent of the total vote, with its candidates losing their deposits on four seats and finishing second on two, while on the Tundla seat, its candidate's nomination papers were rejected.



state due to Cyclone Burevi. Centre will provide all possible support to TN. I pray for the well-being and safety of those living in the areas affected," PM Modi tweeted. Cyclone Burevi, named by the Maldives, will not be as strong as Cyclone Nivar which lashed the northern coast of Tamil Nadu last week, said weather department officials. They said the storm is expected to have a speed of 80-90 km/hour unlike Nivar which had a speed of 110-130 km/hour.

Amit Shah speaks to Tamil Nadu and Kerala CMs over Cyclone Burevi, promises all possible help

New Delhi, December 6 : Union Home Minister Amit Shah addresses the inaugural session of All India DGP/IGP Conference-2020 via video conferencing in New Delhi on Wednesday. Union home minister Amit Shah on Thursday spoke to chief ministers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala as Cyclone Burevi barrels towards India's southern coast. The cyclonic storm is expected to make landfall late on Thursday night or early Friday morning. "Modi government is committed for all possible support to help people of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Several teams of NDRF are already deployed in both the states," Shah said on Twitter. Have spoken to Tamil Nadu CM Shri @EPSSTamilNadu and Kerala CM Shri @vijayanpinarayi in the wake of Cyclone Burevi. Modi government is committed for all possible support to help people of Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Several teams of NDRF are already deployed in both the states. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued red alert for

Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta and Alappuzha districts of Kerala for December 3. There is red alert for four districts of Tamil Nadu too. After hitting the Tamil Nadu coast, the cyclone is expected to cross over to Kerala either on Thursday night or Friday morning. "Cyclone Burevi will emerge into the Gulf of Mannar in the next 3 hours. It will reach near Pamban and Kanniyakumari around noon and cross the south Tamilnadu coast on 3rd night to 4th early morning," the IMD said on Twitter on Thursday morning. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has deployed 26 relief teams in Tamil Nadu and Kerala kept one team in reserve in Puducherry. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday spoke with the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu and Kerala on Wednesday and discussed the situation prevailing in parts of the states due to the incoming cyclone while pledging all possible support from the Centre. "We discussed the conditions prevailing in parts of the

Son shares how his dad found love at 66. It's heartwarming

New Delhi, December 6 : Love, a word made of just four letters but a feeling that possesses the power to create something beautiful. Just like this story of 66-year-old Tarun Kanti Pal and his newlywed wife 63-

the tweet. Shayon Pal, while speaking to HT, recounted the story of how his dad met his step-mother. It's a love story which is simple yet has the power to fill your heart with a fuzzy feeling. They both hail from



year-old Swapna Roy. What's even more heartwarming is that this tale of love was shared with the world by Pal's son Shayon Pal. Taking to Twitter, Shayon shared an image from his dad and step-mother's wedding ceremony. The image clearly reflects the happiness of the people in it. The post has now won people over and it can warm up your heart too. "So, my Dad got married the day before. The ceremony was (mostly) masked and just with close friends & family. It was both surreal and fun. After 10 years of being alone since my mom died, I'm glad that he found love again!" Shayon wrote while sharing

Howrah for a ceremony. "Are you Tarunda?" Roy had asked after noticing Tarun Kanti Pal. He didn't recognise her at first but after a quick introduction, he recognized her. She had come from Bengaluru and decided to attend the same programme. These were their first conversations ever. After that, they continued talking and even spoke about their families. After a few months, Swapna called just to exchange pleasantries. However, they ended up speaking for months. About four months later, she proposed to Tarun and he said yes. Shayon also tweeted an image of the happy couple: While talking about

social stigma, Shayon shared that though there are sneers outside the family, everyone close to them is absolutely delighted and happy about this marriage. Also, since they had the wedding amid the pandemic, they had an intimate ceremony following all the safety protocols. "We believe in one life which is very precious. One should have some purpose to live. It is a long journey. So it takes someone to accompany a person in that journey. If unfortunately one partner fails to get along for whatever reason, one may choose someone else as partner during his/her unfinished journey. It is mutually beneficial for both the partners. A person has got every right to lead his life in his own way and belief. He himself should decide his destiny, nobody else," Tarun told HT when asked if he has any advice for the younger generation. Their story tugged at the heartstrings of many and it's clear from the comments that Shayon's tweet received. "You're a good man, Shayon. May there be more like you," wrote a Twitter user. "Yaha hamari pelhi nahi ho pa rahi hai. Btw congrats!" joked a Twitter user. To which, Shayon wittily commented, "Mere Dad ka number le lo. Woh tumhe dating tips de denge."

Joe Biden clinches electoral college win as California certifies

California, December 6 : Joe Biden now officially has more than the 270 Electoral College votes he needs to claim the presidency after California certified its election results on Friday evening. Secretary of



State Alex Padilla approved the results, according to his office, which Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom will use to prepare the Certificate of Ascertainment appointing the state's 55 electors for Biden. All states that voted for Biden over President Donald Trump have now certified their presidential election results except for New Jersey, which plans to do so on Monday, and Hawaii, which is waiting for the resolution of two pending

lawsuits. The electors will meet in their states on Dec. 14 to cast their votes, which Congress will tally in a joint session on Jan. 6. Even as Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris proceed with the transition to a new administration, Trump continues to make unsubstantiated allegations of massive voter fraud on Twitter and in a lengthy video released this week. But his already slim chances of reversing the election outcome have narrowed even more as courts in several states have rejected legal challenges brought by his campaign. Biden's lead in the popular vote is now more than 7 million votes.

