

The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

Vol. No. V ■ Issue No. 330 ■ RNI-ASSEN/2014/58385 | GUWAHATI ■ MONDAY ■ JANUARY 04, 2021 | PAGES 8 ■ PRICE RS. 7.00

Tibet back as fulcrum of new Cold War as US-China ...

04

Gerwyn Price sets up PDC world final showdown with Gary ...

07

NEWS IN BRIEF

Modi congratulates Nation

New Delhi, January 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the country as Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) granted emergency use approval to Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech for their COVID-19 vaccines on Sunday. "A decisive turning point to strengthen a spirited fight! DCGI granting approval to vaccines of @SerumInstIndia and @BharatBiotech accelerates the road to a healthier and COVID-free nation. Congratulations India. Congratulations to our hardworking scientists and innovators," Modi tweeted. "It would make every Indian proud that the two vaccines that have been given emergency use approval are made in India! This shows the eagerness of our scientific community to fulfil the dream of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, at the root of which is care and compassion," he added.

Scooties to girl students

Guwahati, January 3: Assam education minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday distributed scooties to 948 meritorious girl students at Sivasagar under Dr. Banikanta Kakati Merit Award of Pragnya Bharati scheme of the state government. The ambitious scheme launched by the Assam government provides free scooties to the girl students who had passed the higher secondary (HS) second year examinations in first division under the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) in 2020.

177 New COVID-19 Cases

New Delhi, January 3: India reported 18,177 new COVID-19 cases in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of coronavirus cases in the country to 1,03,23,965, the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) informed on Sunday. With this, the total number of active cases now stands at 2,47,220. As many as 217 lives were claimed by the coronavirus in the last 24 hours, taking the death toll to 1,49,435. So far 99,27,310 recoveries have been reported in the country. Maharashtra reported 3,218 new cases and 51 deaths in the last 24 hours.

To reduce risk of transmission Bhutan issues transport escort modality

Guwahati, January 3: Bhutan government has issued the transport escort modality to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and ensure seamless flow of essential items during the nationwide lockdown. The Central Covid-19 Contd...Page 6



CM presents Srimanta Sankardev Award-2020 to noted litterateur, scholar, Prof. Bhavaprasad Chaliha

State govt. to start Srimanta Sankardev Mission to highlight Gurujana's ideals at world stage: CM



Guwahati, January 3: Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today presented Srimanta Sankardev Award 2020 to eminent litterateur, scholar, researcher, Prof. Bhavaprasad Chaliha at a programme organized by Cultural Directorate at Srimanta Sankardev Kalakshetra. Nandita Chaliha, wife of the awardee, received the award in place of Chaliha, who could not be present due to ill health. The award carries a citation, a gold medal, one sarai, angabastra and a cheque of Rs. 5 lakh. Speaking at the

programme, Chief Minister Sonowal announced that the State Government would start Srimanta Sankardev Mission to spread the ideals of Gurujana and highlight them at the world stage. Saying that Sikh Guru Guru Nanak is known and respected across the world, Sonowal lamented the inability of the Assamese people to firmly establish Sankardev's legacy at the world stage. He called for united effort in this regard by all stakeholders and informed Contd...Page 6

COVID-19 vaccine dry run to continue in Assam till actual dose arrives

Guwahati, January 3: In order to prepare the medical staff and infrastructure, the dry run for the COVID-19 vaccine will continue regularly across Assam till actual vaccination takes place, a senior official said on Saturday. Talking to PTI, National



Health Mission (NHM) Mission Director Lakshmanan S said the Health Department does not want to leave any stone unturned to find out any lacuna in the system before administering the vaccine to the people of the state. "Today, we are having the dry run at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, Sonapur Civil Hospital and Khanapara State Dispensary. This is going to be a continuous process and we will be having dry runs till the actual vaccine comes to us," he added. The senior official said the NHM and the state Health Department in the ongoing exercise of dry runs across the state will at-

tempt to cover as much health centres and hospitals as possible in coming days. "Our objective is to prepare our staff, upgrade the state machinery and improve the vaccine delivery infrastructure. We don't want the people to have any issue when the actual vaccine will be administered. These dry runs will help find the shortcomings and plug those," Lakshmanan said. Along with Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Punjab, dry run for COVID-19 vaccine in Assam began on December 28 in Nalbari and Sonitpur districts. The dry runs at five health centres in each of these two districts continued on the next day also and all senior officials monitored the exercise personally. As part of the exercise, the list of beneficiaries of the vaccination was Contd...Page 6

