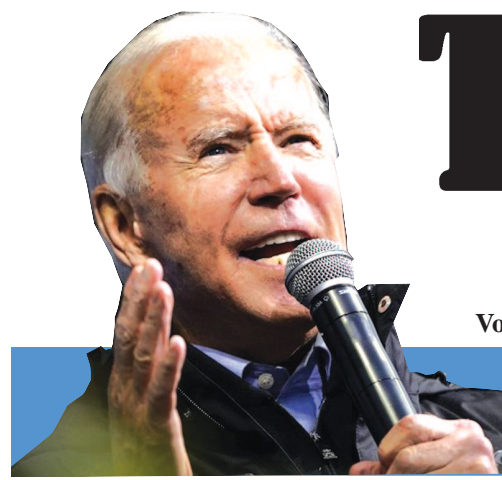


The Assam Rising

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Biden vowed to restore standards. Democrats saying...

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Peter Alliss, voice of the BBC's golf coverage, dies aged 89



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NEWS IN BRIEF

4 Family Members Killed

Guwahati, December 7: In a tragic incident, four members of a family were killed and four others critically injured in a head-on collision accident that occurred in Bokajan's Baghjan on Monday. According to sources, the incident happened when the Tata Sumo vehicle in which the family was travelling in collided head on with an oncoming truck, killing all four of them and injured two others occupants. The family belonged to Nagaland's Lalung area and was travelling to Dimapur for a wedding function. The deceased were identified as Poksham, Aabong, Kandat and Yongkai.

Angurlata Deka's Convoy Meets With Accident

Guwahati, December 7: The convoy of BJP MLA Angurlata Deka met with an accident in Sonapur on Monday, injuring three people. While Deka survived the accident, two of her bodyguards and the driver were injured. They were taken to Sonapur Primary Health Centre for treatment. As per reports, the accident took place near Sonapur College Gate when the convoy collided with a hay-laden truck, causing a temporary traffic jam in the area.

14- Day Judicial Custody

Guwahati, December 7: Principal of BRM government Law College in Guwahati who was arrested for an alleged rape and mental torture of his daughter has been remanded to 14 day judicial custody. Kundu was produced in a special court today Professor Ashutosh Kundu was arrested by police officials of All Women's Police Station in Pan Bazar on Sunday night from his residence in the city. The arrest was made after the victim registered a complaint against Kundu for alleged sexual and mental abuse. Kundu has been booked under all Women PS case no. 185/20 u/s 354/352/506/294 IPC add section 376 IPC.

Actor Divya Bhatnagar dies of Covid-19 at the age of 34

Mumbai, December 7: After battling Covid-19 and pneumonia for many days, actor Divya Bhatnagar has died in Mumbai on Monday. Her colleagues from the film industry have paid tributes. TV actor Divya Bhatnagar, who had been diagnosed with Covid-19 and pneumonia, has died in Mumbai at the age of 34. She was put on ventilator support last week



and her family had said her condition was critical. Her family had also shifted her to a different hospital to ensure better medical facilities for her. Many of the colleagues of the Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai actor paid tributes to her. Devoleena Bhattacharjee wrote on Instagram, "Jab koi kisi k saath nahi hota tha toh bas tu hi hoti thi... Divu tu hi toh meri apni thi jisse main daant sakti thi, ruth sakti thi, dil ki baat keh sakti thi... I know life was too hard on you... the pain is intolerable... but I know today you must be in a better place and free from all the sorrows, pains, sadness. Contd...Page 6

First phase of BTC election ended amid tight security

pramod Boro drives Tractor to Polling booth, Names Missing From Voters' List

Guwahati, December 7: Polling for the first phase of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) election began on Monday morning with heavy security measures and Covid-19 protocols in place. Over 13.59 lakh voters will decide the fate of 130 candidates in 21 constituencies in Udalguri and Baksa districts in the first phase. Voting for the other 19 constituencies in Kokrajhar and Chirang districts will take place on Thursday. Polling started at 7:30 am and will continue till 4:30 pm in 1739 polling stations. As per initial reports, voting is underway smoothly. "There are 10

constituencies in our district. All security arrangements are in place and polling parties have been given face masks, sanitisers for themselves and also to give to those voters who come without masks. Social distancing will also be maintained during voting," Prakash Ranjan Gharphalia, deputy commissioner of Udalguri said. This is the first election being held in Assam amid the raging Covid-19 pandemic. The polls were scheduled to be held in April but had to be postponed because of the pandemic and all the four districts under BTC were placed under the Governor's

rule. The BTC polls are being seen as a crucial contest before the state Assembly polls in Assam due in March-April next year. Since its formation in 2003, the BTC had been governed by Hagrama Mohilary, a former rebel who now heads the Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF), a partner in the ruling coalition headed by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) as the third partner. But relations between BJP and BPF started souring after the BTC was placed under the Governor's rule. Both parties are now contesting the BTC Contd...Page 6



A flag is being pinned on Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on the occasion of Armed Forces Flag Day at his official residence

Amid farmers' protest, PM Modi's pitch on reforms: 'Can't build new century with old laws'

New Delhi, December 7: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said reforms are needed for development and some laws from the past century have be-

come a burden now. "Reforms are needed for development. Reforms are very much needed for a new order and to give new facilities. We cannot build the next century

with the laws of the previous century," PM Modi said while launching the Agra Metro rail project through video conference. "The reforms carried out by the government are also getting reflected in election results," PM Modi said. The Prime Minister's pitch on the importance of reforms comes ahead of Tuesday's 'Bharat Bandh' over the three new farm laws enacted by the Centre. However, the PM made no direct reference to the new laws or the farmers' protests. Tuesday's 'Bharat Bandh' call has been given by various farmer organisations, and supported by most op-



position parties. "Some laws that used to be good in the past century have become a burden in the present century. Reforms should be a continuous process," Modi said. Contd...Page 6

Bharat Bandh today: Banking, transport services may be affected

New Delhi, December 7: The Bharat Bandh called by farmers is set to affect services across various sectors. The farmers are protesting against three laws passed recently by the Centre. Delhiites are expected to face trouble as several auto and taxi unions have decided to join Bharat Bandh. The Bharat Bandh (nationwide strike) called by farmers on Tuesday (December 8) in protest against three new farm laws passed by the Centre is set to affect services across various sectors. "It will be an emphatic Bharat Bandh on



December 8", All India Kisan Federation president Prem Singh Bhangu said on Saturday after the fifth round of talks between farmers' leaders and the Centre failed to break the deadlock. The farmers are

protesting against Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance Contd...Page 6

Curfew clamped along Assam-Bangladesh border

Silchar, December 7: In an order issued to this effect here on Saturday, Deputy Commissioner, Keerthi Jalli promulgated night curfew under Section 144 CrPC along the Bangladesh border of Cachar district. "Movement of individuals shall remain strictly prohibited in between sunset to sunrise within one km radius of Indo-Bangladesh border of Cachar district from December 5. No person shall move on the river Surma

and on its high bank within the limit of the territory in actual control of India in the district of Cachar between the hours of sunset to sunrise," said an official order. The order has been promulgated in view of the movement of extremist elements out to create law and order problems in the district and also the unauthorized movement of commodities, including cattle from the district through the areas sur-

rounding the district borders. It was stated in the order that no person will be allowed to ply boat in the river Surma for fishing purpose and the permission for fishing has to be obtained from the Circle Officer, Katigorah. It also further Contd...Page 6



Assam Girl honoured by Indian Book of Record



Guwahati, December 7: There is no denying the fact that there is an abundance of young talent all across India. Whether it's chess, spelling bee championships or other sporting Contd...Page 6

CAA process to begin in Jan-Feb: BJP

Guwahati, December 7: BJP leaders Kailash Vijayvargiya and Mukul Roy have claimed that the process of implementing the amended citizenship law will begin in either January or February 2021. "Most probably from January, the process of granting citizenship to all the people who are refugees will be started by the BJP government. These people have come from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan after facing religious persecution. They have sought refuge in our country. The BJP government will grant citizenship

to all such people. The Centre has honest intentions to grant citizenship to persecuted refugees who have come to India from neighbouring countries," Vijayvargiya, the party observer for Bengal, told the media on the sidelines of a BJP event in North 24 Parganas district on Saturday. On Sunday, Roy, the party's national vice president, raised the matter at a protest meeting at Red Road here. "Implementation of CAA [Citizenship Amendment Act] will start from January-February. I am confident that in the upcoming Assembly elections the BJP will come to power with more than 200 seats. One will not be able to see the TMC even through a microscope," he added. Though stirring the

CAA cauldron appears risky at a time of farmers' protests, the BJP wants to reassure the Matua community that it intends to grant them citizenship rights under the new law. The Matuas Contd...Page 6



Bollywood comes out in support of protesting farmers: 'India's food soldiers'

Mumbai, December 7: Numerous farmers represented by farmer unions, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting what they perceive as unjust farm laws passed by the Parliament. They have hunkered down at the borders of Delhi and a nationwide strike has been declared for Tuesday, December 8. Like many issues, the farmer's protest has also divided the Hindi film industry, with some, like Kangana Ranaut and Vivek Agnihotri choosing to side with the government. Celebrities like Diljit Dosanjh, Priyanka Zinta,



Riteish Deshmukh, Richa Chadha, Hansal Mehta, Anubhav Sinha and others have lent support to the farmers. Diljit Dosanjh first showed solidarity with farmers on social media and then went to the Delhi border in person to protest with the farmers. Riteish Deshmukh shared on Twitter, "If you eat today, thank a farmer. Contd...Page 6

Guwahati's first Fifa approved Football Turf 'GAME ON ARENA'

Guwahati, December 7: Game On Arena, the first FIFA approved football turf and sports complex in Guwahati, was inaugurated yesterday. The turf will now be used to develop the young up and coming talents in the city affirmed Game On Arena Manager Sajad Siddique, who says that parents of the children can now breathe more easily knowing that their wards shall be playing on turf approved by football's

apex body. The artificial turf located at Beharbari, Kerakuchi Tinali, and built with the objective to boost Grassroots Football infrastructure in the state held their Grand Opening with a Grassroots exhibition match. The joint venture of father-son duo Hiren Barman and Jiten Barman was brought to life by Manager and IIM graduate in Sports Management Sajad Siddique who intends to take forward his vision of grassroots de-

velopment in the field of sports, especially football in association with Guwahati City Football Club (GCFC) in their activities. Leading Lighting company Kritron also helped in bringing the turf to its world standard. The turf will also be used for recreational purposes within subsidized rates. The event started with words of encouragement following the ribbon-cutting ceremony by Chief Guests; Mr. Subodh Malla Contd...Page 6



CDC advises ‘universal’ masks indoors as US Covid deaths again break records

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued new coronavirus guidelines, including requesting “universal face mask use”, after the US again set a record for the highest daily number of coronavirus deaths. On Thursday, 2,879 people died from coronavirus, according to Johns Hopkins University, while there were 217,664 new cases, also a record. The

they are running out of intensive care beds, with 100,667 people currently in hospital with Covid. California plans to implement a sweeping stay-at-home order in a desperate attempt to get infections under control. Joe Biden, meanwhile, said he would ask all Americans to wear face masks during his first 100 days in office and, in remarks to the press on Thursday afternoon, warned of “a very dark winter

unlikely there will be a million people on the mall going all the way down to the monument.” He instead predicted an event with virtual elements similar to the Democratic convention in August. “First and foremost is to keep America safe, but to celebrate, and see one another celebrate,” said Biden. Donald Trump stayed silent on the crisis on Thursday, as number of US deaths reached 276,366. On Saturday the president is due to hold a rally in Georgia, which is seeing its highest number of coronavirus cases since August. Two Republican senators face runoff elections in the state in January, key to control of the chamber. In an interview with Newsweek, Fauci warned that the worst was yet to come. “I think January is going to be terrible because you’re going to have the Thanksgiving surge super-imposed upon the Christmas surge,” Fauci said. “So

there was only about 5% less vehicle travel than in 2019. The commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, Stephen Hahn, told Reuters vaccinating 20 million Americans before the new year was realistic. The FDA is due to hold a public hearing as it considers whether to allow a vaccine produced by Pfizer and BioNTech to be administered. The UK approved it this week. “We expect to move quickly,” following the 10 December meeting, Hahn told Reuters. Some officials have predicted a decision within days. California is fast becoming one of the most severely hit states in the country, and its governor, Gavin Newsom, announced a series of new restrictions on Thursday. Stricter stay-at-home orders will be implemented in areas in the state where intensive care units are expected to fall below a capacity of 15% – with the vast majority of the state expected to meet that criterion within the next few days. “The bottom line is if we don’t act now, our hospital system will be overwhelmed,” Newsom said. “If we don’t act now, our death rate will continue to climb.” The five Bay Area counties will implement a preemptive adoption of the regional stay-at-home order, affecting about 6 million Californians, on Sunday. The order, the most far-reaching since the pandemic began, will include restrictions on business and gathering spaces – no salons, no gyms, no indoor worship, no playgrounds. Restaurants will be allowed only takeout or delivery. Retail already limited to 20% of customer capacity will be allowed to remain open, but all non-essential travel is restricted. The record high number of cases came amid news that the recovery in the US jobs market collapsed in November. The US added just 245,000 new jobs, less than 638,000 in October, 672,000 in September and 1.4m in August. The unemployment rate fell to 6.7%.

Adam Gabbatt

it’s entirely conceivable that January could be the worst.” Fauci, who has accepted Biden’s offer to be chief medical adviser, said he expected data to show a further rise in cases and deaths in mid-December – largely attributable to Thanksgiving. “If you and I travel and then go home and have family dinners, you’re gonna see infections two to three weeks from there and then a week later you’ll see more hospitalizations and then two weeks later you’ll see more deaths,” Fauci said. Despite warnings, millions traveled over Thanksgiving. Wednesday, the day before the holiday, was the busiest day for air travel since mid-March, with nearly 1.1 million people clearing airport security. On Friday, the Associated Press reported that while vehicle travel in early November was as much as 20% lower than last year, it surged around the holiday. On Thanksgiving itself



number of people admitted to hospital with Covid exceeded 100,000 for a second day in a row, as the top infectious disease official, Dr Anthony Fauci, warned: “January is going to be terrible.” The CDC issued fresh public health guidance on Friday, in a weekly report. It recommended that state or local agencies should “issue policies or directives mandating universal use of face masks in indoor (non-household) settings” – stronger advice than previously issued. The CDC also recommended avoiding “non-essential indoor spaces” and postponing travel. Numerous states have warned that

ahead”. Americans, Biden said, are “in trouble through no fault of their own. What they need, they need us to understand, we’re in a crisis. We need the Congress to act, and act now.” Biden also discussed vaccines and plans for their distribution, saying of the Trump administration: “They’ve clued us in on their planning, on how they plan to distribute the actual vaccine to the states, but there is no detailed plan – that we’ve seen anyway – as to how you get the vaccine out of the container into an injection syringe and into someone’s arm.” Biden said of his inauguration, in Washington on 20 January: “It is highly

As we close in on a Brexit that pleases next to nobody, how did we end up here?