Covid vaccines show promise during Phase 3 trials, Here's why it's the most crucial stage

New Delhi, December 6 : Three Covid-19 vaccine candidates — by Moderna, Pfizer, and Oxford-AstraZeneca — have delivered preliminary results of Phase 3 trials this month that show a high level of efficacy in protecting recipients against the novel coronavirus. Phase 3 trials are the final stage in the testing process for a vaccine and are considered the most crucial. They require the vaccines to be administered to large groups of people to establish their efficacy and safety. But how do researchers recruit the hundreds of volunteers required for this stage, and how exactly is efficacy measured? Every Phase 3 trial, although designed by its individual sponsor, has some basic elements. A vaccine becomes eligible for a Phase 3 trial after it clears Phases 1 and 2, which are also aimed at assessing safety, efficacy and side-effects but involve much fewer participants. At this stage, it is given to large numbers of volunteers for scientists to observe the effects of the vaccine on the general population. For the Pune-based Serum Institute of India, which is sponsoring the Oxford-AstraZeneca trials in India, that number is 1,600. Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech, which is producing the indigenous candidate Covaxin and is also conducting

Phase 3 trials, is looking to recruit 25,800 volunteers. The trials begin with the selection of hospitals where they will be performed. Every hospital selected to administer the vaccine is told the number of volunteers it must recruit. Clinical research organisations (CROs), entities that help conduct these trials, are often engaged to do the leg-work of recruiting volunteers. "We have an ethics committee that decides whether it is okay for us to advertise a call for volunteers. They also approve a team of field workers to organise volunteers for us," said Dr Mohammed Shameem, a principal investigator from Aligarh Muslim University, which is a trial site for Covaxin. These studies are "double-blind", which means neither the doctor nor the participant knows whether a volunteer has been given the vaccine or a placebo. Volunteers must fill in paperwork and a consent form, after which their details are filled into an interactive web response system (IWRs) or an equivalent system that provides doctors with a randomised code. A vial with the corresponding code — containing either a placebo or vaccine — is then administered to the participant. "Only the third-party sponsor (the manufacturer of the vaccine) is aware of who has been given what," said

Dr Sushant Meshram, an investigator involved in the Serum Institute of India's Covishield trial. "At the end of the study, the data is segregated into those who got the vaccine and those who got the placebo, to check the efficacy," he added. Dr Dhananjay Lad, managing director of Goa-based CROM Clinical Re-

search, is helping a trial site in the state testing Covaxin. Lad told ThePrint that each volunteer submits blood and swabs at the time of vaccine administration. If the results are positive, the patient is not invited back for a booster shot and is given standard of care treatment. If negative, the patient is called back after 28 days for a second round. "If, dur-



ing the course of the trial, something goes wrong, we are at liberty to check if the patient was given the vaccine or placebo, and that data is unblinded," said Lad. "All patients are followed-up with and checked every month." Dr Shameem said the hospital has recruited staff to stay in touch with volunteers over the

phone to monitor any adverse effects, apart from conducting a monthly check-up. Simply put, a vaccine is considered efficacious if it is able to prevent healthy volunteers from contracting the virus. A Phase 3 trial, from beginning to end, usually lasts around a year or longer so scientists can observe the vaccine's long-lasting effects.

Contd. From Page 1

Farmers protest: 36 British MPs

"This is an issue of particular concern to Sikhs in the UK and those linked to Punjab, although it also heavily impacts on other Indian states." The Punjabi community is widely recognized as the backbone of the state's economic structure and the farmers' concerns are a powerful faction in national and state politics," the letter said. It called for an urgent with Raab to discuss the 'deteriorating' situation in Punjab and its relationship with the Union government. Also, representations to be made to India about the impact on British Sikhs and Punjabis, with longstanding links to land and farming in India. In a tweet, Dhosi said, "Many constituents, especially those emanating from the Punjab, have contacted MPs to express solidarity with the farmers opposing farmers Bill 2020 in India. Dozens of MPs duly deliberated and signed a cross-party letter, seeking justice for the peacefully protesting farmers." The development comes as thousands of farmers continued their protests at the Delhi-Haryana and Delhi-Uttar Pradesh borders for the tenth day on Saturday. The agitated farmers are demanding the repeal of the three farm laws passed by Parliament earlier this year and have expressed apprehension that they would pave the way for the dismantling of the minimum support price system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporate houses. The government has maintained that the new laws will provide farmers with better opportunities. It has also accused the opposition parties of misleading farmers.

BPF leaders lost trust of public

return to the good graces of the public," Daimary told reporters in Baksa. Daimary further added that the BJP is the only solution for the people of the BTC as the party has promised to enact the schemes earmarked by the State and Central Governments. "Most of the people have switched to the BJP side and the BPF will be a non-factor here. The BJP win a majority of the seats," Daimary stated, adding that he wishes to become either a Panchayat President or the VCDC Chairman to tackle the grassroots issues. "I am not contesting the polls. If I am made the Panchayat President or the VCDC Chairman, that will be suitable so I can connect with the grassroots to figure out why the schemes rolled out by the Centre as well as State are not being implemented," Daimary said, adding, "If I made the President of the Panchayat or the President of the VCDC, I will be more than satisfied as I will be able to work with the downtrodden." Daimary added that he wants to ensure that everybody gets the benefits of the schemes of the Government. Ahead of the Bodoland Territorial Elections starting from Monday, miscreants have vandalized campaign offices of Bodoland People's Front and Bharatiya Janata Party on Saturday night in Chirang's Basugaon area. The miscreants set the offices on fire including BPF's office in Ward Number 4 in Goglapara. The incinerated materials included official documents and party banners, posters, and flags. No casualties were reported and an investigation is underway.

Awareness cum Training

rearing of ducklings, its benefits and income boost up through duck farming in their locality. Here Mr. Jyoti Timung, Mr. Pradip Ingti, Mr. Badan Ch Taro etc. spoke valuable words to the beneficiaries. Mr. Manob Basumatary of Modertoli gaon, progressive duck farmer also told about his success history about his duck farming in his locality. After the meeting was ended fruitfully, free duckling distribution was done successfully to 66 nos SHG & interested beneficiary farmers of Nomati MAC constituency from the Duck Breeding Farm Cum Demo. Unit, Phuloni for women empowerment and income generation mission through duck farming in their locality.