Children Can't Get The Covid-19 Vaccine Now

London, January 3: More than a million people in the US got the first round of vaccines in US. The front runners Pfizer and Moderna are dispensed in the country so far and they are shown to be safe after months of trials. But there

is a question on why the children can't get the Covid-19 vaccine yet? The Pfizer vaccine is good for 16 years and above while Moderna is for 18 years and above. Though they are safe, there is a caution encouraged by the doctors when taking the vaccines for people who have had adverse reactions to vaccinations in the past or aller-



gic to vaccines. However, the vaccines are not for children, because the authorized Contd...Page 6

DCGI finally approves Serum Institute, Bharat Biotech's COVID19 vaccines for emergency use

New Delhi, January 3: Serum Institute of India CEO Adar Poonawalla said that all the risks that the company took has finally paid off with its coronavirus vaccine Covishield being approved for emergency use. Serum had stockpiled around 40-50 million doses of its coronavirus vaccine, which Poonawalla said was a risk. "Happy new year, everyone! All the risks Serum Institute took with stockpiling the vaccine, have finally paid off. COVISHIELD, India's first COVID-19 vaccine is ap-



proved, safe, effective and ready to roll-out in the coming weeks," he said in a tweet. In a follow-up tweet, Poonawalla thanked PM

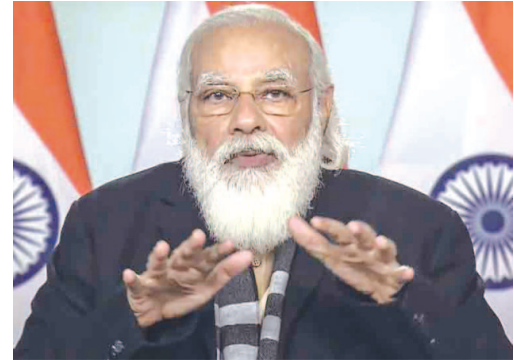
Modi, Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, ICMR, Department of Biotechnology, DCGI, Oxford

University, AstraZeneca, GAVI alliance, Gates Foundation and Bill Gates for their support. PM Modi took to social media to congratulate the two companies as well as Indians for the approval of the vaccines. "It would make every Indian proud that the two vaccines that have been given emergency use approval are made in India! This shows the eagerness of our scientific community to fulfil the dream of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, at the root of which is care and compassion. Contd...Page 6

PM Narendra Modi hails DCGI vaccine nod, says 'move will lead to COVID-free nation'

New Delhi, January 3: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday (January 3) hailed the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)'s nod for Serum Institute's Covishield and Bharat Biotech's Covaxin for restricted use in India. The Prime Minister termed the move as a decisive turning point in the country's fight against the virus and expressed his gratitude for all front-

line workers in 'adverse circumstances'. In a series of tweets, Prime Minister Modi congratulated Serum Institute and Bharat Biotech on getting the DCGI's approval. "A decisive turning point to strengthen a spirited fight! DCGI granting approval to vaccines of @SerumInstIndia and @BharatBiotech accelerates the road to a healthier and COVID-free Contd...Page 6



BJP, UPPL to jointly fight Assam Assembly polls 2021 in BTR

Guwahati, January 3: Assam minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said the BJP and their ally, United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) in BTC will jointly fight in the ensuing Assam Assembly polls 2021 in Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). The

ing of the BJP held under the aegis of the party's Kokrajhar district committee at Sikkhajhar Taekwondo Gymnasium, Kokrajhar. Talking to media persons, Sarma said they have already discussed the matter of fighting the State Assembly polls



convenor of BJP-led North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) and finance minister Sarma said this on Saturday after attending a felicitation and organizational meet-