Are we there yet? Very nearly, it seems. A deal is there for the taking. And, however scrawny it may be, any deal is very different to no deal in economic, political and diplomatic terms. Yet the fact remains that our choice is between something skinny and nothing at all. Which, if nothing else, raises the question: how the hell did we arrive here? For some, the answer is simple: Tory Brexiters. European Research Group ultras dragged Theresa May kicking and screaming into backing the kind of Brexit only they wanted. When she failed to deliver it, she was summarily defenestrated by her loyal colleagues. Steve Baker and co have provided us with the Brexit version of the devil’s alternative: no deal unless it conforms with their version of Brexit ideological purity. But Brexit ideological purity has always been a minority interest. In the parliaments that gave us the referendum and then tried to work out what it meant, only some 80 MPs backed the kind of outcome we are now confronted with. What is more, public opinion never came out in favour of this kind of Brexit. Yes, they voted to leave and the official Vote Leave campaign spoke of taking back control. But that is a tenuous mandate at best. That campaign, after all, quite deliberately avoided telling the public what leaving would look like. Subsequent polling and deliberative inquiries, moreover, have shown that, offered a choice, a majority of the public favours something far “softer” than what is now on offer. Thinking back to the period immediately after the referendum, few people could have imagined where the tortuous subsequent journey would end. May set out red lines at the party conference and in her “plan for Britain” speech at Lancaster House that some see as setting the destination

unequivocally towards hard Brexit, but she wanted a “bespoke” arrangement between the UK and the EU. Between 2016 and 2018, May went on something of a journey. From Lancaster House to Chequers, her approach to Brexit softened significantly, albeit that the end product was still a Brexit that eschewed the customs union and the single market. By Chequers, she was proposing that the UK remain part of the single market for goods through a “common rulebook” and her customs backstop meant that the starting point for the future relationship would be an enduring customs relationship until technology came to the rescue, the reason her backbenchers would not pass her deal. Those suggesting some kind of compromise were shouted – and voted – down as the debate polarised. Moreover, en route, she called, and effectively lost, an election. To claim that the outcome of Brexit was set in stone by May in either October 2016 (Tory conference) or January 2017 (Lancaster House) is to forget just how powerless she frequently was after that electoral debacle. It’s here

that things get really interesting. Not least because it’s at this point that the dynamics of Brexit absolutism took over. Just at the moment when the prime minister was too weak to force her version of Brexit on parliament or the country, those suggesting some kind

Anand Menon

of compromise were shouted – and voted – down as the debate polarised. As the People’s Vote campaign got under way, so the Brexiters become



increasingly obsessed with Brexit purity. Rather than train their fire on each other, both camps focused their ire on the “compromisers” in the middle. As the temperature was raised, so it became more difficult for those seeking a compromise

to argue – let alone vote – in favour of one. As Peter Mandelson has pointed out, it’s possible to have argued in favour of a referendum and thereby weakened the case for a softer form of Brexit and not regret it. But his acceptance of the link between the two is instructive. Clearly, the state of our politics did not help. Plenty of Conservatives would have considered working closely with the parliamentary Labour party had their leader not been Jeremy Corbyn. Equally, plenty of

however, feels faulty. Yes, there was pressure from constituency Labour parties. And yes, once it looked as if May could fall, propping her up would have taken some explaining. But, with May vulnerable, it was clear that her successor’s views would be nearer those of Steve Baker than Dominic Grieve. Consequently, the best way of guaranteeing a softer Brexit was to pass the May deal, with its legally binding backstop, add many of the caveats on offer to the accompanying legislation (including, if a majority could be mustered, another referendum) and keep parliament on life support until the future relationship was settled. Short-term expediency ultimately triumphed, of course. And there is no guarantee that, even had enough Labour MPs supported the May deal to get it over the line, that would have enabled the creation of the kind of stable parliamentary majority to get Brexit done (to coin a phrase) along these lines. And yet and yet, what was the alternative? What we are left with is a Brexit that pleases next to no one. Not the DUP, which

is stuck with a GB-NI border it hates, not the non-ERG Tories, not to mention those who used to be in parliament and no longer are because they voiced their concerns. Not Labour MPs, who may be whipped through division lobbies to support a Brexit deal they can’t abide. The only grouping that may have lost the immediate battle but won the war is the SNP, if a hard Brexit opens the path to indyref 2 and Scexit, but a hard Brexit raises the price it will have to pay for this. “Nothing is inevitable until it happens,” opined the historian AJP Taylor. The kind of Brexit we now face was not an inevitable outcome of the referendum, or the conference speech of 2016, or of Lancaster House. To claim it was is to deny agency to a huge number of participants in the Brexit saga. Rather, it was the outcome of many factors. Most important of all, it resulted from the nature of our politics – adversarial, intolerant of compromise and pushing politicians to more extreme positions than the voters who put them there. That, above all else, is cause for concern.

Christian group tears down mysterious monolith on California mountain

A Report

A group of young men claiming to be Christians have posted a video of themselves tearing down a mysterious monolith that had appeared atop a California mountain and replacing it with a cross. The monolith had been built near the town of Atascadero and sparked huge interest after the appearance of a similar silvery metal-faced monolith that had been discovered in the deserts of Utah. “I guess this is a thing now, right?” monolith appears on California mountain – video report That original monolith – which attracted hundreds of curious sightseers and garnered headlines worldwide – was also

destroyed by visitors who were captured taking it down and carrying it away by an observer’s mobile phone video. Now the Atascadero monolith has met a similar kind of fate, according to a report in the San Luis Obispo Tribune newspaper. In a video, which was livestreamed and

posted online, the group of young men drive from southern California to tear down the structure. Under cover of darkness, they hike up to the structure and tear it down while chanting “Christ is king!”. They then erect a homemade wooden cross in its place and drag the



remains of the monolith down the mountain to their car. During the video, the men also make offensive comments and drink substantial quantities of energy drinks, while also referencing Donald Trump and the QAnon conspiracy theory and their mission is to demonstrate “how much we love Jesus Christ”. The vandalism angered local officials. “We are upset that these young men felt the need to drive five hours to come into our community and vandalize the monolith,” Atascadero’s mayor, Heather Moreno, said in a news release. “The monolith was something unique and fun in an otherwise stressful time.”

Wartime Christmases can teach us how to ‘muddle through’ in the time of Covid

Being as I am a child of divorce, I watched all the media discussion of Christmas and what was to be done about it with detached bemusement. I have come to view Christmas as something of a movable feast, which at times had been downright unconventional. I realised that it mattered hugely to other people, of course, but I’d be fine, I thought – relieved, even, not to be on a crammed train, the windows misting up with everyone’s virus-y breath. But I was a fool. When the gutpunch came, it was swift and unexpected: Ella Fitzgerald’s version of Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas, chosen out of a desire for something festive, and jazzy, and cheerful. Clearly I had never listened to the lyrics before, which are about having had a terrible year (“Next year all our troubles will be out of sight”) and not being able to see your loved ones (“Faithful friends who are dear to us / Will be near to us once more”). The line that turned me into a little heap of cranberry jelly on the floor, though, was this: “Someday soon, we all will be together / If the fates allow / Until then, we’ll have to muddle through somehow”. There’s something so clumsily human about “muddling through” – it is coping, but not coping, a state of being familiar to so many of us this



year. Written in 1943, Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas is, of course, a wartime song. Composed by Hugh Martin and Ralph Blane for Judy Garland for the film version of Meet Me in St Louis, it was originally far more lugubrious. Garland rejected it on those grounds, saying quite correctly that telling a little girl to “Have yourself a Merry little Christmas, it may be your last” would see her labelled a monster. I would be a monster, too, to dwell for too long on the fact that this may be a last Christmas for many, many more people, as a surge in travelling and socialising indoors could see a spike in cases. Nevertheless, it is

Rhiannon Lucy Cosslett

what we are all thinking. And it is for this reason that perhaps a wartime Christmas is the closest parallel we have to look to, because we are yet again facing death in the midst of a national crisis, and the war was the last time that so many families spent the festive season separated from one another, when being together is really what Christmas is all about. My grandma was a child in Hartlepool during the war, and I asked her about her experiences. There were, of course, food shortages, something most people in 2020 are no longer having to face (I did wonder briefly if a black market would emerge, owing to earlier reports of a Turkey shortage). Nobody is at the point where they are having to make “fudge” out of carrots, though apparently the dessert my great-grandmother concocted from boiled parsnips, banana flavouring, and under-the-counter cream from a relative’s shop in Middlesbrough was delicious. There will, however, be many more families living in poverty this year and wondering how they will pay for Christmas lunch, let alone presents (Christmas gifts made from paper may have passed muster for our grandparents, but modern day parents have a whole consumerist machine with which to contend). There will be others who have lost their homes and livelihoods. In wartime, there were special canteens that provided shelter and refreshments to those who had been bombed out of their homes; in 2020, we have food banks. On top of this, we have a grave moral decision laid at all our doors: “tis the season to be jolly careful”, we are told, so if your loved ones become ill, it’s sort of on you. We are left with a choice: risk infecting our relatives, or stay away. Compromises can be found. Tales of the New Yorkers who turned up to Central Park in full black tie to lay out an enormous Thanksgiving dinner, could act as inspiration. However, there is no escaping the fact that some people will die as a result of celebrations. It is this awareness of death that my grandmother remembers most strongly about wartime festivities. She recalls the Christmas before her brother Maurice and his fellow sailors set off on the Arctic convoys to Murmansk. “They’d all been in the pub of course, and back comes Maurice with about half a dozen pals ... With Dad being a pianist it just started a singsong. I’d never seen any other year like it.” Someone got her out of bed and gave her a glass of port and lemonade. “I thought this was terribly grown up,” she says. But her happiness was tinged with sadness – she knew they wouldn’t all survive. “I was looking – and it stayed in my memory all these years – in that sitting room, the front room, and them all singing ... My mother’s baking was being handed out and afterwards my grandad said, ‘never mind, pet, some of them may not come back’.” Melancholy and loss have always been a part of Christmas, and this is heightened in times of crisis. This year has affirmed for many of us the things that truly matter, and that was true for the war generation, too — I’d love to hear more stories from readers on their memories of that time. I imagine it was much the same as now: a return to simple pleasures, a reduced emphasis on consumption, a renewed commitment to volunteering and charitable giving and, as in my grandmother’s story and the 1943 song, a determination to “have yourself a Merry Christmas now”, while you can. It may be hard, but we’ll muddle through.

NMA takes exception to Gov's speech

Dimapur, December 7 : Naga Mothers' Association (NMA) has criticized Nagaland Governor RN Ravi for his Statehood Day speech that purportedly ignored Naga women as equal stakeholders, in the Naga political process. In a statement, NMA expressed "deep displeasure" over the Nagaland governor RN Ravi's recent statement, adding "he is confused on his delicate role of peacemaker and Interlocutor of the longest Naga freedom struggle in the North east region." NMA urged the Prime



Minister of India to ensure that there were "measured words of peace and respect" for the Naga people including Naga women from the office of the Raj Bhavan in Nagaland. It reiterated that never in the history of Nagas have they

seen "such intolerance and arrogance from Indian leaders, as reflected in this instant case." NMA said the language of peace began with mutual respect, that "must be maintained by the governor, who is not only the Head of state, but involved in bringing Peace to our Naga areas." NMA quoted the Governor's speech when he said that the "traditional village institutions and tribal bodies are the primary stakeholders in the Naga political issue." NMA said this "unfortunately, shows his complete ignorance, in not realizing, that Naga women are equal stakeholders, in the Naga political process." It pointed out that over the years, Naga women walked the talk, trudging into deep jungles and areas untrod by many traditional village institutions and few tribe leaders, in search of "our armed brothers for peace." In view of this, NMA said it was "highly questionable" that the representative of the Government of India had not taken cognizance of Naga women's expressed wishes for peace and an early settlement inclusive of all

NGPs "for the future of our children" in all Naga areas. Further, NMA reiterated that history of peace processes around the world proved that when women's voices were not counted and went unheard by negotiators; "peace is not sustained and peace processes break down." Therefore, NMA asked why was had the Governor's message shown "disrespect to the primary stakeholders who were also "Naga women, the other half of the Naga population in all Naga areas." NMA said it was expected that such an official address from the head of the state, who carried the responsibility of being the Interlocutor, "should not have been accompanied by dire warnings of wrath or threats, to the Nagas, especially Naga women, who have suffered so much under the impunity of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act since 1958, much before statehood, that still continues to violate our right to peace and security." NMA said as mothers and women, who are half the Naga population, mothers had struggled alongside their men and brothers,

"in war and peace". It said as Nagas stand on the threshold of a new understanding of peace and at the crossroads to a historic peace, the governor's "patronizing speech" has proved that there was "great disrespect to our history and the thousands who have marched and died under our Naga flag." NMA asserted that the Naga flag was not a flag of the Naga political groups, but it was a flag revered "in remembrance of our struggle, a living symbol of our political belief and our Naga identity." It reiterated that Nagas were not a confused race of people, as they were well aware of their history so were the women, who have faced the brunt of Indian militarization and its unimaginable atrocities under the Armed Forces Special Powers Act for decades. NMA said with its slogan of "Shed No More Blood", it has worked for years to bring peace and create better understanding through dialogues, whether it be with "our armed brothers" or with successive governors, union home ministers, Primes Ministers of India.