Farm laws will not be repealed

repealed. If necessary, some amendments to the Acts will be made to acknowledge agitating farmer's demands," said Choudhary. He reassured the farmers that, as the government has said previously, the minimum support price (MSP) for crops will continue, and the Centre is ready to give it in writing as well. "I think the Congress government in different states and also the party in opposition is trying to instigate farmers. Nation's farmers are in favour of these laws but some political people are trying to add fuel to the fire," said the Minister repeating the ruling BJP's allegation on opposition about misleading the protesting farmers. Choudhary again maintained that 'real farmers', who are still working in their farms are 'not bothered' by the three laws, and alleged that the agitators are 'lured' for 'political benefits'. "I have faith in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership and farmers. I'm sure farmers will never make a decision that will cause unrest anywhere in the country. These laws have provided the freedom to them. I don't think the real farmers, working in their farms, are bothered about it. I think farmers should think how this is being politicised and not get lured by the ones who are trying to score political benefits," he added. Meanwhile, the protest by farmers agitating against the three agriculture laws passed by the Centre entered its eleventh day today with demonstrations in Sant Nirankari Samagam ground in Burari on the outskirts of Delhi and other border areas. A nationwide shutdown has been called by the protesting farmers on December 8. Farmers are protesting against the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

Himanta's words have instilled

People's Party Liberal (UPPPL) leader Promod Boro. In 28 Goibari (ST) BTC, 70,358 voters will cast their votes, of which 35,940 are males and 34,418 female voters. The administration has set up 87 polling stations, of which 12 are very sensitive, 18 sensitive and remote, while the rest 6 are comparatively safe. The candidates are Chandni Basumatary (BPF), Himanta Kumar Rabha (BJP), Promod Boro (UPPL), Maheswar Rabha (VPI), Dilip Kumar Sarania (Independent) and Rabin Rabha (Independent). Earlier, Sarma has been slammed by senior BPF leader Anjali Daimary for his divisive rhetoric ahead of the polls that the Minister views as a "semifinal" ahead of the Assembly Polls in 2021. "Everybody has the right to contest elections, but the way they (the BJP) have entered - as if to take revenge with insults and seeking to divide society through a divisive campaign - is something that we heartily condemn," said Daimary. Senior Bodoland People's Front (BPF) leader Anjali Daimary tore into Assam Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma for his allegedly "divisive" election campaign in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) ahead of the polls in the State. The election will be held in two phases on December 7 and 10. "Everybody has the right to contest elections, but the way they (the BJP) have entered - as if to take revenge with insults and seeking to divide society through a divisive campaign - is something that we heartily condemn," said Daimary. Daimary further slammed the political rivals for accusing the BPF of doing nothing for the upliftment of the BTC area. "If a road, a school, a bridge, or University or a medical college has been set up, credit goes to the BPF. These are all election issues. The kind of allegations that we are hearing are truly shocking." The BTAD region is a part of India, it is a part of India. These past 17 years, Himanta Biswa Sarma never entered any of these villages to see if there is development," Daimary said, adding that the only development that is required in the region is of an "intellectual" nature. Responding to United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) Chief Promod Boro's accusations that development has not been witnessed in the region, Daimary said, "He (Boro) cannot say that there has been no development in the past 15 years. While electioneering, he must have seen the kind of development that we have here. Hagrama Mohilary has been dealing with people from all communities for the past 15 years, which is how he has earned their trust."

Pfizer Seeks India Approval For

clinical trials for a vaccine", officials say. "Pfizer's CT-18 application for grant of permission to import new drug (Covid vaccine) for sale in India is under process. As per New Drugs and Clinical trials Rules 2019, the application has to be decided within 90 days," sources told. A spokesperson from the pharma firm said: "Pfizer is dedicated to ensure the availability of this vaccine for use by governments across the world. During this pandemic phase, Pfizer will supply this vaccine only through government contracts based on agreements with respective government authorities and following regulatory authorization or approval. We remain committed to engaging with the Government of India and explore opportunities to make this vaccine available for use in the country." However, experts have been raising concerns about the logistical issues linked to the distribution of this vaccine, which needs to be stored at a temperature of minus 70 degrees Celsius. Most vaccines in India can be stored at temperatures between 2 and 8 degrees. Dr Gagandeep Kang, a vaccine expert, had earlier stated on Twitter, "This RNA vaccine needs ultracold storage. Not sure of BioNTech price, but Moderna is \$375 a dose. Which makes these vaccines a stretch for less resourced countries that will find them hard to deliver and expensive. The drug regulator recently approved three drugs - Favipiravir, Itolizumab and Remdesivir - for 'restricted emergency use' for treating coronavirus. Dr D Roy, Former Deputy Drugs Controller, Central Drugs Standard Control Organization, today told, "Recently antiviral drug - Favipiravir - was allowed in India for Covid-19 on emergency use basis. So vaccines can also be approved for emergency usage. Prior consent of each individual who is being vaccinated will be must." In November, NITI Aayog member (Health) Dr VK Paul, who also heads the National Task Force on COVID-19, said sufficient doses of the Pfizer vaccine, as required for the Indian population, will not be available, but the government is looking at the possibilities and will work out a strategy for its procurement and distribution in case it gets the regulatory approvals. Elaborating on various aspects, Dr Rommel Tickoo, Associate Director, Internal Medicine, Max Healthcare today said: "Emergency use authorisation does not mean there will be no trials at all. Usage will start in a restricted way on one end but in a parallel way the trials will also start simultaneously. As far as resources are concerned, we might have a challenge when it comes to rural areas but bigger cities already have advanced facilities and India has decades of experience with inoculation programmes. If we can vaccinate even if a fraction of the population, especially our frontline workers, then it's good." Across India, "three indigenous vaccines are already in the final stages of trial", Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday. "Vaccines for COVID are likely to be ready within few weeks. Indian health agencies and manufacturers are working in tandem with global agencies. We are fully prepared for the roll out," he said after an all-party meet.

Defiant Donald Trump says US

win Ohio, in history you've never lost an election. This has got to be a first time - but the truth is they were right, we've never lost and we're winning this election," Trump said. He urged his supporters to go out and vote for the January 5 Senate elections in Georgia. "You must go vote and vote early starting December 14. You have to do it. They cheated and they rigged our presidential election, but we will still win it. We will still win it. We'll still win it. And they're going to try and rig this election, too," he said. "If you don't vote, the socialists and the communists win. They win. Georgia patriots must show up and vote for these two incredible people. They are two of the finest people you will ever meet," he said. The cheering crowd frequently erupted into chants of "stop the steal!" and "fight for Trump." "This election was rigged, and we can't let it happen to two of the most respected people in Washington. We can't let it happen again. Your governor could stop it very easily if he knew what the hell he was doing. He could stop it very easily," he claimed. "The answer to the Democrats' fraud is not to stay at home; that's what (House Speaker) Nancy Pelosi and (Senate Minority Leader) Chuck Schumer want you to do - stay at home. If you want to do something to them - I don't want to use the word revenge, but it is a sense of revenge - to the Democrats, you show up and vote in record numbers," he said. The president alleged that "hundreds of thousands of illegal votes were cast in each state" and insisted falsely that poll watchers were "thrown out" of polling places in Pennsylvania. Trump has allowed the official start of Biden's transition to power but has not yet conceded defeat. Trump has yet to concede the election, which he has repeatedly alleged was massively rigged. State officials and media have said that they have not found any such evidence. The Trump campaign has filed a slew of lawsuits across the United States in an attempt to turn his defeat in the November 3 election into a victory. Except for one, all have been rejected by the courts.