2021 jointly with UPPL. Sarma said, "The Pramod Boro-led BTC government has started working with transparency keeping faith in all the Contd...Page 6

Rattled China attacks Trump administration, says this about US President-elect Joe Biden

Beijing, January 3: China's Foreign Minister has expressed hope that the Biden would not continue with Trump's Cold War policy towards Beijing. He said that Biden would adopt a sensible approach to restore normal ties between the two countries. President Trump approved several policies against China on several fronts. Days before US President-elect Joe Biden is set to take oath as new president of the US, China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Saturday (January 2) expressed hope that the

Biden would not continue with outgoing US President Donald Trump's Cold War policy towards Beijing and adopt a sensible approach to restore normal ties between the two countries. It is to be noted that Presi-



dent Trump approved several policies against China on different issues, including trade, Tibet and Taiwan. Trump never missed an opportunity to target Chinese President Xi Jinping and was very blunt in his criticism against the Xi. Wang said in an interview to state-run Xinhua news agency that Beijing is hopeful that Biden administration will resume dialogue with China and restore normalcy in relations between Washington and Beijing. "China-US relations have come to a new Contd...Page 6

Rescue operation leads to discovery of 200m-long India-Bangladesh tunnel in Karimganj

Guwahati, January 3: While rescuing a kidnapped man in Karimganj district, Assam Police have discovered a 200-metre-long tunnel connecting India and Bangladesh in the district. The news has been confirmed by Karimganj superintendent of police Mayank Kumar. It is suspected that the tunnel is being used by international gangs involved in kidnapping and smuggling. According to a media re-

port, one Dilwar Hossain was kidnapped on December 28. Dilwar Hossain is a resident of Shilua village under Nilambazar police station in Karimganj. After an FIR lodged with the police, the Karimganj Police launched an operation in search of Hossain. The report quoted SP Mayank Kumar as saying: "We received an FIR regarding a person who was abducted to the other side of the

border, following which we went to the area." He further said everything will be clear about the tunnel only after a proper investigation. Saying that there are some serious issues in some particular areas in the Indo-Bangla border, the Karimganj SP said the police have taken up the matter with the Border Security Force (BSF) and intelligence agencies. It has been reported that Dilwar Contd...Page 6



As a teacher during the pandemic, I've realised that a school is a genuine community

If you haven't been in one since the last time you were at one, you might not appreciate that a school can often feel like a bad theme park: way too exciting, over-stimulating, and liable to produce headaches. It's what you get if you put hundreds of kids and dozens of caffeinated adults under one roof. It's a hive of human activity and constant, emotional interaction - buzzing with movement, noise, rapid changes, ups, downs and, in many cases, actual bells to tell everyone when to stand up and go somewhere else. For teachers, it's a bit like hosting an eight-hour Zoom call with nobody on mute and your camera always switched on. That's a comparison that wouldn't have made sense a year ago, but the pandemic has ushered in a whole new reality that we're all struggling to deal with. Not to sound too much like a football score, it's starting to feel like Covid-19, everyone else - nil. As it stands, amid unprecedented levels of Covid cases, the government has announced a staggered return to school in January, depending on local infection rates. Until there's a readily available vaccine and infection rates become stable, teachers will continue facing the warped reality of teaching under Covid. I'll tell you what it's like: in a word, weird. During that first

lockdown - the sunny one - many schools became empty shells, open only to vulnerable children, the children of key workers and teachers. We rattled around empty corridors and abandoned rooms. It was like the opening credits of a post-apocalyptic dystopian movie; the first time many of us had worn face masks in public places, stuttering in our steps when we met in stairwells. Was this two metres? Did he just touch that door handle? Can I touch it? Is there any hand sanitiser left? We soon regrouped. Schools worked out how to be Covid-secure: one-

forest with no one around to hear, my students were there but not there, absent but present. Without all the usual sensory input that makes a school a school, I became a disembodied deliverer