APSCW raises concern over child and women trafficking

Itanagar, December 7 : Arunachal Pradesh State Commission for Women (APSCW) Chairperson Radhika Chai Tachi raised serious concern over the increasing number of child and women trafficking in the state and the country. She was addressing a gathering during a legal awareness programme organised by the Human Right Law Networks (HRLN), in collaboration with the APSCW and the Athu Popu Social Foundation, on trafficking and human rights violation at a city hotel here on Saturday. Tachi informed that most human trafficking cases in India are related to those hired as domestic help. "Human trafficking is also done for sexual exploitation and child or forced marriages and even organs," she said, adding: "According to a 2014 report, around



16 million women were victims of sex trafficking in one year, and half of them were children." While she said that the commission does not receive extremely high numbers of reports of women and child trafficking cases, the state does report high cases of domestic violence, kidnapping and rape, with the capital region registering the highest crime rate against women, followed by West Siang district. This was followed by Gauhati High Court advocate Sunil Mow elaborating the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act and international laws, while social activist Hasina Kharbhih highlighted the trafficking issues in mainland and Northeast India. SIT (Crime) SP Rohit Rajbir Singh spoke on the role of the police and the civil society for prosecution of perpetrators. Arunachal Pradesh Women's Welfare Society secretary-general Kani Nada Maling spoke on child trafficking and the support system in India, while journalist Karpur Chisi spoke on 'Human trafficking ways: A case study of Arunachal Pradesh'. APSCW member Tachi Hummai spoke on the powers and functions of the commission.

1 arrested in connection with fireman's death during anti-Bru stir in Tripura

Agartala, December 7 : One person was arrested in Tripura on Saturday in connection with the death of a fireman during an anti-Bru protest last month, police said. The development comes two days after The Indigenous Progressive Regional Alliance (TIPRA) chairman and scion of the erstwhile Tripura royal family, Pradyot Kishore Manikya Debbarma, threatened to launch a massive agitation in the state if those responsible for the death of the fireman were not arrested. Based on a case registered with Panisagar police station in North Tripura district, a 25-year-old resident of Kanchanpur was arrested, Deputy Inspector General of



Police Lalhingma Darlong said. "Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb called me up and informed me that one person was arrested. We welcome the step but demand that the rest of the accused be arrested," Debbarma told reporters here. He also appealed to people to maintain peace and communal harmony. "I will request the chief minister to visit the house of slain fireman Biswajit Debbarma and meet his family. This will send a message that the state government stands in solidarity with the victims." He should also visit the house of Srikantha Das, who was killed in police firing on the same day (November 21)," he said. The fireman was critically injured in an attack by protesters and Das was killed allegedly in police firing during a road blockade organised by the Joint Movement Committee (JMC) in Panisagar on November 21 against the settlement of Mizoram's displaced Brus in Kanchanpur sub-division in North Tripura district. The fireman later succumbed to his injuries at a hospital.

World Soil Day celebrated



Itanagar, December 7 : World Soil Day was celebrated in several districts of the state on Saturday with the theme 'Keep soil alive, protect soil diversity'. In Papum Pare district, the soil & water conservation (SWC) directorate of the RWD celebrated the day at Moin village in Sangdoputa circle in the presence of a large number of villagers. SWC Director Joram Puppa highlighted the importance of the World Soil Day. He urged the villagers to use the land in a sustainable manner, "following scientific method of soil management to minimize soil erosion and loss of soil fertility." Soil Conservation Officer Nido D Pubiyang advocated "scientific know-how of various soil conservation techniques to be adopted in farmers' fields," and SWC Joint Director RN Singh emphasized on conservation of soil biodiversity. Other features of the celebration included dedication of a vermicompost unit in Moin village and training on vermicomposting technique through field demonstration by resource person Nido D Pubiyang. Among others, Rillo village GB Tem Sengko spoke on the occasion. As many as 60 people from eight villages under the circle and officials from the SWC directorate attended the programme. The Changlang KVK celebrated the World Soil Day at Kavin village. Addressing the function, MLA Laisam Simai, who was accompanied by GBs and progressive farmers, commended the faculty members of the KVK "for their contributions to the farmers and the district as a whole in imparting the horizontal spread of new technologies among the farmer community." Earlier, KVK Head Dr Devendra Singh Chhonkar highlighted the importance of the World Soil Day and explained different ways of maintaining soil fertility. He also emphasized on "green manuring, using of azolla, tridderma and biofertilizers" to maintain soil fertility, and spoke about the new farm act. In Tawang, 31 farmers participated in the World Soil Day celebration in Kitpi

village. Horticulture scientist Dr AK Tiwari spoke on organic farming for maintaining soil productivity, while plant protection scientist Lakshmi Priya Borah stressed on organic plant protection techniques suitable for the farmers of Tawang, and home science specialist DY Thungon, delivered a speech on issues related to soil health cards, nutrition, etc. Soil health cards were distributed among the farmers at the end of the programme. In East Siang HQ Pasighat, the College of Horticulture & Forestry [CHF], the Krishi Vigyan Kendra and the College of Agriculture celebrated the World Soil Day. CHF Dean Prof BN Hazarika emphasized on protecting the soil for the future generations, and advised progressive farmers to switch over to organic cultivation. DAO A Pao highlighted the importance of healthy soil and sustainable management of soil resources. Later, experts on soil science discussed various issues, such as plant growth and soil fertility, carbon storing, soil biodiversity maintenance, organic cultivation practices, etc. Soil health cards were distributed to selected progressive farmers.

Tripura CM launches website for 16th century shrine

Agartala, December 7 : Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Kumar Deb on Saturday launched a website for Tripurasundari shrine - one of the 51 Shakti Peethas of the Hindu religion in the country - providing devotees a chance to catch a glimpse of the temple deity online every day. Deb said people across the globe would come to know about the temple, its history and relevance from the website www.matabaritemple.in, and that in turn would bring more tourists to the state, generate more revenue and subsequently create employment opportunities. The temple, considered to be one of the holiest Hindu shrines, stands on a hillock which resembles the back of a turtle, around 55 km from here. Maharaja Dhanya Manikya built the temple in 1501. Over two lakh devotees throng the temple during Diwali mela every year. A trust headed by the chief minister was formed in 2018, after the BJP-IPFT government came to power in Tripura, for the upkeep and maintenance of the shrine. The CM, after launching the website, said there is provision for making tax-free donation to the temple. The website would offer a glimpse of the deity twice a day, once for an hour from 4 am, and then between 11:30 am - 1 pm, he added.

Heroes of 1962 war in Arunachal: Captain Rudolph David Rosario

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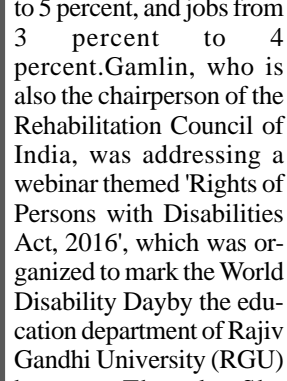
Many Arunachalee old-timers recall the 1962 Sino-India conflict with fear and anger. The Chinese forces entered deep into Arunachal along many axes, like Takising-Limeking, Mechuka/Manigong-Tato, Gelling-Tuting, Kibithoo-Walong axes and the main Tawang-Bomdila-Rupa axis. Many readers are not aware of fierce battles fought by our brave soldiers. One such story is the story of Captain Rudolph David Rosario. During the 1962 Sino-India war, Captain Rosario was leading a company of the 2 Sikh Light Infantry and was deployed at the Chinese border in Tawang area. To have tactical advantage it was important for his unit to assess the condition of a bridge across the river Tawang Chu. On 30 October, 1962, he undertook a patrol to assess the condition of the bridge and to assess whether the enemy was making any attempt to reconstruct it. Captain Rosario proceeded towards the river with a section level force.

On reaching Jang village, his section came under heavy fire of enemy mortars. He realized the danger of involving all members of the patrol for the task and asked his troops to take positions for any eventualities and moved forward alone towards the bridge. As he approached within 500 yards of the



Gamlin urges state govts to prepare standard rules based on Rights of PwDs Act

Rono Hills, December 7 : Secretary of the persons with disabilities (PwD) department under the ministry of social justice & empowerment (MSJE), Shakuntala Doley Gamlin urged the state governments to come up with standard rules based on the Rights of PwDs Act, 2016. Under the act, she said, reservation in admission in institutes of higher education has been increased from 3 percent



to 5 percent, and jobs from 3 percent to 4 percent. Gamlin, who is also the chairperson of the Rehabilitation Council of India, was addressing a webinar themed 'Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016', which was organized to mark the World Disability Day by the education department of Rajiv Gandhi University (RGU) here on Thursday. She highlighted the actions taken by the MSJE for "transforming existing buildings and transport facility into accessible form under the Sugmya Bharat Abhiyan." "To curb stress, anxiety and suicidal tendencies among youths with disabilities, Kiran helpline has been launched, which gives support in 13 Indian languages, and a new national institute in Shehore in Madhya Pradesh is under construction for mental health and rehabilitation," Gamlin informed. The RCI is engaged in manpower development in 17 professional categories, including teacher preparation for children with disabilities (CwD), and has successfully educated 14 lakhs teachers for the field. Gamlin spoke about engaging RGU students in different certificate, diploma and degree courses and collaborating with the RCI "as there is a huge demand for manpower, projected to be

40 lakhs in the future." She assured RGU of all possible help from her ministry for skill development of students with disabilities. Arunachal's Social Justice & Empowerment Director Yumlam Kaha informed that there are more than 33,000 PwDs in Arunachal as per the 2011 census. He informed about the state's intervention in the form of issuing unique IDs to the PwDs and disability pension of Rs

1,700 per month. He said a physiotherapy centre is operational in Naharlagun, a new project for a vocational training institute is underway and a CRC is being set up. He urged RGU to start a department to take care of the education and training of disabled people. RGU VC Prof Saket Kushwaha spoke about the varsity's commitment towards

PwDs, and assured that research proposals pertaining to the issues of such people would be funded with internal resources. He said that accessible infrastructural facilities will be created in a phased manner for students with disabilities. RGU Registrar Dr NT Rikam spoke on injustices done to the PwDs knowingly or unknowingly. He opined that there should be visible changes in the lives of such people, saying "otherwise mere launching of schemes won't help." Founder director of Sense International, India, Dr Akhil Paul, director of the National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities, Dehradun, Dr Himangshu Das, and Bhubaneswar-based RIE (NCERT)'s education department head Prof Gogramma IP also spoke on the key theme.

Manipur CM Biren offers alternative livelihood means for poppy cultivators

Imphal, December 7 : Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Saturday offered various alternative means of livelihood to farmers and villagers of hill districts of the state engaging in illegal poppy cultivation. "The state government is offering various alternative ways to earn livelihood to farmers/villagers instead of cultivating poppy in the hill ranges and farms, Singh wrote in his facebook post today after a consultative meeting here. The chief minister chaired the consultative

meeting of village chiefs of different villages of Ukhrul district, which are affected by destruction of poppy plants under government's 'War on Drugs' campaign. State tribal affairs and hills minister Vungzagin Valle, social welfare minister O Henry, some MLAs from hill districts, DGP LM Khaute and officials of the con-



cerned departments attended the meeting. Plantation and processing of lemongrass as an alternative livelihood for affected villagers was the main agenda of the meeting, a DIPR release said. In a PowerPoint presentation prepared by the tribal affairs and hills department, it was informed that the state government has sought approval of a project costing Rs 68 crore from the Union ministry of tribal affairs for the plantation of lemongrass in 130

hectares of different hill districts of the state. Necessary steps have been taken up to implement a pilot project costing Rs 60 lakh by the Manipur Food Industries Corporation Ltd. to plant lemongrass on 10 hectares of Senapati district and three hectares in Ukhrul district. The state rural development and panchayati raj

(RD&PR) department has also given permission to the plantation of lemongrass under MGNREGA. The project may further expand if it is successful. Singh also directed the officials to convene a joint meeting of all the concerned officials and stakeholders to identify villages where lemongrass plantation may commence. He said that villagers would automatically switch to other occupations if the government provides proper assistance.

Will all countries get covid vaccine?

If last year was the one that gave Covid-19 its name and 2020 was defined by masks, gowns and swabs, 2021 will be the year of the vial. This being a pandemic (from the Greek word for “all people”), that welcome development presents all the usual problems of global differences in wealth, power and equity. Rich countries have already placed their orders. Poor countries can only hope not to be left out. What should be done? The question doesn’t just tap into the debate between nationalists and multilateralists that polarizes many Western countries. It’s also a timeless ethical conundrum. In a famous dialogue by Plato, an Athenian macho named Callicles argues that justice is merely the law of nature — meaning, of the strong. In our pandemic context: Why wouldn’t politicians in rich countries buy up the vaccines and give herd immunity to their own electorates first? Socrates, in that conversation, counters that justice demands cooperation and a view that encompasses strong and weak alike. Translated for today: The world is better off sharing vaccines because survival shouldn’t depend on where you live. But this purely moral case isn’t the only one to be made for cooperation. It turns out that multilateral sharing of vaccines would also save many additional lives. A lab at Northeastern University in Boston has modeled two counterfactual scenarios of what would have happened if a vaccine had been available in March 2020. In one, the first two billion doses are snapped up by rich countries, while only the remaining billion are allocated among all others. In the second, all three billion are distributed from the start to all countries in proportion to their populations. In the first or “uncooperative” case, the vaccine would have averted 33% of global deaths through Sep. 1. In the second or “cooperative” scenario, it would have prevented 61%. That’s a lot of lives saved — even in countries that would have had the vaccine in either scenario. The situation is therefore a bit like the famous Prisoner’s Dilemma in game theory. If all countries cooperate, the world can achieve an optimal outcome and defeat the pandemic soon and decisively. If they don’t cooperate, Covid will drag on and there’ll be many more deaths. The dilemma is that each individual country also has an incentive to “cheat,” relying on others to do the sharing while snatching all the doses it can. But this leaves the others even worse off than if no one cooperated. In game theory, the various outcomes can be tweaked by changing the mathematical parameters. And this — at least in my interpretation — is what the Eurasia Group, a geopolitical risk consultancy, is now trying to do with a new report commissioned by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The nonprofit is a lead sponsor of the ACT-Accelerator, a collaborative effort between governments, companies, scientists, and philanthropists, to test, treatments and of course vaccines to developing countries. The idea is that rich donor countries pitch into a pot that funds distribution in poorer nations. But donor nations have so far ponied up only \$5.1 billion. An additional \$28.2 billion is needed to deliver the shots and other tools as they become available. How can we get all prisoners in this dilemma to cooperate? By showing them that any money paid in will earn them a huge return with no downside, Eurasia Group’s report implies. The group has analyzed the geopolitical and economic costs to rich countries if the pandemic were to rage on in poor ones. These include the obvious — the impact on the Japanese economy of the Summer Olympics being cancelled, say — and the oblique, such as the effects on international demand for German exports or U.S. fracking gas. Overall, Eurasia Group found that the economic benefit of controlling the pandemic everywhere would be \$153 billion next year for the ten top donor nations, or \$466 billion over the next five years. That’s more than ten times the amount ACT-Accelerator asks for. Moreover, if you compare the ACT-A pot to the gargantuan domestic stimulus programs rich countries have passed, it starts looking almost trivial. Rich countries have a lot of big decisions to make in the coming weeks — whether and how fast to approve which vaccine, how to allocate scarce shots in the domestic population, how to fight disinformation by anti-vaxx conspiracy theorists, and so forth. These fights may get nasty, as I predicted in July. But the decision about whether to include poor countries in our common human struggle against a pandemic shouldn’t be so hard. If there’s any good argument for not fully and immediately funding the ACT-Accelerator, I have yet to see it.