Power secy visits Subansiri Lower

"restart of the power house works," according to a release from the NHPC. The secretary also reviewed the ongoing construction activities at different sites of the project. Representatives of major work contractors briefed him on "the quantum of construction activities at individual fronts," the release added. Later in the day, the NHPC CMD briefed Sahai on the various construction activities involved in the project and the downstream river protection works undertaken by the NHPC. He gave assurance that the project would be commissioned by March 2022. Sahai advised the employees to "work with maximum zeal to complete the project as per schedule." He also visited an exhibition organized by the farmers-producers companies that are registered for livelihood interventions initiated by the NHPC in the fields of piggy, sericulture and handloom. The visiting dignitaries commended the efforts and initiatives of the NHPC for the people living in the downstream areas.

1st Phase of BTC polls today, vote will be counted on December 12

Baksa, December 6 : The fervid electioneering for the 1st phase of the polls in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) came to a halt yesterday, with 10 Constituencies in Udalguri and 11 in Baksa set to head to the polling booths tomorrow. The second phase of the polls will be held on December 10. The votes of both the 1st phase and the 2nd phase of polling will be counted on December 12. The elections - that will see 3 prime contenders - the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL), and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) go head to head, are being seen as a "semifinal" ahead of the all-important polls in the State of Assam to be held in the first quarter of 2021. The polls in the BTC were delayed after the outbreak of the novel coronavirus. It was initially scheduled to be held on April 4. Assam Governor Jagdish Mukhi assumed administrative control of the BTC after the expiry of its 5-year term on April 27, 2020. How many voters will exercise their franchise? A total of 23,82,036 voters will exercise their franchise in the two phases. Out of these, 11,79,020 are women. The Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was formed after years of insurgency and the elections have been held since 2005, with the Hagrama Mohilary-led BPF party emerging triumphant every single time. What are the voting timings? Earlier, the polling time was from 8 AM to 4 PM, however, it has now been changed to 7.30 AM to 4.30 PM. This has been decided by the apex state election commission so that social distancing norms can be maintained. COVID-19 guidelines that were issued by the Election Commission of India to hold the Bihar Assembly elections will be adopted.

IMA calls for Nationwide Protests on 8th & 11th December opposing mixing up of Medical Systems

Ghuwahati, December 6 : The Indian Medical Association is highly perturbed by the recent policy proposals for integration of all systems of medicine, calling it a khichidi medical system which could put millions of lives at risk. The largest organisation representing doctors of modern medicine said it stands for purity of systems of modern medicine as well as Ayush and that this new system will provide hybrid doctors and the choice of the patient is effectively nullified. A recent circular of Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) paving the way for allowing Ayurvedic post-graduate doctors to practice various surgeries which are otherwise carried out by well-trained surgeons under the modern medical system has terrified all conscious people concerned about public health. IMA demands immediate withdrawal of the notification of the amendment regulations of Postgraduate Ayurveda Education in which the Post Graduate course namely MS Shalya Tantra the words (General Surgery) have been incorporated and they are allowed to get trained and independently practice a long list of surgical procedures. The competency of such surgical skills squarely fall under the ambit, authority and jurisdiction of modern medicine having been prescribed by the then Medical Council of India as the competency ascribable to the postgraduate course titled MS (General Surgery). IMA claims that NITI Aayog has formed four committees in the areas of medical education, clinical practice, public health, medical research and administration to integrate all systems of medicine. The theoretical basis of policy seems to emanate from the new National Education Policy. 2020. Warning that the radical changes that are being institutionalised will have serious impact on the health of people and can put millions of lives at risk. There are issues arising out of such indignant decisions affecting patient care and safety. What about the pre anaesthetic medication? Will it be Ayush drugs? What about Anaesthesia? Does Ayush have its own anaesthesia drugs and procedures? What about postoperative care and infection control? How will a system not subscribing to microbial theory find a way to control sepsis? Will it be a throwback to the 19th century septic wards? How will the Government find adequate resources to create new infrastructure from nowhere to fend for this modern medicine B team? It is very obvious that Ayush will be dependent on modern medicine doctors, anaesthesia, antibiotics and equipments to perform modern medicine surgical procedures. It fails the test of logic behind such irresponsible initiative placing thousands of gullible patients at risk. IMA has already announced a series of protests against the detrimental steps of the government. All the members of the Association will take part in public demonstrations on 8th December all over the country, adhering to Covid protocols. On 11th December IMA has given a call to all doctors practicing modern medicine to withdraw non-essential and non-COVID services from 6 am to 6 pm. IMA feels Health of generations of Indians is at stake and it is prepared for the ensuing long drawn struggle for existence and identity of modern medicine and all Associations of the fraternity including the specialities and students are determined to resist this ill advised adventure in our national life. IMA also warns that it will be constrained to intensify the agitation until the steps towards implementing mixopathy are abandoned.

'Like two sons of a father': Transport unions support Bharat Bandh call Assam Congress also extends support to Farmers' Bandh