Jeffrey Boakye

of content, my classes only able to communicate through the chat function - a sidebar full of textspeak. (We'd been advised to not let them unmute. Welcome to the future.) But even when they can't be seen or heard, children are never truly absent. If nothing else, a teacher is a constant in a



way systems, no-go zones, policies and protocols. Still eerie, but inching slowly back to something close to normal. Sort of. My first time teaching online was anxiety-inducing. Like trees that fall in a

child's life. We're there, every day, every week, every term, part of the furniture. It was a panic to see so many kids drop off the radar, unable to access this brave new world due to a lack of tech, a lack

of will, or both. We could ask where they were and send work home, but we couldn't drag them in. And what's a school without pupils? I felt myself missing the interactions - good, bad and ugly - and becoming grateful when anyone turned up at all to my online lessons. In a job that's all about communicating with people for extended periods of time, Covid is a reminder that a school is a deeply communal entity - a genuine community. Teaching under Covid isn't without fear. As school populations have fluctuated, the threat of transmission has grown increasingly tangible. I've watched the staff room thin out as colleagues have been taken ill or been forced to self-isolate, while student outbreaks have led to bubble closures - another piece of Covid speak that we didn't have last year. I caught it myself in October. Being black and part of the so-called BAME cohort that has been disproportionately affected by the outbreak, I was already at "medium risk". This came with a risk assessment outlining what I could, should and shouldn't do, but it's impossible to teach and be 2 metres away from all students at all times. Not to mention wiping down every shared keyboard, mouse and photocopier display panel, or the constant handling of hundreds of exercise books. I can't say for certain that I caught

Covid at school but since my illness, I've been a lot more wary of the risks. It isn't only the disease that's to be feared, either. We've all seen this year how pupils' exam results, and thus their futures, can hang in the balance of government algorithms. How social inequalities can so easily lead to material deprivation and financial instability. A generation of young people are staring down the barrel of an exam system that Covid has shown to be precarious. When students have put their faith in your promises as a teacher, you start to wonder if you're part of the problem or the solution. But it's not all doom and despair. You may not believe me, with my 13 weeks' holiday and "early" finishes, but teachers want to be at school. We want to teach. Covid has exposed the vulnerabilities of the education system but it's also revealed what's at the very core of being a teacher: relationships. It's in our nature just as much as it is in our job descriptions to be there for our students when they need us. My job has always been much more than talking about books and telling kids how to pass exams. Now, more than ever, I've become part of the ballast for the Covid generation in deeply uncertain waters. And when the only thing that seems certain is more uncertainty to come, that's a privileged position to be in.

I work in intensive care. Our beds are full, and more Covid patients are arriving

It's Christmas morning and it's 2C out side. My breath rises as I stand at the boot of my car, peeling off my layers. This is my ritual now. I have already changed into clean clothes at work, but with a new, more virulent strain of Sars-CoV-2 I'm not taking any chances. Tiptoeing through the front door, the house is silent. Everyone is still in bed, even our three-year-old. I step into the shower, turn up the heat as high as it goes, and let the night shift wash off me. I'm grateful for the chance to sneak in a quick coffee; I left for work 16 hours ago and have been awake all night. The past few weeks have been the toughest NHS workers have faced yet

the relentless march of Covid. But as we hit December, cases in the south east of England, where I work, continued to rise all around us. The virus worked quickly. Some patients would come in smiling, talking, not realising their oxygen levels were already critically low, and probably had been for days. We term these cases "happy hypoxia". Our hearts would sink as we pulled up their chest X-rays. Their fate was already sealed. We knew hours later they would be face down, fighting for their lives on a ventilator. A heroic effort was once again under way to enact surge plans. Management cancelled

operations to free up staff and equipment. Medics with no experience in critical care were redeployed, turning up on our units looking wide-eyed and shell-shocked. We made a special effort to look after them. We could not afford to lose them while each day another one of our colleagues became sick. Wards became temporary ICUs. Yet as quickly as we could free more beds, they were filled by those sick with the virus. Teams scrambled to move ventilated patients by ambulance out of the south east to hospitals with any capacity left. Those hospitals are now full. By the week before Christmas there was simply no room left at the inn. Are you surprised by this? Maybe you are. The tabloids continued to report we were quieter than this time last year, that we had even more capacity than before. But this simply