Your brain has an in-built bias, It blocks out contradictory facts

A rumor started circulating back in 2008 that Barack Obama was not born in the United States. At the time, I was serving as chair of the Hawaii Board of Health. The director and deputy director of health, both appointed by a Republican governor, inspected Obama’s birth certificate in the state records and certified that it was real. I would have thought that this evidence would settle the matter, but it didn’t. Many people thought the birth certificate was a fabricated document. Today, many people still believe that President Obama was not born in the U.S. More recently, I was listening to a “Science Friday” podcast on the anti-vaccination movement. A woman called in who didn’t believe that vaccines were safe, despite overwhelming scientific evidence that they are. The host asked her how much proof she would need in order to believe that vaccines were safe. Her answer: No amount of scientific evidence could change her mind. As a psychologist, I was bothered, but not shocked, by this exchange. There are several well-known mechanisms in human psychology that enable people to continue to hold tight to beliefs even in the face of contradictory information. In its early days, the science of psychology assumed that people would make rational decisions. But over the decades, it’s become clear that many decisions people make — about choices ranging from romantic partners and finances to risky health behaviors like unsafe sex and health-promoting behaviors — are not made rationally. Instead, human minds have a tendency toward several cognitive biases. These are systematic errors in the way you think about the world. Given the complexity of the world around you, your brain cuts a few corners to help you process complex information quickly. For example, the availability bias refers to the tendency to use information you can quickly recall. This is helpful when you’re ordering ice cream at a place with 50 flavors; you don’t need to think about all of them, just one you recently tried and



liked. Unfortunately these shortcuts can mean you end up at a nonrational decision. One form of cognitive bias is called cognitive dissonance. This is the feeling of discomfort you can experience when your beliefs are not in line with your actions or new information. When in this state, people can reduce their dissonance in one of two ways: changing their beliefs to be in line with the new information or interpreting the new information in a way that justifies their original beliefs. In many cases, people choose the latter, whether consciously or not. For example, maybe you think of yourself as active, not at all a couch potato — but you spend all of Saturday lying on the couch bingeing reality TV. You can either start thinking about yourself in a new way or justify your behavior, maybe by saying you had a really busy week and need to rest up for your workout tomorrow. The confirmation bias is another process that helps you justify your beliefs. It involves favoring

JAY MADDOCK

information that supports your beliefs and downplaying or ignoring information to the contrary. Some researchers have called this “my side blindness” — people see the flaws in arguments that are contradictory to their own but are unable to see weaknesses in their own side. Picture fans of a football team that went 7-9 for the season, arguing that their team is actually really strong, spotting failings in other teams but not in theirs. With the decline of mass media over the past few decades and the increase in niche media and social media, it’s become easier to surround yourself with messages you already agree with while minimizing your exposure to messages you don’t. These information bubbles reduce cognitive dissonance but also make it harder to change your mind when you are wrong. It can be especially hard to change certain beliefs that are central to your — that is, who you think you are. For example, if you believe you’re a kind person and you cut someone

off in traffic, instead of thinking that maybe you’re not all that nice, it’s easier to think the other person was driving like a jerk. This relationship between beliefs and self-concept can be reinforced by affiliations with groups like political parties, cults or other like-minded thinkers. These groups are often belief bubbles where the majority of members believe the same thing and repeat these beliefs to one another, strengthening the idea that their beliefs are right. Researchers have found that people generally think they are more knowledgeable about certain issues than they really are. This has been demonstrated across a variety of studies looking at vaccinations, Russia’s invasion of the Ukraine and even how toilets work. These ideas then get passed from person to person without being based on fact. For example, 70% of Republicans say they don’t believe the 2020 presidential election was free and fair despite a lack of any evidence of widespread voter fraud. Belief bubbles and the defenses against cognitive dissonance can be hard to break down. And they can have important downstream effects. For instance, these psychological mechanisms affect the ways people have chosen whether or not to follow public health guidelines around social distancing and wearing masks during the COVID-19 pandemic, sometimes with deadly consequences. Changing people’s minds is difficult. Given the confirmation bias, evidence-based arguments counter to what someone already believes are likely to be discounted. The best way to change a mind is to start with yourself. With as open a mind as you can summon, think about why you believe what you do. Do you really understand the issue? Could you think about it in a different way? As a professor, I like to have my students debate ideas from the side that they personally disagree with. This tactic tends to lead to deeper understanding of the issues and makes them question their beliefs. Give it an honest try yourself. You might be surprised by where you end up.

India’s Zoom wedding experiment fizzled out, It didn’t have that four-day hangover

What’s an Indian wedding without drunken parking lot hangs, mind-numbing bhangra benders, mountains of laddoos and marigold, being photographed while eating, placating the baraatis and the metaphoric naraaz fufaji? Zoom’s oh-so-polite and sanitised weddings just didn’t do it for us. It didn’t have that four-day hangover. Indians and weddings have a relationship like no other, one that not even a global pandemic can spoil. And

to pretend it didn’t exist. But as lockdowns forced people to stay indoors, and the mahurat dates continued to line up, Indians were forced to forego their mega-event shaadi plans and opt for Zoom weddings instead. For once, brides and grooms didn’t have to meet and greet thousands of guests, parents didn’t have to shell out a pretty penny on tent houses, hotels, and caterers, and newlyweds

Indian wedding. But as the pandemic seems to have slowly become ‘old news’ (even though India’s Covid rising tally continues to haunt us), our band baja baraats are back. And in some cases, they’re bringing in tow frighteningly large numbers of guests — see this recent video from Gujarat. Weddings in India are no spontaneous, low-key affair. They are planned months in advance, and involve a lot of investment. At the start

decided to go right ahead. And with a booming telecom industry and a lot of free data, many decided to opt for virtual weddings. For instance, a groom in Mumbai married his fiancé who was sitting in Bareilly, while the priest was chanting mantras in Raipur.

TINA DAS

While one couple ensured that all their ‘Zoom guests’ could witness the ceremony in its, another groom decided to borrow outfits from his brother-in-law and replace the traditional juttis with the more comfortable Crocs. Recorded dance performances and virtual haldi application sessions also ensured everyone had the closest experience to a ‘real-life’ wedding. So, with like everything else in India, the jugaad instinct kicked in and people ‘rocked’ Zoom weddings. The Indian

wedding industry is valued at roughly \$40-50 billion, but that amount reduces drastically in the Covid world where you can easily pull off a wedding in a few thousand rupees. A typical Zoom meeting allows up to 100 guests. But if you wish to have around 500 guests on Zoom, you will have to pay an additional Rs 3,791 for the month. Which would almost be equal to the price of three plates of food at an Indian wedding. The math made the Zoom weddings pretty appealing, not to mention the ‘world is ending’ feeling was all too real throughout the lockdown. Add to that, a drastically reduced number of ‘real’ guests, elimination of the number of ceremonies and events — you could be saving yourself from Covid, and not have to sell a kidney to fund your own wedding. With the Ministry of Home Affairs guidelines restricted the number of wedding guests in Unlock 3 and 4 to up to 50, weddings became small intimate affairs. For a while, the ‘small wedding’ of former Karnataka CM Kumaraswamy’s son and Bigg Boss 2 winner Ashutosh Kaushi may have grabbed headlines back in April. But more recently, it’s the never-ending #NehuDaVyaah ceremonies, of singers Neha Kakkar and Rohanpreet Singh’s wedding, and music maestro Udit Narayan’s son Aditya Narayan’s nuptials with actor Shweta Agarwal that have grabbed eyeballs for being lavish affairs. Even though Covid-19 protocols were reportedly followed during both the weddings, the social-media frenzy and the absence of masks in most of the images almost made one believe that coronavirus has already

been defeated. And with celebs hosting weddings, #YOLO becomes a very real emotion among the mass. Even with Covid-19 restrictions in place, and some periods of relief when places like Delhi allowed up to 200 guests for weddings, social gatherings continue to be high-risk scenarios for contracting the virus. Despite the mandate of masks and downloading the Aarogya Setu app, and mandatory temperature checks, most functions don’t see many people follow precautions, as I recently found out at a wedding I attended. While masks were in place, social distancing, especially during the baraat procession, was not strictly followed. The venue had no one checking temperatures of the attendees, or enquiring if the Aarogya Setu app was in place. Sanitisation, too, was not carried out in any manner. Weddings flouting Covid norms and hosting more than the allowed number of guests have accelerated the spread of Covid infections. And with announcements from Moderna, Pfizer and AstraZeneca about the possibility of vaccines arriving by 2021, caution has been thrown to the wind. Many have even ‘escaped’ to destination weddings, in smaller towns and scenic locales such as Udaipur, Jaipur, and Manesar where rules might not be as stringent, or one can call more guests to be part of the wedding. In fact, when Delhi reintroduced restrictions in the end of November, by putting a cap of a maximum of 50 guests, many made a beeline for Gurugram, which still allowed up to 200 guests.



when the pandemic hit India bang in the middle of the wedding season back in March, our first reaction was

could focus on what truly matters — their new union, not organising and then reeling from a big fat

of the pandemic, many families did postpone or cancel their impending celebrations, while many

Biden vowed to restore standards. Democrats saying Trump was worse isn’t the way forward

Of all the nominees President-elect Joe Biden has so far put forward, Neera Tanden is the one most likely to lose a confirmation battle. She has harshly attacked some Republican senators whose votes she may now need to become the head of the Office of Management and Budget. After the Senate voted to put Brett Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court, she issued a press release accusing Senator Susan Collins, the Maine Republican, of “offering a pathetically bad faith argument as cover for President Trump’s vicious attacks on survivors of sexual assault.” Senator Robert Portman, a Republican from Ohio, says her tweets have shown too much partisanship and not enough judgment. Tanden has deleted many of her more peppery tweets during the last month. The counterargument from Tanden’s supporters is obvious: You

Republicans are upset about tweets now? President Donald Trump has been far more incendiary, offensive and downright nutty in his Twitter feed, and Republican officeholders have gotten used to averting their eyes from it. Washington Post columnist Jennifer Rubin has gone so far as to say that since Portman can’t really be upset about Tanden’s comportment, he

RAMESH PONNURU

must really be motivated by the desire “to defeat a woman of color.” It seems more plausible to assume that Republicans, like most people, don’t like it when they’re insulted. The debate over Tanden has low stakes for Biden. If she makes it through, she won’t be the first, or even the fifth, OMB director to have spent time in the political trenches. If she doesn’t, Biden

will surely get someone else who has roughly the same outlook to fill the position. But it’s a preview of what is very likely to be a running theme in politics during the Biden administration. Republicans will object to something: They’ll claim the Democrats are violating norms, or lying, or acting unethically, or seizing too much power for the president.

Democrats will respond that such complaints, coming from Republicans who supported Trump, are too hypocritical to take seriously. That indignant, dismissive Democratic response will be natural, and it will have some truth to it. Progressive activists will say that it would be unfair and self-defeating for Democrats to hold Biden to a higher standard than Republicans demanded of Trump — and they’ll have a point, too. Tanden herself



expressed that sentiment in one of her deleted tweets, saying that “when they go low, going high doesn’t f***cking work” (demure asterisks in the original). But Biden campaigned on restoring standards. Bringing dignity and decency back to the White House was his central promise.