Guwahati, December 6 : Transport unions on Sunday expressed their solidarity with the protesting farmers and said they would observe the call for the nationwide strikes on December 8. The Delhi Goods Transport Association and India Tourist Transport Association expressed their solidarity with the ongoing protests. "Farming and transporting are like two sons of a father," India Tourist Transport Association president Satish Sehrawat was quoted as saying by news agency ANI. He further added that 51 transport unions have decided to support farmers in their Bharat Bandh call. Delhi Goods Transport Association president Parmeet Singh Goldie said that farmers form the roots of their business hence they feel they should express their solidarity with the agitating farmers' unions. Goldie said, "We are supporting our farmer brothers. They are the roots of our business." On December 2, the apex body of transporters All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) had threatened to halt operations in north India in support of agitating farmers' unions. AIMTC represents 95 lakh truckers and other entities across the nation. AIMTC president Kultaran Singh Atwal told PTI that the apex body of transporters had from the beginning lent their support to the agitating farmers. He further added, "AIMTC has already extended its support to the farmer agitation from day one. We have decided on stopping our operations strategically starting from North India and if the government does not address the issue of the farmers, then we may decide to go for shutting down of transport operations nationwide in their support." Bal Malik Singh, AIMTC core committee chairman, had outlined that they will primarily halt supply truck movements in north India starting December 8 and said that it will escalate into a countrywide halt of movement of supplies if the government chooses not to address the issues. "Starting December 8, we will halt the movement of supplies in entire North India including Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan. We will then escalate it to the entire country if the government fails to address their issues," Singh said. Several transporters' bodies believe that the protests are legitimate and have extended their support to them as 65% of their trucks carry farm produce. The Centre and the protesting farmers' unions have not yet reached an agreement over the three laws - Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill; the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill. Despite assurances from the government, farmers' unions have said that they will go ahead with the Bharat Bandh on December 8. The Centre and the farmers' union will hold the sixth round of discussion over the laws on December 9. The Assam State Unit of the Indian National Congress has sounded a clarion call to all its mandals to support the farmers' "bandh" that has been called on December 8 as a mark of resentment against the Centre's new Farm Laws. The Assam Congress has asked all its workers to express solidarity with the agitators, who have stayed put on Delhi borders for 10 days. The Assam Pradesh Congress Committee today released a statement clarifying that it shall indeed be supporting the "bandh" called by the farmers who are demanding the repealing of the "anti-farmer legislations." Extending moral support to the agitating farmers, the Assam Congress has also informed that the party's workers from each Congress Mandal Committee shall be joining the farmers in the fields of the state to register their protest. Ripun Bora, the APCC President, requested all the chapters of the Congress across the State to observe the "democratic and non-violent protest in a befitting manner." Farmers' leaders have said that they will carry on with the 'Bharat Bandh' (nationwide strike) on 8 December to mount pressure on the Central Government. The representatives of thousands of protesting farmers, who are sitting on various borders of Delhi since 26 November, have said their call for a 'Bharat Bandh' would be observed with full force. The ruling Trinamool Congress in West Bengal has decided to extend its "moral support" to the 8 December nationwide strike and would stage sit-ins in various areas for three days.

Football begins its slow roll back from an unpredictable alternative reality

Liverpool, December 6 : In Monty Python's famous Philosophers' Football Match the only goal of the game is scored at the death by the Greek captain Aristotle ("very much the man in form"), and allowed to stand despite prolonged protests from Germany's Hegel about the nature of reality. It seems likely both skippers would have some interesting things to say about the Premier League season 2020-21. This has been a spectacle at one remove, a piece of staging that

experience imposed by dark forces – broadcasters, the league, his own chief executive. Here's another thought. What if this is actually more real? What if the shared restrictions, the inability to bring superior resources to bear, has provided a return to some previous form of reality? In an everyday season it is possible to run these global businesses so well, to stockpile so much expertise, that it is literally impossible for four-fifths of your competitors to finish ahead of you. What



seems always to be asking very basic questions about what football is, what it should be; and whether this is all actually real, or some other thing entirely. The season is now into its second quarter. As the return of fans signals a slow roll back towards normality, it seems safe to drown out the noises off, forget our own shared expectations, and draw some conclusions. At the end of which the most obvious conclusion is that, to date, the Premier League's 190 games of ad hoc bubble-football have been intense, high-grade, and instructive too. It wasn't meant to be this way. It might even take some shedding of preconceptions to realise it is the case. This is not the authentic experience, we have been told repeatedly. Pundits have referred to "a season like no other", something to be enjoyed through a veil, a journey into the hyper-real. Jürgen Klopp in particular has seemed disturbed by its demands, seeing something unheimlich in this altered landscape, an

if that was the unreal part? Perhaps, for a few short months, we have emerged from rather than entered The Bubble. Most notably, the field is simply closer together. The distance from Tottenham in first to Wolves in seventh is four points. After 10 games of last season there were 15 points between first and seventh. The season before that the difference was seven points, and before that 12. West Ham and Southampton have had a better start than the two Manchester clubs. Goal differences are unusually even. This may be a source of sorrow for supporters of the biggest clubs. But then, it might not too. Everyone likes a little narrative tension. A more widely-cast drama might benefit the whole league, even if, as expected, the stronger squads assert their authority through the slog into spring. Perhaps the most remarkable part of those 10 rounds of ghost-games is the retained intensity of the football itself. It would have been very easy for the tempo to drop and the rhythms

to sag. Instead the Premier League has maintained its manic intensity, albeit one characterised at times by flurries of goals, and marked by mistakes and slack defending. Jürgen Klopp has had plenty to say so far this season with his champions having suffered a troubling start compared to the last two campaigns. Jürgen Klopp has had plenty to say so far this season with his champions having suffered a troubling start compared to the last two campaigns. Photograph: Phil Noble/AFP/Getty Images When Chelsea and Tottenham produced a tight, low-throttle nil-nil last Sunday there was a temptation to nod knowingly and point to the lack of crowd. But this is to forget that low-throttle nil-nils have always been present, and are in fact a sign of continued normality. The day before Liverpool and Brighton had produced a hysterically committed 1-1 draw, a game that could scarcely have been more helter-skelter played out in front of an all-terrace crowd of old-school ultras. This is not something to take for granted. There have been suggestions in some other sports, those without blanket TV coverage, that crowd-free fixtures have sagged in intensity. One revelation of the current Premier League season is just how much the players actually want to play, how motivated they are by basic competition. Given the weirdness of the modern footballer's existence, the occasional sense of distance, it has been heartening to see this so clearly. That intensity has translated into 2.84 goals per game, compared with 2.72 in last season's games with a crowd, an increase that has, according to figures provided by Gracenote, been entirely down to away teams becoming more prolific. Opta report an average of 29 shots per Premier League game, the highest average since it started counting in full. This is of course a spectators' view. For players and managers there have been issues with workload and a jiggered schedule. Not to mention the fears Klopp has raised of fatigue and injury. How accurate is this? On Sky Sports this week Gary Neville suggested that teams had played no more football than any other season, while also

enjoying an unusually long summer break. The bare numbers suggest Neville is right about most clubs, but wrong when it comes to those playing in the Champions League, figures that may also prove illuminating for Klopp. From the start of the current Premier League season Manchester United have played a game every 4.6 days, as opposed to 5.2 days at the same stage last year. Chelsea have played every 4.5 days as opposed to 5 days last year. Manchester City have been busiest, down to 4.4 days from 5. In fact only Liverpool have not played more games this season, holding steady at one every five days. Liverpool also played fewer matches over the summer, with nine to City's 14, Chelsea's 13 and Manchester United's 14. These numbers should not be used to scoff at Klopp's comments. He has been at pains to stress his concern is for all clubs and all players not just his own, an entirely reasonable point of view. In any case the problems with fatigue relate to much more than simply matches played. Every professional athlete suffered during the first lockdown. Training regimes were knocked off course, routines junked. Being in a bubble, travelling in a bubble, taking all the endless precautions: this is exhausting in itself. Players have contracted Covid-19. Some clubs have had injury spikes. Plus everyone involved has had to cope with the mental stress of the situation. We may only see the results of this grind as the season rolls on. For now it seems likely things will return to the usual trajectory from here. The lack of training time has clearly hampered some managers; perhaps more noticeably those whose game is based on honing a finely-wrought system. One of Pep Guardiola's strengths is his maniacal attention to detail. Football on the hoof is not the ideal place for this to blossom. Before long those advantages will come into play again. Larger, stronger squads will be more of an asset. The familiar powers will reassert themselves. And the bubble will become the usual bubble, the extreme conditions the usual extreme conditions. Until then, there is still time to enjoy an oddly familiar unreality.

Eddie Jones wants England to learn lessons from World Cup final

London, December 6 : The inaugural Autumn Nations Cup has not always felt like a substantial meal but something more nourishing might just await at Twickenham. It is a final, for a start, with a title at stake and, glory be, there will be 2,000 real live fans in attendance. If ever there was a year to be grateful for small mercies, this is surely it. It also offers England a chance to show they can respond to all-or-nothing end games rather better than proved the case in last autumn's Rugby World Cup final. This fixture, against a below-strength France, is nothing like as pressure-laden but Eddie Jones is determined not to make the same mistakes he now thinks contributed to England's downfall against the all-powerful Springboks. With the benefit of hindsight Jones feels England almost



tiptoed towards the biggest game of their lives, underestimating the need to take a fresh guard mentally in the days after smashing the All Blacks in the semi-final. "In retrospect we probably didn't attack the week like we normally do. It's not necessarily a conscious decision. Sometimes you think: 'Well, we've just got to continue.' In sport there's no such thing as continuing, you are either going up or you go down. We've made a big effort this week to attack the week, not to sit back, and to see where we can improve our game." Hence the selectorial thinking, too, behind an England starting XV which contains a record 813 caps – compared with France's paltry tally of 68 – and sees just one change, with Anthony Watson returning in place of his injured Bath teammate Jonathan Joseph. It might seem the equivalent of using a sledgehammer to crack one petite noix but Jones clearly reckons there is still plenty of time left before the next World Cup in 2023 to examine the claims of Dan Robson, Max Malins, Ben Earl, Jack Willis and Ollie Thorley. More valuable, to his mind, is sending out a message to all and sundry that England, having won the 2020 Six Nations, remain fully committed to raising the bar every time they take the field. And if world domination is the stated aim, what better role model for Jones to choose on BBC Radio Four's Today programme than cricket's incomparable Vivian Richards? Even the Master Blaster's slow, deliberate swagger to the crease was a warning to the bowler and, sure enough, the ball would usually disappear to all parts. "We'd like to play like Viv Richards used to bat," insisted Jones, glossing over the fact the West Indian legend played his last Test before the majority of this England squad were born. "Everyone wants to play beautiful rugby and we're no different. Sometimes the conditions are conducive to that and sometimes they're not, but we want to be a dominant force in world rugby." None of this will mean much to the French but Jones reckons England are currently more like Australia's captain Steve Smith: not particularly elegant but increasingly hard to dig out. "His ability to control the bowler is fantastic and that's where rugby is going," insisted the head coach. "At the moment defence is in the ascendancy but teams will work out how to attack rush defences and we're in the process of developing our own attacking system to do that. It takes time." There have been few instances of England hitting much off the square, never mind over the pavilion, in an attacking sense over the past month but this weekend really should offer the opportunity to flex their muscles at some point. While the new-look visiting side contains several excellent up-and-coming talents, even the organisational genius of Shaun Edwards will be hard pushed to knit Les Bleus into a collective unit capable of conquering a venue where no first-choice French team has beaten England since 2007. It is easy to see the visitors, with nothing to lose, displaying plenty of early spirit but, as Georgia, Ireland and Wales can testify, getting smashed by Tom Curry, Sam Underhill and England's other enforcers for 80 minutes soon becomes hard work, particularly with temperatures forecast to be on the froid side of chilly. Nor is it terribly likely that England will opt to throw caution to the winds, at least not until their forwards have propelled them into a significant lead. According to Jonny May, the sharpest knife in the Red Rose tool box, the notion of wingers floating around on the periphery like nervous debutantes is a throwback to a now-defunct era. "When I was young I used to think being on the wing was all about being in space, scoring tries, and making line-breaks. Now my mindset more than ever is chasing kicks, leading the defensive line, communicating, winning in the air. I build my game around that." Given May has already scored seven tries in seven Tests against France, there must be a decent chance of him adding to the brace he scored when England were last beaten, in Paris in early February. It could be that these two sides have several high-profile duels to come in the next few years and it is already clear Jones will not rest until England's 2019 final pain has been assuaged. "You never put it to bed. We weren't good enough in that World Cup final. Even if you win the next World Cup, it stays with you. And that is what drives you to keep on wanting to get better. In any sort of sport you are in a cycle of success and failure – as soon as you've had success, failure is sitting next to you. And vice-versa."