Thatcher or Anna moment? Why Modi's choice on farmers' protest will shape future politics

New Delhi, December 7 : Has the farmers' blockade of Delhi brought Narendra Modi to his Thatcher moment or Anna moment? It is up to Modi to answer that question as India waits. It will write the course of India's political economy, even electoral politics, in years to come. For clarity, a Thatcher mo-

compare it with the anti-CAA movement. That suited the BJP politically by deepening polarisation; this one does the opposite. It's a cruel thing to say, but you can't politically make "Muslims" out of the Sikhs. That "Khalistani hand" nonsense was tried, and it bombed. It was as much of a misstep as lead-



ment would mean when a big, audacious and risky push for reform, that threatens established structures and entrenched vested interests, brings an avalanche of opposition. That is what Margaret Thatcher faced with her radical shift to the economic Right. She locked horns with it, won, and became the Iron Lady. If she had given in under pressure, she'd just be a forgettable footnote in world history. Anna moment is easier to understand. It is more recent. It was also located in Delhi. Unlike Thatcher who fought and crushed the unions and the British Left, Manmohan Singh and his UPA gave in to Anna Hazare, holding a special Parliament session, going down to him on their knees, implicitly owning up to all big corruption charges. Singh ceded all moral authority and political capital. By the time Anna returned victorious for the usual rest & recreation at the Jindal fat farm in Bangalore, the Manmohan Singh government's goose had been cooked. Anna was victorious not because he got the Lokpal Bill. Because that isn't what he and his 'managers' were after. Their mission was to destroy UPA-2. They succeeded. Of course, helped along by the spinelessness as well as guilelessness of the UPA. Modi and his counsels would do well to look at both instances with contrasting outcomes as they confront the biggest challenge in their six-and-a-half years. Don't

ers of the Congress calling Anna Hazare "steeped in corruption, head to toe". Remember that principle in marketing - nothing fails more spectacularly than an obvious lie. As this Khalistan slur was. The anti-CAA movement involved Muslims and some Leftist intellectual groups. You could easily isolate and even physically crush them. We are merely stating a political reality. The Modi government did not even see the need to invite them for talks. With the farmers, the response has been different. Besides, this crisis has come on top of multiple others that are defying resolution. The Chinese are not about to end their dharna in Ladakh, the virus is raging and the economy, downhill for six quarters, has been in a free fall lately. Because politically, economically, strategically and morally the space is now so limited, this becomes the Modi government's biggest challenge. Modi has a complaint that he is given too little credit as an economic reformer. That he has brought in the bankruptcy law, GST, PSU bank consolidation, FDI relaxations and so on, but still too many people, especially the most respected economists, do not see him as a reformer. There is no denying that he has done some political heavy lifting with these reformist steps. But some, especially GST, have lost their way because of poor groundwork and execution. And

certainly, all that the sudden demonetisation did was to break the economy's momentum. His legacy, so far, is of slowing down and then reversing India's growth. Having inherited an economy where 8 per cent growth was the new normal, now RBI says it will be 8 per cent, but in the negative. It isn't the record anybody wanted in his seventh year, with India's per capita GDP set to fall below Bangladesh's, according to an October IMF estimate. The pandemic brought Modi the "don't waste a crisis" opportunity. If Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh with a minority government could use the economic crisis of 1991 to carve out a good place for themselves in India's economic history, why couldn't he now? That is how a bunch of audacious moves were announced in a kind of pandemic package. The farm reform laws are among the most spectacular of these. Followed by labour laws. This is comparable now to the change Margaret Thatcher had dared to bring. She wasn't dealing with multiple other crises like Modi now, but then she also did not have the kind of almost total sway that Modi has over national politics. Any big change causes fear and protests. But this is at a scale that concerns 60 per cent of our population, connected with farming in different ways. That he and his government could have done a better job of selling it to the farmers is a fact, but that is in the past. The Anna movement has greater parallels, physically and visually, with the current situation. Like India Against Corruption, the farmers' protest also positions itself in the non-political space, denying its platform to any politician. Leading lights of popular culture are speaking and singing for it. Again, there is widespread popular sympathy as farmers are seen as virtuous, and victims. Just like the activists. Its supporters are using social media just as brilliantly as Anna's. There are some differences too. Unlike UPA-2, this prime minister is his own master. He doesn't need to defer to someone in another Lutyens' bungalow. He has personal popularity enormously higher than Manmohan Singh's, great facility with words and a record of consistently winning elections for his party. But this farmers' stir looks ugly for him. His politics is built so centrally on the pillar of "messaging" that pictures of salt-of-the-earth farmers with weather-beaten faces, cooking and

sharing 'langars', offering these to all comers, then refusing government hospitality at the talks and eating their own food brought from the gurdwara while sitting on the floor, and the widespread derision of the "Khalistani" charge is just the kind of messaging he doesn't want. In his and his party's scheme of things, the message is the politics. Thatcher had no such issues, and Manmohan Singh had no chips to play with. How does Modi deal with this now? The temptation to retreat will be great. You can defer, withdraw the bills, send them to the select committee, embrace the farmers and buy time. It isn't as if the Modi-Shah BJP doesn't know how to retreat. It did so on the equally bold land acquisition bill, reeling under the 'suit-boot ki sarkar' punch. So, what about another 'tactical retreat'? It will be a disaster, and worse than Manmohan Singh's to the Anna movement. At the heart of Modi's political brand proposition is a 'strong' government. It was early days when he retreated on the land acquisition bill. The lack of a Rajya Sabha majority was an alibi. Another retreat now will shatter that 'strongman' image. The opposition will finally see him as fallible. At the same time, farmers blocking the capital makes for really bad pictures. These aren't nutcases of 'Occupy Wall Street'. Farmers are at the heart of India. Plus, they have the time. Anybody with elementary familiarity with farming knows that once wheat and mustard, which is most of the rabi crop in the north, is planted, there isn't that much to do until early April. You can't evict them as in the many Shaheen Baghs, and you can't let them hang on. Even a part surrender will finish your authority. Because then protesters against labour reform will block the capital. That's why how Modi answers this Thatcher or Anna moment question will determine national politics going ahead. Our wish, of course, is that he will choose Thatcher over Anna. It will be a tragedy if even Modi were to lose his nerve over his boldest reforms.

Unsterilised injections caused 2017 HIV 'outbreak' in UP's Unnao, study finds

New Delhi, December 7 : An outbreak of HIV cases at the Integrated Counselling and Testing Center (ICTC) located in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao district in 2017, was caused by the use of unsterilised injection equipment, a study has found. Researchers at the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)-National AIDS Research Institute, Uttar Pradesh State AIDS Control Society and National AIDS Control Organisation conducted the study from September through December 2018, across the three UP districts of Premganj, Karimuddinpur and Chakmeerpur. At least 46 cases of HIV were reported over a period of 10 months, starting July 2017, after several rounds of screening were conducted in Unnao. The cases were linked to a quack who had reused syringes, infecting patients. The findings of the study were published on 4 December in Plos One, an open access, peer-reviewed scientific journal. Talking about the sample size, the study reads: "We conducted a case-control study to identify factors associated with this increased detection; 33 cases and 125 controls were enrolled. Cases were individuals detected HIV sero-reactive (presence of anti-bodies) during November 2017-April 2018 from three locations namely Premganj, Karimuddinpur and Chakmeerpur in the Bangamau block of the district of Unnao. Controls hailed from the same geographical setting and tested HIV sero-nonreactive either in health camps or at ICTC centers from where the cases were detected." One of the authors of the study, Dr Samiran Panda, director, ICMR-National AIDS Research Institute, Pune said, "The study has been critical to understanding the outbreak and the challenges associated with unsafe injection practices. A comprehensive approach to tackle the problem should be adopted with interventions like increasing access of auto-disabled (single use) syringes and needles, empowering the local commu-

nities and implementing effective regulatory practices across care settings." According to UN data for India, there were 21 lakh people living with HIV in 2017. The same year, 88,000 new HIV cases were recorded, while 69,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses. Upon investigation of the cases and controls, the study found that those infected with HIV fell sick more often, exposing them further to the risk of unsterilised needles and spreading the disease. "A significantly greater proportion of cases sought professional help for fever, body ache, common cold and cough experienced in the last one year



compared to controls; plausibly indicating more illness experiences in them. We also compared cases (PLHIV) against controls regarding receipt of intravenous fluid and intramuscular injection during treatment-seeking within the last five years, which turned out to be significantly different. This difference could be explained by the greater proneness of PLHIV to fall sick compared to controls," the study said. Cases of similar outbreaks due to use of unsterilised equipment were also found in Pakistan and Cambodia. These cases were linked to use of unsafe injection during treatment, contaminated blood transfusion and male circumcision with equipment that had not been sterilised. The study suggested that availability of auto-disabled syringes and needles, empowerment of local communities and effective regulatory practices across care settings will serve as important intervention measures in order to curb the spread of the disease.

Japan's Hayabusa2 spacecraft returns samples of asteroid Ryugu to Earth

Bengaluru, December 7 : Samples collected from the asteroid Ryugu, about 300 million kilometres away, by Japan's Hayabusa2 spacecraft arrived safely near Woomera in Australia, in the early hours of Sunday. Samples of both surface dust and material from below the surface, that was stirred up when the spacecraft had fired two impactors into the asteroid, were collected. The probe had collected the samples in the first half of 2019. The Hayabusa2 stored them in a separate sealed container that was detached from the craft about 220,000 km from Earth and subsequently landed in the Australian outback using parachutes. The Royal Australian Air Force tracked the 16 kg-container's beacon in the wee hours of Sunday morning. The container was taken to a nearby facility for a quick analysis before being flown to Japan. Hayabusa2 had left the one kilometre-wide Ryugu to return to Earth in November 2019. The mission follows in

the footsteps of the first Hayabusa mission, which had returned samples from the asteroid Itokawa in 2010. Ryugu's samples will be split between JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency), the



US space agency NASA, and other international research institutes. Hayabusa-2, which was launched in 2014, still retains about 30 kg of its xenon propellant from its original 66 kg. The spacecraft is now on an extended mission with two new asteroid targets, a fly-by of (98943) 2001 CC21 in July 2026 and a rendezvous with 1998 KY26 in July 2031. 2001 CC21, a rare L-

type asteroid, will be photographed in detail during a high-speed fly-by. 1998 KY26, however, will be the first target that is a fast rotating micro-asteroid. Materials from asteroids are considered very precious for research as these small bodies were leftovers from the early formation of our solar system. These have since remained pristine and unchanged, because asteroids and other smaller bodies did not undergo the same metamorphic changes that planets did. Analysis of the composition of these asteroids and other smaller bodies gives insights into the formation, evolution, and the likely future of our solar system. Asteroid samples are important candidates for studying both the origin of water as well as origin of life on Earth. It was long believed that comets deposited the first water droplets on Earth, but recent findings have shown that asteroids carried water to early Earth.

AAP supports farmers' Bharat Bandh call too, accuses Modi govt of 'delaying tactics'

New Delhi, December 7 :

Delhi Minister Gopal Rai on Sunday announced that Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has decided to support the farmers-led Bharat Bandh slated to take place on December 8. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal has urged his party officials and workers to support the bandh. "Aam Aadmi Party's convenor and Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal Ji has urged party officials and workers to support farmers-led Bharat Bandh on December 8. Ours is an agrarian country, I would also urge the people to show their support as well," Gopal Rai tweeted. While slamming the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Gopal Rai said that "For several days, farmers are out there protesting against the farm

laws brought by the BJP government. They are forced to sleep on the streets during this winter season. In the name of discussion, the government is using delaying tactics." "At a time when the farmers are asking the government to repeal the laws, they are still conveying the benefits of these laws. Farmers are the ones who cultivate crops, they know what is good for them and what is bad," Rai said. Besides AAP, Congress has also decided to support the Bharat Bandh in support of the farmers protesting against the Centre's new agriculture laws. Farmers have been protesting at the borders of the national capital for the past eleven days now

against the three farm laws. The Centre is engaging with farmers to settle their differences. The 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.



2 minor girls from PoK detained after crossing LoC in Jammu & Kashmir's Poonch

Jammu, December 7 : Two minor sisters from Pakistan-occupied Kash-

mir were detained early Sunday after they inadvertently crossed the

Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, officials



said. Laiba Zabair (17) and her younger sister Sana Zabair (13), residents of Abbaspur in Kahuta Tehsil of PoK, were noticed moving into this side by Indian troops deployed along the LoC in Poonch sector, a defence spokesperson said. "Own troops deployed along the LoC, having detected the crossing, exercised complete restraint to prevent any harm to the teenagers," he said. The spokesperson said that efforts are being made for their early repatriation.

Stop talking to media without permission - Prasar Bharati tells employees for the 3rd time

New Delhi, December 7 : Prasar Bharati, the parent body of state-owned broadcasters Doordarshan (DD) and All India Radio (AIR), has issued yet another order barring officials from interacting with the media without its permission, stating that lapses to this effect have been viewed "very seriously". The fresh missive was issued on 3 December, after two similar orders issued in November 2019 and then on 11 February this year. The new order, accessed by ThePrint, states that it has been brought to the notice of the Prasar Bharati Secretariat that various officers and employees of AIR and DD are briefing and interacting with the press and media on issues concerning the

organisation. "Prasar Bharati had earlier issued clear directions (that) no briefing to the press and media be given by the officers of DD/AIR without permission from the com-



petent authority. This lapse has been viewed very seriously," the order said. "In cases where briefings are required, such cases may be addressed to ADG (Marketing), PB

Secretariat, in advance and prior approval may be taken before giving such briefings." A Prasar Bharati official told ThePrint this order was issued again after some instances had come to light where AIR and DD staff issued statements to the media without taking due approval. "This was specific to on-record instances that have come to light," the official said. A second official from the organisation said the leakage of information to the media pertaining to some of Prasar Bharati's latest decisions, such as rationalisation of radio transmitters, could have triggered

the move. ThePrint reached Prasar Bharati CEO Shashi Shekhar Vempati for a comment through WhatsApp, but there was no response till the time of publication of this report. In December last year, days after Prasar Bharati had issued the first order, Vempati had told ThePrint that in any corporate house, communication has to be streamlined and has to follow a proper corporate policy. "The advisory issued is part of that; there is nothing unusual about it," he had said. Vempati had also tweeted about the matter, saying authorised corporate spokespersons will speak, like in any modern functioning media corporation, after taking due approval.

Contd. From Page 1

First phase of BTC election ended

polls separately. The BPF has fielded candidates in 37 seats while the BJP is contesting 26 and supporting Independent candidates in the other seats. Apart from the BJP and BPF, opposition Congress and All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), which have a tie-up for the assembly polls, are contesting 20 seats. The other prime contenders are United Peoples' Party Liberal (UPPL), which is contesting all 40 seats, and Gana Surakha Party (GSP) of Kokrajhar MP Nava Sarania, which is fighting in 35 seats. Counting of votes will take place on December 12. According to the administration, around 17 per cent voter turnout has been recorded in first two hours polling for the first phase of BTC election. The second phase of BTC elections in Kokrajhar and Chirang district will be held on December 10 and counting of votes will be held on December 12. After signing the Bodo peace accord early this year and formation of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), it is the first election in BTAD. Ahead of the assembly polls in Assam which is scheduled in 2021, the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) election is being seen as the semi-final of 2021. The BJP is contesting against its own ally party Bodoland People's Front (BPF) in this election. BPF is an ally party of the BJP-led Assam government since 2016 and BPF has ruled Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) which covered four districts Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri in last one and half decades.

Names Missing From Voters' List

During the first phase of voting in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections on Monday, voters turned up to cast their votes across 21 constituencies, however, the electorate faced major disappointment after their names were missing from the voters list. 48 eligible voters present in polling station No.30 at Digheli Primary School of number 24 Mushalpur constituency found their names to be missing from the electoral roll. The deprived and agitated citizens protested at the polling station against such inaccuracy and errors. Furthermore, the angry voters even tried stalling the polling at the booth and demanded for re-polling after their names are inserted.

PRAMOD BORODRIVES TRACTOR TO POLLING BOOTH

Voting underway for the first phase of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) election in Assam amid tight security arrangement. In the morning hours United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) president Pramod Boro reached the polling booth to cast his vote for the first phase of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections by driving a tractor, the party symbol of the UPPL. While coming out of the polling station Boro said, "From last 17 years Hagrama Mohilary has done nothing for the people of Bodoland rather cheated them every time. And that's the reason people have come out to vote for a change irrespective of caste, creed, or religion. People have come from different parts of the northeastern states just to cast their vote." Boro also added, "People have been calling me from the morning and letting me know that they are with UPPL and they have traveled all the way from Shillong, Jorhat, Guwahati, etc just to see a change. And I believe we will definitely win this election and people will see the change". Polling for 21 council constituencies in Baksa and Udalguri district under the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) began at 7-30 am on Monday and will end at 4-30 pm. Voters queued up since early morning to cast their votes even before polling began at 7.30 am. The first phase of the elections is being covered in Udalguri and Baksa. On Thursday, the second phase would be held in the districts of Kokrajhar and Chirang. The counting of votes will take place on December 12.

Bollywood comes out in support of protesting

I stand in solidarity with every farmer in our country. #JaiKisaan. "Hansal Mehta responded to Vivek Agnihotri on Twitter and wrote, "Mock them as always. Dont listen to them. As always." Agnihotri has shared the video of Deep Sidhu talking with policemen to suggest that the protesting farmers were not really farmers. Richa Chadha shared, "For those who are wondering what the farmers are protesting, read Downwards arrow India has been facing an agrarian crisis for the past 2 decades, 12000 farmers commit suicide every year, that's over 30/day! And yet, this is the biggest protest by people who put food on our plates." Priyanka Zinta tweeted, "My heart goes out 2 the farmers & their families protesting in the cold in this pandemic. They are the soldiers of the soil that keep our country going. I sincerely hope the talks between the farmers & govt yield positive results soon & all is resolved. #Farmerprotests #Rabrakha." Anubhav Sinha, whose cinema of late has tackled societal issues like domestic violence and caste-based discrimination, tweeted (translated from Hindi), "Ravi, Jhelum, Sutlej, Chenab, Beas have something special in the water of these five rivers. Zindabad," referring to the five rivers of Punjab due to which the state is called that.

Assam Girl honoured by Indian

tournaments, Indian children never cease to amaze. Budding whiz kids of the country have gained fame both in the country and abroad. One such amazing feat has been achieved by a youngster in the Self Defense Training field too. Fifteen-year-old Minakshi Singha, a girl from Pandu of Guwahati city, Assam, has been conferred "Indian Excellency Award" by Indian Book of Record for her excellent contribution in the field of Self Defense Training. The award has been conferred to Minakshi for her continues effort from the last year to provide free Self Defense Training to 120 girls in her area. Minakshi Singha is a Wushu athlete and she organizes free self-defence training workshop for girls every Sunday in the Maligaon for last one year.

Actor Divya Bhatnagar dies of

cheats, lies... I will miss you divu and tu bhi jaant i thi i loved you and cared for you... Badi tu thi par bacchi bhi tu hi thi... God bless your soul. Jahan bhi hai tu abhi bas khush reh. You will be missed & remembered. I love you @divyabhatnagarofficial. Too soon to be gone my friend... Om shanty. "Her friend Yuvraj Raghuvanshi told Spotboyee, "Divya passed away at 3am in the night. She had been shifted to Seven Hills Hospital and was suffering from breathing issues since 2 and at 3 doctor declared her death. Its a big shock for me and her family. May her soul rest in peace." Late in November, Divya had shared a screenshot from one of her video calls on Instagram and wrote, "Hi my Instagram family. Pray for my speedy recovery. I love you all." Divya's brother had told Times of India on December 1, "We have shifted Divya to another hospital. She was hospitalised on November 26 and tested positive for COVID-19 on November 28. She was already suffering from pneumonia, which has worsened owing to coronavirus. Initially, she was on non-invasive ventilation to support her breathing, but is on ventilator now because of all the exertion of shifting hospitals. We want her to recover from the pneumonia, which has spread."

Bharat Bandh today: Banking, transport services may be affected

and Farm Services Act, 2020 and Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020. The farmers claim that these laws end the minimum support price system in the future and will give corporates total control over agriculture sector. Bharat Bandh tomorrow: Traders association CIAT, transport union AITWA make big announcement. On the other hand, the government has projected these laws as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove the middlemen and help in the growth of the income of the famers. What may be affected during Bharat Bandh: Delhiites are expected to face trouble as several auto and taxi unions in the national capital have decided to join Bharat Bandh. However, many other unions have decided not to support the bandh. Delhi Taxi Tourist Transporters Association President Sanjay Samrat said in a statement that several unions, including Delhi State Taxi Cooperative Society, and Kaumi Ekta Welfare Association will join the strike on December 8. However, Rajender Soni, general secretary of Delhi Auto Rickshaw Sangh, and Delhi Pradesh Taxi Union said that many "important" auto, taxi and last mile vehicle driver unions will not join the strike. "We fully sympathise with the farmers struggle and support their demand. But the drivers of autos, taxis and Gramin Sewa and other last mile vehicles are already hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and can not afford to strike now," Soni said. Banking Services may also be affected on December 8 as several bank unions have expressed their solidarity with farmers. It is likely that the supply of milk, vegetables would be affected during the Bharat Bandh.

CAA process to begin in Jan-Feb: BJP

play a decisive role in at least 30-40 Assembly seats, and favoured the BJP in the 2019 LS polls. To offset the minority vote that mostly remained with the TMC - some went to the Congress - the BJP aims to consolidating its Matua and tribal votes. Last month, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said during his visit to the state that the implementation of the CAA was just a matter of time. BJP national president JP Nadda had made similar comments the month before. The BJP is keen to hold on to the votes of the sizable Matua community, most of whose members are refugees from Bangladesh. The community had voted in favour of the BJP in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, helping the saffron party register its best-ever performance in Bengal. A section of the state BJP leadership is apprehensive that delaying the implementation of the new citizenship law might turn the community against it. Last month, BJP MP Santanu Thakur said he would write to Shah, requesting him to quickly implement the law in Bengal to ensure that Matuas get citizenship rights. Thakur is a member of the community. Matuas have been migrating to West Bengal since the 1950s, mostly because of religious persecution. The community, with an estimated population of three million in the state, influences at least four Lok Sabha seats and 30-40 Assembly seats in Nadia, North and South 24 Parganas districts.

Curfew clamped along Assam-

stated that no person shall carry on any vehicle, handcart, rickshaw or any other modes of transport, sugar, rice, wheat, edible oil, SK Oil, salt etc between sunset to sunrise within 5 km belt inside the district boundary of Cachar along Bangladesh border. Permit may be issued in this regard by the Circle Officer, Katigorah, who will only provide relaxation for specific purpose after verification from the local supply officials. The order comes into force for a two-month period from the date of issue.

Guwahati's first Fifa approved

Barua, President, All India Sport Journalists' Federation and Mr. Kamalakanta Loitongbam, N.F. Railways Coach, AFC B License and AIFF D License instructor along with Mr Siddhartha Sankar Deka, Co-Founder of Guwahati City Football Club (GCFC), GCFC Co-Founders Kaustab Chakraborty and Darick Ranjan Deka also graced the occasion with their presence. A U9 exhibition match between GCFC Academy and Kaziranga Football Academy was also played where a wave of crowd and media adorned the event as well. The objective behind the setting up of an artificial turf was to boost grassroots football infrastructure in the state, and provide a safe, world-class facility for the kids. The grand opening of the turf was marked by grassroots exhibition match on Sunday. It is a joint venture of father-son duo, Hiren Barman and Jiten Barman. The project was brought to life by manager and IIM graduate in Sports Management, Sajad Siddique, who intends to take forward his vision of grassroots development in the field of sports, especially football in association with Guwahati City Football Club (GCFC).

Amid farmers' protest, PM Modi's pitch on

Armed groups in Myanmar -- including the United Wa State Army and the Arakan Army, which was designated a terrorist organization this year -- are acting as Beijing's proxies by supplying weapons and providing hideouts to insurgent groups in India's northeastern states, according to Indian officials with knowledge of the situation, who asked not to be identified. Security forces launched a search operation after a militant allegedly opened fire on CRPF personnel posted at the Narbal crossing on the Srinagar-Gulmarg road here on Monday, officials said. Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) troopers at the crossing claimed that they signalled a driver of a car to stop, but he drove past and stopped after a short distance, they said. The Prime Minister said his government is carrying out "holistic reforms". "Earlier, reforms used to happen in a piecemeal manner, or keeping in mind some sectors and departments," Modi said. The PM said the reforms carried out in recent past have infused self-confidence in the country, adding that people will be satisfied when they go through the "finer details." "This confidence has been seen in every election in the recent past. A glimpse of this confidence is seen in the election results in every part of the country, including UP," he said. The PM said in recent years the poor and the middle class have showered their "unprecedented blessings" on the efforts of the government. He said their support and the small joys experienced by the countrymen "gives me the courage to do new things and take new initiatives". Modi said his government intends to solve the festering problems faced by people, make life easy, increase investment and ensure the maximum use of modern technology. He said a major problem in the country's infrastructure sector was that new projects were announced but not much attention was given on how they will be funded. Dynastic looters and scamsters are putting road blocks as they worry that if peoples lives are improved and country progressed. Various farmers' organisations have hit the streets to protest the new laws. Large number of farmers, mostly from Punjab, have been camping at several entry points to Delhi, demanding that the three new laws be withdrawn. The government has so far held five rounds of talks with farmer leaders, but the deadlock is yet to be broken. In the last round of talks, the government has agreed to amend some provisions in the laws. However the details are not yet known. The next round of talks is scheduled for Wednesday.

Govt considering accelerated review of Oxford, Pfizer covid vaccines

Pune, December 7 : Serum Institute and Pfizer have applied for emergency use authorization of its coronavirus vaccine over the weekend. The Indian government is considering reviewing Pfizer Inc and AstraZeneca's vaccines for emergency use on an accelerated basis, Reuters reported, citing a top government official. This has raised hopes that inoculation efforts could begin within weeks. "We are in the process of reviewing. It is an accelerated reviewing process, which is there for Serum too," the government official said. "All applications are accelerated. It is the need of the hour." Serum Institute, which is making AstraZeneca's Oxford COVID-19 vaccine in India, had lodged the first formal application for emergency use approval for AstraZeneca Plc's COVID-19 vaccine. Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla tweeted that the move to apply for emergency use "will save countless lives". "As promised, before the end of 2020, Serum Institute India has applied for emergency use authorisation for the first made-in-India vaccine, COVISHIELD. This will save countless lives,

and I thank the Government of India and Sri Narendra Modi ji for their invaluable support," Poonawalla tweeted. According to the ICMR, the Serum has already manufactured 40 million doses of the vaccine under the at-risk manufacturing and stockpiling license it obtained from the drugs regulator. The application for emergency authorization in India is one of the first globally for AstraZeneca's vaccine, which has the most supply deals around the world. Pfizer applied for emergency use authorization of its coronavirus vaccine over the weekend, the official said. Meanwhile, Britain is preparing to become the first country to roll out the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine this week, initially making the shot available at hospitals for care workers and the most vulnerable before distributing stocks to doctors' clinics. Supplies have started to arrive in Britain from Pfizer's manufacturing site in Belgium. In total, Britain has ordered 40 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine, enough to vaccinate 20 million people. About 800,000 doses are expected to be available within the first week.

NGOs Linked With Terror Groups Funded Ajmal Foundation

Guwahati, December 7 : The Legal Rights Observatory (LRO) in a shocking revelation said that the Ajmal Foundation run by All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Badruddin Ajmal receive funds from the NGOs who have a direct link with terrorist groups. The LRO listed the names of the NGOs who provide fund to Ajmal Foundation. The first name which is listed by the LRO is Al Imdaad Foundation UK which is directly linked to Palestinian Intifada spearheading terror group Hamas which financed numerous suicide bombings in Palestine against Israel. It collects Halal Certification fees in millions and channels that money to fund terror acts. The second NGO which funded Ajmal Foundation is Ummah Welfare Trust UK which is accused of money laundering and terror financing. For which Gulf based newspaper Al Arabiya had reported, "The Ummah Welfare Trust, a UK-based, which has been designated as a terrorist entity by the US Treasury, in the past." Turkey based Ajmal

Donor-IHH-Insani Yardim Vakfi (Foundation for Human Rights & Freedoms n Humanitarian Relief) is flagged by many government agencies from across the world, think tanks and media houses for its direct links with AlQaida terror group n Global Jihad Network. Another donor is the Muslim Aid of UK known for its direct connections with Kashmiri terror group Hizb Ul Mujahiddin. It may be mentioned that Ajmal Foundation received Rs.70-75 crores yearly out of which only Rs. 2.5 crores were spent in education. Speaking about the funds received from these NGOs, Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that Badruddin Ajmal doesn't spend money from his pocket for Ajmal Hospital, and education which he claimed so. The Ajmal Foundation received funds from these NGOs and only 2.5% of the funds have been spent in education. The minister sought Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention and inquiry to root out the dirty money.

Friendly cricket tournament held , PCSC XI team won the tournament

Guwahati, December 7 : A friendly cricket tournament was held On December 7 at RPF, Reserve Line MLG ground. Where all RPF of HQ, MLG and RPSF staff of Construction department participated. In this cricket tournament PCSC XI team won the tournament and SO to PCSC XI team became runner up. Best bowler, best batsman and best all rounder trophy won by IPF Pawan Kumar, Constable Ombeer and constable Ravinder Kumar respectively. PCSC Sri

Sanjay Kishore distributed the trophy followed by speech for the players. Three teams participated in the friendly cricket tournament tournament namely, PCSC XI, Staff officer XI and RPSF Construction.