New transfer rules are example of negative Brexit impact – Jürgen Klopp

London, December 6 : Jürgen Klopp said he is still waiting for the first benefit of Brexit following the Football Association's announcement of its ramifications for English football. The FA, in conjunction with the Premier League and EFL, confirmed this week that English clubs cannot sign foreign players until they are 18, or more than three overseas players under 21 in a single transfer window once the UK leaves the EU on 1 January. Other rules include work permits, allocated on a points-based system, for all transfers from EU

nations. Klopp, a long-time Brexit critic, believes the Home Office would have enforced greater restrictions but for resistance from many within the game, and he considers the transfer rules another example of Brexit's negative impact. The Liverpool manager said: "Michael Edwards [Liverpool's sporting director] was involved in a lot of these discussions and the clubs fought pretty hard for a solution – kind of a good solution or as good as possible. Without the discussions it would have been worse. I am still waiting for the first advantage of Brexit that someone can tell me. What really improves after

Brexit? It's obviously not my thing to judge, but as an interested person I just wait until the first really positive impact of Brexit. Maybe I didn't read it because I'm too much in football, but I don't remember a lot, to be honest." The Governing Body Endorsement plan is designed to promote more homegrown talent in the English game. Klopp, however, believes English talent is thriving because players can train alongside some of the best youngsters in Europe, an opportunity that will be lost post-Brexit. "People – the FA or whoever – want to make sure that the clubs don't sign too many players from other countries because



Arnold returned to training on Friday having missed the past four weeks with the injury picked up at Manchester City. He could be involved in Sunday's game against Wolves.

World Athletics accused over 'abusive sex testing' of athletes from global south

Paris, December 6 : World Athletics, the sport's global governing body, targets women from countries in the global south for "abusive sex testing" based on arbitrary definitions of femininity and racial stereotypes, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW). A report by the rights group, published on Friday, claims female runners are being pushed out of competitive events, which some rely on for their livelihoods. Athletes struggle with emotional trauma and feel discriminated against and humiliated by the testing, said HRW. "These regulations demean women, make them feel inadequate and coerce them into medical interventions for participation in sports. Modern sport should adapt itself to support inclusion and nondiscrimination rather than perpetuate exclusion and discrimination," said athlete rights advocate Payoshni Mitra. "World Athletics has targeted women from the global south for decades, treating those with high testosterone as less than human," said Mitra. South Africa's Caster Semenya and India's Dutee Chand were barred from competing because of their testosterone levels. The report argues there is not enough scientific evidence that higher levels of

testosterone impact performance. World Athletics rejected the report and accused the authors of being "advocates for one side of the argument" and not asking for comment from World Athletics. email. The statement said their measures were an "objective and scientific" way to ensure fair competition.



Athletes interviewed for the report described how they were singled out for testing, not informed of the reason for it, and often not given their results. The report said the system, which regulates athletes running distances of between 400m and one mile, encourages discrimination and forces women to undergo

medical interventions. Uganda runner Annet Negesa was tested in 2011 but not told she was banned from participating until July 2012, when she was in the final stages of training for the London Olympics. Negesa told HRW she was informed by an official at World Athletics – then known as the International Association of Athletics Federations – that she would need to undergo surgery to continue running. The surgery caused her pain for years afterwards, she said. World Athletics has strongly denied the allegations. HRW said women are scrutinised and those deemed "suspect" are chosen for testing. "Identifying athletes through observation and suspicion amounts to a policing of women's bodies based on arbitrary definitions of femininity and racial stereotypes," said Agnes Odhiambo, senior women's rights researcher at HRW. The report said India runner Chand was subjected to testing after others judged her "stride and musculature" as masculine. The rights group is calling on World Athletics to stop sex testing, and for the International Olympics Committee to recognise racial and gender biases in the testing system and end regulations that force medical intervention.

Weakened France will try to stay strong in face of cap-heavy England

Paris, December 6 : Suggestions that Sunday's Autumn Nations Cup final will descend into farce have struck a chord with France this week. According to the team

few things more dangerous than a French team who have been written off. The statistics paint a bleak picture for France, however. They will line up with 68 caps in their side – England have 813 – and

weekend – it must be said by a bigger margin than England managed – but it has been further depleted by the uneasy agreement between the clubs and the union that French players can play only three of their

farce'. We can understand them. Our two national selections are not on the same footing. Unfortunately, that means some of our players had to justify their inclusion and the value of playing a Test match which looks too one-sided. It necessarily resonated in their minds. They were exemplary in their preparation. We won't allow ourselves to be pushed around." The head coach, Fabien Galthié, seems more bothered by the lack of preparation afforded to France than lack of personnel available. Evidently France see themselves as underdogs but, nonetheless, Ibañez has praised the players "state of mind", having finished second in the delayed Six Nations finale and reached tomorrow's final. "England have years of collective experience and we have a young team who've had only two training sessions together," said Galthié. "[But] we will be ready on Sunday, I can assure you that we will be ready." Jones agrees and highlights both their recent success at under-20 level, as well as their longer-term

project towards hosting the 2023 World Cup as reasons not to underestimate France. "The consistency of the French team is that they have a certain system they play," he said. "They are building up a project, they are all educated to play the French way, they'll be looking at this as an opportunity to put their best foot forward, so they are a dangerous animal." Maybe he sees a bit of England in France too because, for all that les bleus have lit up international rugby this year, their vastly improved kicking game has been the bedrock of their success, with the South African kicking coach Vlok Cilliers having a considerable impact. Kicking, of course, has been a fundamental part of the way Jones's side plays, and back in 2017 Galthié spent some time in the England camp at Jones's invitation. He left convinced he had seen the future of international rugby, recalling in a column for L'Equipe: "It said a lot about the way Eddie Jones and his troops think about kicking – a big part of the game, not defensive play,

it's a continuation of offensive play, a way of putting on pressure and increasing the 'metres per minute' to recover the ball or force the opponent to make a mistake." Regardless of personnel then, Galthié – with a helping hand from Jones – does seem to have created an environment which suggests France will not be as outplayed as they were on their last visit to Twickenham when they were thrashed 44-8 under Jacques Brunel amid widespread reports of player mutiny. And for all those missing, there is firepower in this French side, not least the Fiji-born winger Alvereti Raka, who has three tries in his four Tests and makes his first international appearance since last year's World Cup. England's sizeable Saracens contingent know all about the threat he poses – Raka scored an unforgettable hat-trick against them for Clermont Auvergne three years ago. "He's an incredible player," said the England hooker Jamie George. "We didn't know too much about him before that game at Sarries but he scored three tries that day and passed about three over the line. He's a huge threat."



manager, Raphaël Ibañez, they have resonated in the minds of the players, who "will not allow themselves to be pushed around". Eddie Jones, for his part, is wary of the dangerous animal that will arrive at Twickenham and, at the risk of slipping into stereotypes, there are

only one of France's starters, Brice Dulin, is into double figures. Ben Youngs, Owen Farrell and George Ford all have more caps themselves than their opponents combined. The French pack has just 16 between them and the captain, Baptiste Couilloud, is making his first start. It was a callow side that beat Italy last

six matches this autumn. In total, 20 players are unavailable because of that ruling with more out injured. Put like that, Ibañez understands why, looking from the outside, France will have to "overthrow mountains" to clinch the one-off title. "It must also be recognised that seen from abroad this final can be regarded as 'a

Russell's 'size 11 feet were a struggle' in Hamilton's car

London, December 6 : George Russell has described his chance to race for Mercedes as Lewis Hamilton's replacement at the Sakhir Grand Prix as an almost surreal end to an unbelievable year. The 22-year-old will be at the wheel of the season's dominant car in Bahrain on Sunday, having spent two seasons driving for Williams in his second season in F1 and the British driver, who is a member of the Mercedes junior driver programme, was chosen by the team to replace Hamilton after he was diagnosed with Covid-19 on Monday. Russell said he had taken the call from the Mercedes chief, Toto Wolff, at 2am on Tuesday, after which followed a whirlwind of preparations. He was

clearly in excellent cheer as he prepared for the biggest race of his career and the chance to stamp his name on a future drive with Mercedes. Russell has had to liaise with Hamilton's race engineer, Peter Bonnington. He is four inches taller than Hamilton, which meant there were adaptations to be made from the off. "It was a tight squeeze [getting into the car], my size 11 feet were a struggle so I am having to wear a size smaller now," Russell said. "It's slightly uncomfortable but I am sure I can endure the pain to get this opportunity. I spoke with Bono and he said: 'I am sure we can make some mods ... to your body'." Russell has acquitted himself well in the past two seasons in a Williams that is off the pace and a handful of drive. He has out-qualified his teammates in every grand prix since his debut and repeatedly wrung more from the car than it deserved. Yet only months ago his future was in

doubt, when rumours circulated that he was to be dropped by Williams in favour of Sergio Pérez. He has since been confirmed for 2021. Then after a season of barely putting a foot wrong, he was in a position to score the first points of his career at Imola when an error saw him crash out of the race behind the safety car. With the Mercedes call coming on top, taking it all in was proving some task, he said. "This is not how I envisioned my first opportunity in a Mercedes race car, obviously it is very odd circumstances. This year has been mental on all accounts, not just for me – there are much greater problems going on in the world – but from a personal perspective in terms of my career it has been up, down, left, right, centre and this has been another twist in the tale. It still seems a bit surreal and in years to come I will look back on 2020 and say: 'What an unbelievable year.'" He and Mercedes have had to come up to



speed fast to ensure he is able to take to the track in first practice on Friday. Russell has yet to speak to Hamilton but expects to over the weekend. He will have to learn to work with a new crew and learn the intricacies of a new car, while going up against Valtteri Bottas, who is in his fourth year with Mercedes. "There is no pressure," he said. "I am being thrown in at the last opportunity. I haven't

driven their simulator in two years and my seat is three years old. I have got so much information to learn and going up against Valtteri is not going to be easy." So I am in a good position, I am not putting additional pressure on myself. I am going to go out there and enjoy it, there are no targets, no expectations from Mercedes, because you can't judge somebody off the back of one race."

Alun Wyn Jones believes Wayne Pivac will bring long-term gain for Wales

London, December 6 : Alun Wyn Jones battles with Maro Itoje in the lineout during England's 24-13 victory over Wales in Llanelli in the Autumn Nations Cup. Photograph: Ian Cook/CameraSport/Getty Images Alun Wyn Jones has backed the Wales head coach, Wayne Pivac, who will finish his first year in charge without a victory over a country in the top 10 of the world rankings,

head coach at the end of 2007. "He has stuck to his guns – and continues to give players opportunities." In some of the games, he could have played it safe and reverted to players from before, and in the last four months we have made strides. We went into the Six Nations with a lot of ambition and that has continued. We are a team that generally gets better with time. Short-term pain



saying that pain in the short-term will turn into gain by the 2023 World Cup. Wales face Italy in Llanelli on Saturday evening with fifth place in the Autumn Nations Cup at stake. The Azzurri were his first Test opponents in February and the 42-0 victory in Cardiff that afternoon is the high point of his tenure, with the only other success coming against Georgia. "I know I am inside the tent, but you have to give credit to Wayne," said Jones, the Wales captain and the one player in the squad who was involved before Warren Gatland became

for long-term gain." Pivac has not been deflected by remarks that one bad defeat would see him sacked. Even without the question of whether the Welsh Rugby Union, in these straitened times, could afford to pay him off, he was hired to broaden Wales's outlook and make them more adventurous. The uniquely challenging period of Covid is an unfair time to judge him. He has picked an attacking back division with young half-backs, quick and deceptive wings and Liam Williams has been restored to his most effective position, full-back.

স্মৃতিগ্রন্থৰ বাবে লেখা আহ্বান

বিগত বৰ্ষৰ দৰে এইবাৰো আলোকপ্ৰভঞ্জন বেলফেয়াৰ ছ'চাইটিৰ সৌজন্যত দৈনন্দিন **বাৰ্তা** গোষ্ঠীয়ে আয়োজন কৰিছে **Assam Rising-2020** শীৰ্ষক বঁটা প্ৰদান আৰু সম্বৰ্ণনা অনুষ্ঠানৰ। এই উপলক্ষে প্ৰকাশ পাব এখন স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থ। আগ্ৰহী লেখক-সাংবাদিকে উক্ত স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থলৈ লেখা প্ৰেৰণ কৰিব পাৰিব **৩১ ডিচেম্বৰ, ২০২০** তাৰিখৰ পূৰ্বে। লেখাৰ বিষয়বস্তু প্ৰধান্য দিয়া হ'ব— আত্মনিৰ্ভৰ ভাৰত-আত্মনিৰ্ভৰ অসম, জাতীয় অৰ্থনীতিৰ নিৰ্মাণ, ক'ভিডকালীন সংবাদ মাধ্যমৰ প্ৰত্যাহ্বান আৰু ভৱিষ্যতৰ নতুন দিশ ইত্যাদি বিষয়ত।

তলৰ ই-মেইলত লেখাসমূহ প্ৰেৰণ কৰিবলৈ অনুৰোধ জনোৱা হ'ল —

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