Notice

Written test for recruitment to the post of Stenographer and Junior Assistant under the Inspectorate of Boilers, Assam. (Vide Advertisement No. Janasanyog/D/6071/20) published on 22.10.2020.

The written test to the said post will be held at Karmashri Hiteswar Saikia College, Sixmile, Panjabari at 10:00 am on 20-12-2020. Letters in this regard have been issued to the eligible candidate and sent by post. The list of eligible candidates who have been asked to appear in the written test has been uploaded in our website www.cib.assam.gov.in.

Eligible candidates who does not receive call letter sent by post, may collect the duplicate copy of the same from the Office of the Chief Inspector of Boilers, Assam, Lalmati, Guwahati- 29, during office hours by providing suitable identity proof.

Sd/- Chief Inspector of Boilers, Assam
Lalmati, Guwahati-29

Janasanyog/D/7933/20

MISSING INFORMATION



The above is photograph of Smti Gita Sutradhar (29 Years) W/O Sri Dipak Sutradhar, Vill - Anaduaupara, PS- Panery, District- Udalguri, Assam who has been missing since 14/11/2020 from her home .

This refers to Panery PS GDE No- 372 Dtd. 18/11/2020 and this office Man Missing Register Entry No. 140 Dtd, 25/11/2020.

Descriptive Roll of the Missing Person :-

1. Complexion	-	Fair
2. Age	-	29 Years
3. Built	-	Medium
4. Language	-	Assamese
5. Height	-	4.9 Feet
6. Wearing apparel	-	Churider

All efforts may be made to trace out/recover the above noted missing person at the earliest and result thereof may be intimated to this office at the following helpline numbers for further necessary action: 8134852559/9859427622 (Cell phone).

Sd/-
Superintendent of Police
Udalguri, Assam

Janasanyog/D/7941/20

MISSING INFORMATION



The above is photograph of Miss Padhya Das (20 Years) D/O Sri Narayan Das, Vill - No-2 Suklai, PS- Dimakuchi, District- Udalguri, Assam who has been missing since 18/11/2020 from her home .

This refers to Dimakuchi PS GDE No- 339 Dtd. 18/11/2020 and this office Man Missing Register Entry No. 140 Dtd, 21/11/2020.

Descriptive Roll of the Missing Person :-

1. Complexion	-	Swarthy
2. Age	-	20 Years
3. Built	-	Medium
4. Language	-	Assamese/Bengali/Nepali & Hindi
5. Height	-	5 Feet
6. Wearing apparel	-	Churider

All efforts may be made to trace out/recover the above noted missing person at the earliest and result thereof may be intimated to this office at the following helpline numbers for further necessary action: 8134852559/9859427622 (Cell phone).

Sd/-
Superintendent of Police
Udalguri, Assam

Janasanyog/D/7944/20

MISSING INFORMATION



The above is photograph of Smti Archana Biswas (19 Years) W/O Sri Gandhi Biwas, Vill - No-2 Ekharai., PS- Rowta, District- Udalguri, Assam who has been missing since 17/11/2020 from her home .

This refers to Ekharai OP (under Rowta PS) GDE No- 272 Dtd. 21/11/2020 and this office Man Missing Register Entry No. 144 Dtd, 26/11/2020.

Descriptive Roll of the Missing Person :-

1. Complexion	-	Fair
2. Age	-	19 Years
3. Built	-	Medium
4. Language	-	Assamese & Bengali
5. Height	-	4 Feet
6. Wearing apparel	-	Pink colour Lehenga

All efforts may be made to trace out/recover the above noted missing person at the earliest and result thereof may be intimated to this office at the following helpline numbers for further necessary action: 8134852559/9859427622 (Cell phone).

Sd/-
Superintendent of Police
Udalguri, Assam

Janasanyog/D/7948/20

Papa Bouba Diop's winner against France was Senegal's Maradona moment

Paris, December 7 : There are a handful of goals that are universal, that resonate with almost everybody who follows the game. Diego Maradona scored two of them in the space of five minutes against England in the World Cup quarter-final in 1986 - goals much better

ably the biggest World Cup moments of the past 20 years. Goals, it turns out, are overrated, but it may be that the most memorable in the World Cup in the 21st century was the first: Papa Bouba Diop's winner for Senegal against France in the opening game of the 2002

back along the edge of the six-yard box. Diop arrives in front of Emmanuel Petit and although Fabien Barthez saves his initial shot the ball rebounds back to him as he slides towards the line, allowing him to hook it in as Bixente Lizerazu appeals vainly for offside. Diop is on

lion adverts and Fifa's cant about the football family, to become cynical, but no cultural pursuit is so universal. (In 2002, without realising who he was until half-time, I sat next to N'Dour during Senegal's Cup of Nations quarter-final against DR Congo in Mali, exchanging the odd polite comment about the football.) Diop was born in Rufisque, once a thriving port but now run-down and subsumed into Dakar. At 18, he started playing in the Senegalese top flight. At 21, he secured a move to Switzerland, fulfilling the dream of a lucrative European move. In January 2002, just after joining Lens, he was part of the Senegal squad at the Africa Cup of Nations. There were already whispers this was a special side. They kept themselves apart, booking out a small hotel while every other side based in Bamako, Mali's capital, stayed in the huge concrete Hôtel L'Amitié. There was a mood about them that is particular to a national side tasting significant success for the first time, or for the first time in a long while, at least: a mixture of excitement, pride and disbelief. While those in the hotel seemed stuck on the familiar players' treadmill of bedroom-dining room-training, Senegal's players relaxed in the garden. They were probably the best side at the tournament, but lost on penalties in the final to Cameroon. Diouf, also at Lens, was the ebullient and charismatic face of the squad, but Diop was there in the background. When the left-back Habib Beye described him as a giant it wasn't just his physique he

was talking about. The defender Alassane N'Dour, another member of the squad, described Diop as "a partner, a role model, a friend, a brother and a patriot", as though being "a fantastic and extraordinary player" was incidental. The goal beat the world and European champions and made people, perhaps for the first time, take notice of Senegal. But Diop was a fine player, so influential that, by 2008, Tom Vernon, who ran an academy near Accra in Ghana, was complaining of the "Papa Bouba Diop template", of European clubs coming to west Africa only interested in signing defensive midfielders in his image, just as they had once gone to South America to sign No 10s. The irony is that a player so adept at breaking up opposing attacks should be most famous for a goal he scored. To those who wanted to see it, there was symbolism in a winner against the former colonial master - although there was no animosity: 21 of Senegal's 23-man squad had played in France and most said they happily supported France in tournaments they were not involved in. More immediately relevant was it was the goal that beat the world and European champions, a goal that made people, perhaps for the first time, take notice of Senegal. There, again, the breadth of the World Cup's appeal is made clear. The last week of last month was marked by the deaths of two players from very different but similarly humble backgrounds, who conditioned how the rest of the world regarded their nation.



remembered, in Argentina, in England, everywhere, than either of his brilliant goals in the semi-final or than any of the five goals in the final. What makes a goal indelible is far more to do with context and narrative than the quality of the strike or even the stage at which it is scored. There are very few truly universal goals. How many, really, could you mention to a fan in Beijing or Baltimore, Jakarta or Johannesburg, in the realistic expectation they could describe it? Maybe it is a facet of ageing, but as the volume of football on television has increased, such strikes seem to have become fewer and further between. Zinedine Zidane's headbutt and, some way behind, Luis Suárez's handball are prob-

finals. Diop died last Sunday, four days after Maradona, aged 42. His passing was respectfully marked, and Ademola Lookman celebrated scoring for Fulham against Leicester with his Senegal No 19 shirt, but there was nothing like the same outpouring of emotion. Why would there be? Maradona was one of a handful of all-time greats; Diop was a popular and diligent midfielder for Fulham and Portsmouth. Even in that Senegal side in 2002, Diop was overshadowed by El-Hadjji Diouf and Salif Diao. Yet he, too, had his moment. Omar Daf catches Youri Djorkaeff in possession and slides a pass down the left for Diouf to chase. He beats a lunging Frank Leboeuf and cuts the ball

his feet immediately, running to the corner flag, where he lays his shirt on the ground and orchestrates a dance around it. That passage from Daf winning the ball to the celebration in the corner are, globally speaking, probably the most famous 20 seconds in Senegal's history - not Senegalese football's history, but the history of the nation. Ask somebody in Britain to name anyone from Senegal and while some may know the musician Youssou N'Dour, far more will be able to name Diouf or Diop - or, more recently, Sadio Mané. For some players - Lionel Messi at times, for instance - that can become a terrible burden, but it's also an extraordinary opportunity. It is easy, in the face of the vapid laughter of a mil-

George Russell pipped for Sakhir F1 GP pole by Valtteri Bottas

London, December 7 : Pole position belonged to Valtteri Bottas for the Sakhir Grand Prix but it was his teammate, George Russell, whose talent shone under floodlights in Bahrain. The 22-year-old Briton - standing in for a self-isolating Lewis Hamilton - put his Mercedes on the front row, denied pole by the slenderest of margins on his first drive in a competitive car. In so doing Russell laid down a marker that he should be considered as heir apparent to the seven-times world champion at Mercedes. Bottas took pole on his final lap in Q3 with a time of 53.377sec but Russell in his wake pushed him to the limit, sweeping home just two-hundredths of a second behind. Max Verstappen's Red Bull was in third. Drafted in after Hamilton was diagnosed with Covid-19 on Monday, Russell, who drives for Williams but is a Mercedes junior, has come up to speed with astounding alacrity in adapting to the car and the team since he was called up by Mercedes on Tuesday night. Russell said Hamilton had been in touch and that for now he was keeping his ambitions for Sunday in check. "Lewis dropped me a message on Friday night wishing me well and asking me to look after his car and so far so good," he said. "It would be amazing to stand on the podium but as a racer you just want to deliver the best performance possible." His achievement should not be underestimated. He has had only four hours of practice to get to grips with the Mercedes, Bottas has been with the team for four years. Now in only his second season in F1, Russell's experience thus far has been in driving the slow and difficult to handle Williams. That he should prove able to demonstrate his pace and skill immediately when given his first opportunity to mix it at the front of the grid was definitive notice of how far he may go in the sport. The Mercedes team principal, Toto Wolff, offered praise and an inter-

esting comparison between his incumbent world champion and his team's debutant, who has had to wear race boots a size too small to fit into Hamilton's car. "They're such different characters," he said. "Lewis has been there for a long time and is quite quiet. George is a lot more chatty, he is quite serious - you would think he was a finance guy. He settled in well, even though he doesn't really fit into the car." I said to him: 'If you end up in the first four, that's great and if you get passed by someone and end up in fifth, that's fine too.' But that's a fantastic result today." The British driver had never made it to the final, pressured shootout of Q3 before but he handled it nervelessly on his final run, an exceedingly tricky task on such a short lap, where the margins were tiny. Bottas already has a contract with Mercedes for 2021 but Russell, highly regarded by the team, is doing everything needed to put himself in the frame for 2022. It is a moment of ascendancy for Russell he will relish, coming not long after his future in F1 appeared to be under threat. Only months ago rumours circulated that he was to be dropped by Williams in favour of Sergio Pérez but he has since been confirmed for 2021, a decision vindicated in Bahrain. His achieve-

ment was all the more impressive given that the race this weekend is taking place on the outer loop configuration of the Sakhir circuit, an alternate layout to the one used at the Bahrain GP last week and one that no one has driven before. Yet



Russell had its measure in short order. Bottas had the edge over his teammate across qualifying but when it really mattered at the death he was caught but a breath from the Finn. It was the performance of a young man who has been confident and proactive in pursuing his career thus far. His first contact with Mercedes had been an unsolicited email to Wolff, in 2014. Taken on as a Mercedes junior driver in 2017, the same year he pitched for a drive at Williams by using a PowerPoint presentation, he then went on to win the GP3 series and followed it by claiming the F2 title in 2018. On

Sunday he starts from the front row for the first time and having yet to score a point in F1, will doubtless believe a win is entirely within his grasp. Charles Leclerc was a superb fourth for Ferrari, with Pérez in fifth for Racing Point and his team-

mate Lance Stroll in 10th. Daniil Kvyat was in sixth for AlphaTauri and his teammate Pierre Gasly in ninth. Renault's Daniel Ricciardo was in seventh and McLaren's Carlos Sainz in eighth. The British-Korean driver Jack Aitken, who is making his F1 debut as a replacement for Russell at Williams, was in 18th place. Brazil's Pietro Fittipaldi, the grandson of the double world champion Emerson Fittipaldi, who makes his F1 debut taking over at Haas from Romain Grosjean after his accident at the Bahrain GP, was in 20th.

Peter Alliss, voice of the BBC's golf coverage, dies aged 89

London, December 7 : Peter Alliss, the voice of the BBC's golf coverage for decades, has died at the age of 89. A statement issued by the former Ryder Cup player's family on Sunday confirmed the death of Alliss - who had been on commentary duties for the Masters just last month - was "unexpected but peaceful". As a professional golfer, Alliss returned several high finishes in the Open Championship and won multiple tournaments. He played against the USA in the Ryder Cup, at the time contested by Great Britain & Ireland rather than Europe, in 1953, 1957, 1969, 1961, 1963, 1965, 1967 and 1969. His broadcasting began at the 1961 Open, with Alliss becoming the BBC's lead golf commentator 17 years later. Alliss was voted into the sport's hall of fame in 2012. "It's with great sadness

that we announce the passing of golfing and broadcast legend, Peter Alliss," said his family in a statement. "Peter's death was unexpected but peaceful. Peter was a devoted husband, father and grandfather and his family ask for privacy at this difficult time." The director of BBC Sport, Barbara Slater, said: "Peter was the voice of golf. He was an absolute master of his craft with a unique ability to capture a moment with a magical turn of phrase that no one else could match. Following a highly distinguished playing career, where he won 20 titles and played in eight Ryder Cups, his broadcasting career spanned an extraordinary 60 years." Just last month at the incredible age of 89, he was doing what he loved - commentating for the BBC on the Masters.

England tour in doubt after first ODI abandoned and 'unconfirmed' Covid positives

London, December 7 : England's tour of South Africa lurched back into crisis mode on Sunday after two unnamed members of Eoin Morgan's touring party recorded "unconfirmed" positive tests for Covid-19 following the abandonment of the first one-day international in Paarl. The match had already been called off 30 minutes before the start of play as a result of two members of staff at the Vineyard hotel testing positive, news that led to the England team and staff being tested again on Saturday evening. Now a tour that has already seen three South African players emerge as positive cases - and forced Friday's initial series-opener to be called off - is in danger of being ended altogether following this latest development. A joint statement from Cricket South Africa and the England and Wales Cricket Board read: "CSA and the ECB have agreed to cancel today's One-Day International match, which was due to take place in Paarl. The decision was taken after two hotel staff members testing positive for Covid-19. As a precaution, the England players and management underwent an additional round of PCR tests on Saturday evening." Following the test results, two members of the England touring party

match. "We are deeply regretful of the situation we find ourselves in after the amount of time and energy that has been put in place to host a successful tour. We are in continuous talks with the ECB as we navigate the situation under the guidance of our combined medical teams." Suspicions were raised at 9am on Sunday - an hour before the start of play - when neither team bus had arrived at Boland Park, with the announcement of an initial delay to proceedings coming 25 minutes before the scheduled toss, along with news of two positive test results among the hotel staff. At this stage England were still waiting on the results from a fresh round of testing that took place on Saturday night. The match was then officially abandoned at 9.35am before a statement landed just over an hour later that confirmed the two cases among the touring party. The two teams are due to meet again at Newlands in Cape Town on Monday and Wednesday for the second and third one-day internationals - fixtures that are now clearly in the balance. If they cannot go ahead, it could cost Cricket South Africa around £1.5m in broadcast revenues and affect upcoming visits this season by Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Australia. England had already expressed



have returned unconfirmed positive tests for Covid-19. The players and management are now self-isolating in their rooms until further advice from the medical teams. "The medical advice from both CSA and ECB is that the match cannot not take place. A decision on the remaining matches in the series will be taken once the results of the tests are ratified independently by medical experts." Ashley Giles, managing director of England men's cricket, said: "We regret that we are unable to play in today's ODI, but the welfare of the players and support staff is our primary concern and whilst we await the results of further tests the medical advice from both teams was that this game should not take place. We remain in constant dialogue with Cricket South Africa and will continue to work closely with them to determine how best to move forward." CSA director of cricket, Graeme Smith added: "CSA is doing everything in our power to ensure that our top priority, which is the health, safety and welfare of players, support staff and all involved in this series is safeguarded. With that in mind, we have made the joint decision to cancel today's

grave concerns with the integrity of the biosecure arrangements for the tour after Friday's positive result in the Proteas' camp, something that will only intensify further with the latest positive test results. Roy Davies, general manager of the Vineyard hotel in Newlands, has confirmed further contract tracing has begun amid widespread uncertainty as to how the virus has entered the bubble and then seemingly spread. Davies said: "At this stage, it is not clear how the staff members became infected as neither have left the biosecure area since 16 November and they do not work on the same team or in the same area. Our Covid response team is endeavouring to establish all the facts and contact tracing is under way." Our number one priority is the safety and wellbeing of our staff and guests and we have placed all our resources and efforts into investigating and resolving the situation. "Both members of staff and a player who also tested positive on Friday are currently isolated in on-site apartments some distance from the hotel which have been kept sterilised and available for this purpose. We will issue further statements as more facts become available."

Billy Joe Saunders retains world title the hard way against Martin Murray

London, December 7 : Billy Joe Saunders outclassed a proud but ageing Martin Murray over 12 rounds in London on Friday night to retain his WBO super-middleweight title and will take his 30-0 record into negotiations in pursuit of the biggest prize at 12st: a fight with Canelo Álvarez. The Mexican, who was within days of signing to fight Saunders in March before boxing shut down under the weight of the pandemic, entertains Liverpool's undefeated Callum Smith on 19 December. If Smith were to spring the upset of the year, an all-British fight with Saunders would be a distinct possibility next summer, says Eddie Hearn, but Álvarez is the target for everyone at or around super-middleweight. After outpointing the 38-year-old Murray, 120-109 twice and 118-110 in the third defence of his title, Saunders said: "I've just turned 31. I'm in my prime. I've been out a year and probably needed the rounds. It's very important for me to stay in the gym now, because I'm not getting any younger." Hearn, his promoter, said: "The deal was done with

Canelo and it was a massive blow when it was called off. We can't waste the opportunity to find out how good Billy is, but he's not yet mixing with the elite of the elite: [Gennady] Golovkin, Canelo, Smith." Murray hinted he would retire, revealing he had hurt his back two weeks before the

Abraham, all of them outstanding fighters. Saunders, though, had his measure in nearly every round. "He's a cunning old fox," Saunders said. "He got through it and fair play to him. I hope he has a good Christmas." Hearn was right to point out that Saunders was hard on



fight, an injury which flared in the eighth round, but said: "I lost to the better man." He will surely join the likes of Herol Graham and Kevin Mitchell as among the best British fighters never to win a world title, but he came desperately close, especially against the outstanding Sergio Martínez in Argentina in 2013. Murray also took Golovkin 11 rounds, drew with Felix Sturm and lost a split decision to Arthur

himself after an impressive display against one of British boxing's best. There were no knockdowns, although Saunders reckoned he deserved one when Murray went over in the fourth; it was ruled a slip. If a crowd had been allowed, they would have given both fighters a standing ovation at the end but, as Saunders pointed out, "it was like fighting in a cemetery".

Boring? Rugby deserves a break after a difficult year for everyone

London, December 7 : For all the talk that international rugby is boring, I prefer to hold judgment until next year's Six Nations at the earliest. Given everything that has happened in 2020 I do not think it is fair to be critiquing and assessing the landscape and to be probing Test rugby for all its flaws. The Six Nations is the most



vibrant of rugby competitions but it was forcibly split into two chapters, seven months apart. Covid struck, unions and clubs were faced with the prospect of financial ruin, players have had to adjust to new law interpretations as well as playing without crowds. That we have had a cross-border competition at all is no mean feat and it is a very tough year to fully assess and understand what the game looks

like. On top of that, you have to look at the individual circumstances for some teams. Wales and Ireland have struggled. They have new coaches, trying to implement different gameplans, against the backdrop of everything that has gone on. It is little wonder that Scotland, to a small extent, and England, to a much

greater one, have had a far more prosperous time because of the stability they can fall back on in terms of coaching setup and having a clear identity. Eddie Jones has been there five years now, he has been able to give a few new players a chance this autumn, but at the same time there are players reaching 50 or 100 caps. Rightly or wrongly, the law interpretations mean that if you have a strong set piece and good

defence and you are proficient at the breakdown, you are going to be incredibly hard to beat. That's precisely how I would describe England. On top of that England They have been able to play with a huge amount of control. They have beaten Ireland and Wales in recent weeks and I didn't see either game threatening to get away from them. A large reason for that is the continuity they have been able to enjoy in what has been an unsettling year for most. I fully expect them to beat France on Sunday and if this competition has had an air of being thrown together - and the final is not helped by the enforced weakness of the French side - you don't get the chance to play in that many finals and the squad will benefit hugely from the experience. England have benefited from the continuity of Eddie Jones's reign, with the Australian having been in the job for five years. Photograph: Dan Mullan/The RFU Collection/Getty Images Rugby often tries to recalibrate itself - I believe that is what Jones is getting at when he talks about the game going through cycles, moving from favouring defence to attack and vice versa. It is also important to remember that it all stems from the need to protect players. You could argue that defensive domination is an unintended consequence of the laws, but

they do have the players' interests at heart. The other important thing to bear in mind is that World Rugby has the capacity to review the changes and be far more reactive than it has in the past. Joe Schmidt, the former Ireland coach, is now part of the relevant working group and the key is that coaches, referees and players all need to work together hand in hand to make sure the game they want to see is materialising on the pitch. I'm not sure that is currently the case but there have been times in the past when those conversations between coaches, referees and players would not have taken place. Now I believe they will. Let's also not underestimate the power that the return of supporters will have in lifting Test matches. Rugby is such an emotional sport that it will make an enormous difference. Take the example of Wales coming back to within five points against England last week. Had that been at a packed Principality Stadium it would have had a significant emotional impact on Wales's players but that just wasn't evident at an empty Parc y Scarlets. It is only 2,000 fans at Twickenham on Sunday but it's a step in the right direction and hopefully the next Six Nations will be a different prospect altogether. Let's not be too critical of rugby as a spectacle until then.

Fitness-wise we're on target, no substitute for matches : Graham Reid

Mumbai, December 6 : Of the 19 months Graham Reid has been chief coach of the Indian men's hockey team, nine have been lost without any international matches due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In the six FIH Pro League matches Reid's boys played in January and February, they won four, two of them via shootout, and lost two to world No.1 Belgium and Australia. During the freeze in sports activities since the Pro League matches, the 56-year-old Olympic silver medalist from Australia has overseen the preparation of the team so that they can return to Pro League action in April at a good level and re-build momentum for the Tokyo Olympics, rescheduled for July-August 2021. The Indian team's camp has been on at the Sport Authority of India's Centre of Excellence at Bangalore since October 24. It will have a three-week break from December 12 and the probabilities with re-assemble in Bengaluru on January 5 for a final camp before returning to action. Reid would have completed two years as India hockey coach when they resume their Pro League engagements with a match against Olympic champions Argentina on April 10, 2021, the first step on the path to try and make amends for four decades of disappointments in Olympics. He gives an assessment on the team in this interview. You said before the camp that the aim was to hit top gear by the year end. Where do we stand? Our latest fitness tests in the strength, weight and muscle components show that we are nicely on target. Out training sessions output data are approaching our February figures so we are close to our international match level. It is of course

very difficult to say where we are in our playing levels when we have no external source to gauge against. Given the extremely difficult circumstances for the last four months, I am pleased with where we are. In a normal year you have 4-6 week camps and the players get one week off to spend with friends and family. On the weekends they normally leave the campus and visit the mall, cinema, etc. This year there has been none of that and has been a very tough mental test for all of us. What are your targets for the next stage? With Hockey India we are currently planning for training and matches in January. Depending on the length of the trip and how many players we



take, we hopefully will get to play approximately eight games. This should provide a very good level of test as to where we are at, providing the rest of February to prepare properly for the Asian Champions Trophy in March. The last time they went on a break, six players tested Covid-19 positive on return. How worried are you? Our players realise how important it is to follow the protocols set down by Hockey India and various government departments. Given that, as the rest of world sport has shown, Covid can penetrate even the toughest of protocols and our players certainly understand the risks involved with life outside the camp bubble. Will you give them any special instructions as this camp will be closer to Pro League matches for India? Before their release, the players will receive strict briefing on the SOPs for being COVID safe and the dos and don'ts during the time with their families.

Barcelona loses at Cadiz; Real Madrid wins, Atlético top

Barcelona, December 6 : After Zinedine Zidane got some relief seeing Real Madrid end a winless streak in the Spanish league, Ronald Koeman was back under fire after another disappointing Barcelona loss. Diego Simeone's Atlético Madrid, meanwhile, won again to take the league lead for the first time this season. Real Madrid edged Sevilla 1-0 Saturday for its first win after three straight league setbacks, while Atlético beat Valladolid 2-0 to win its seventh straight league game and Barcelona lost 2-1 at promoted Cádiz to stay far from the top. Atlético moved two points ahead of Real Sociedad, which visits Alavés on Sunday and has played one game more than Atlético. Third-place Real Madrid is six points off the lead and also has played one extra game compared to Simeone's team. Seventh-place Barcelona is now 12 points back. "This was a huge step backward for us in the fight for the league title," Koeman said. "It's disappointing. A difference of 12 points against a team like Atlético is a lot." Barcelona lost in the league for the fourth time this season despite the return of Lionel Messi, who had been rested in the team's Champions League midweek match. Barcelona

was trying to win its fourth consecutive match in all competitions but paid the price for a defensive mistake in the second half. Clément Lenglet misplayed a ball inside the area and goalkeeper Marc-André ter Stegen wasn't able to fully clear it, allowing Álvaro Negredo to easily find the open net and give Cádiz the win in the 63rd. Cádiz had opened the scoring with Álvaro Giménez Candela following an eighth-minute corner kick, and Barcelona equalized in the 58th with an own-goal by Pedro Alcázar while he tried to block a cross by Jordi Alba. Cádiz, which was yet to win at home this season, moved to fifth place. Thomas Lemar scored with a tight angled shot in the 56th and Marcos Llorente added to the lead after a nice run in the 72nd to keep Atlético's winning streak in the league. The team has conceded only two goals in 10 league games and remains the only unbeaten side in the competition. The match in Madrid marked the return of Luis Suárez, who hadn't played with Atlético since November because of the coronavirus. The former Barcelona striker had tested positive for COVID-19 while with Uruguay's national team. Valladolid was winless in its first eight matches



but was coming off two victories and a draw in its last three games. The team owned by former Brazil striker Ronaldo is 19th in the 20-team standings. A second-half own-goal by Sevilla goalkeeper Yassine "Bono" Bounou gave Madrid victory at the Ramón Sánchez-Pizjuán Stadium. "The last few days weren't easy," Zidane said. "The team responded well and these three points are very important for us." Madrid arrived in Seville with Zidane under pressure after the team had won only one of its last five matches in all competitions. It had lost two of its last three league games. "This victory is very impor-

tant to restore our confidence," Vinícius Júnior said. "We had played well in other matches but couldn't get the victory. This has been a different season and sometimes it's difficult to get going. We have to keep improving." Madrid and Sevilla were coming off tough losses in the Champions League - Madrid lost 2-0 at Shakhtar Donetsk on Tuesday, while Sevilla was routed 4-0 at home by Chelsea on Wednesday. Sevilla, which dropped to sixth place, had won three straight in the league, including the last two at home. Madrid had never gone four straight matches without a win in the league under Zidane.

স্মৃতিগ্রন্থ বাবে লেখা আহ্বান

বিগত বর্ষৰ দৰে এইবাৰো আলোকপ্ৰভঞ্জন বেলফেয়াৰ ছ'চাইটিৰ সৌজন্যত দৈনন্দিন **বার্তা** গোষ্ঠীয়ে আয়োজন কৰিছে **Assam Rising-2020** শীৰ্ষক বঁটা প্ৰদান আৰু সম্বৰ্ধনা 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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