wasn't true. What they had failed to realise when reporting on our expanded ICU capacity is what that truly meant: using portable ventilators and anaesthetic machines, the kind of ventilators used for operations and not intended for long-term ventilation of sick patients; putting patients in theatres and wards not set up for critical care; using staff who aren't trained in looking after ICU patients. When you hear that hospitals are running at capacity, what that

means now is that they are running at 100% of 150%. I'm not sure how we can find more space. For NHS staff, the painting of this inaccurate picture works to sap away at the morale that is left, and erodes the support and understanding from the public and their families that helps get them through. While people worried about Christmas, doctors and nurses were worrying about how they could possibly keep patients safe. For many, their leave had long been cancelled while others were moved onto emergency rotas and found themselves working over the holidays at the last minute. Some, like me, volunteered. Aside from being an ICU doctor, I am also the lead for the Doctors' Association UK. In my role as president I hear from those on the frontline across our platforms catering for more than 45,000 doctors. I can't tell you how hard we have had to fight to raise morale a second time around. How do you raise spirits knowing that last time we lost more than 650 of our colleagues? I can't tell you what it's like having to ventilate a colleague. I lost more than one. Long gone are the days of claps on doorsteps. Things put in place to sup-

port NHS staff during the first wave have been taken away at the time they are needed most. Free parking. Access to tea and coffee during the long nights. Mental health support. Let alone the promised pay rise. And now, even as staff continue to put their lives at risk every day that they turn up for work, they find themselves at the back of the queue for a vaccine. In some hospitals, vaccinations haven't even been mentioned yet to staff. I have no idea when it'll be my turn. It was our one light at the end of a very long tunnel. I dwell on this as I sip my coffee on Christmas morning, watching the sun come up. Our three-year-old wakes up. I couldn't be happier seeing how excited he is. This is the first year he really understands Christmas. The morning is spent opening stockings, ripping off wrapping paper. A box of chocolates is opened; it is decided that 11am is not too early for bubbly. My heart is so full. Yet my mind wanders back to the previous night. I can't help thinking of the family who will not be celebrating today. The family of the young man in his 20s who will never come home. I can still feel his ribs cracking under my hands as I tried to push life back into him with CPR. "You're quiet," says my husband. It stirs me out of my reverie. He is given a tired smile. A hug that lasts a second too long. "Bad night?" he says. He understands. I say a silent prayer for the family who I know will be mourning today and push it out of my mind. Today is a day for joy. I have so much to be grateful for. And so I celebrate, and enjoy this brief reprieve before what I know will be waiting for us around the corner in January.



in the battle against Covid. The virus has not discriminated as much as we thought it would. Older people, younger people. Those with medical problems, those without. All brought in in their droves. Ambulance after ambulance would arrive with patients fighting for breath as we desperately tried to shuffle beds around to accommodate them. By November things were looking bad. We had clung to the hope that a second lockdown would slow

Samantha Batt-Rawden

Optimism may be irrational, but it's helping me get through this pandemic

Looking back on when my mum died several years ago, it would be easy for me to count every time I thought she might live as a moment of stupidity. She had stage four lung cancer. Even with the best treatment in the world, her chances of getting through it were minuscule. But that didn't stop me from crying tears of joy when, a few weeks after she started immunotherapy, I saw a scan showing that the tumour had shrunk. I tried to stop myself, but images of her - strong, and loud, and cackling her head off again - flooded my mind. Anxious people know what it is to be a slave to the eternal "what if?", but what if the "what if" is about everything going right? Even as I held her limp hand in the ambulance to the hospice, a microscopic but irrepressible part of me thought a 180-degree turn was possible. She was still my mum; she

still said "fuck" a lot, and loved us aggressively, and had red hair, even though the grey roots were slowly taking over. But yes, it was deranged - at this point - for me to hope for anything other than an end to my mum's pain. But sometimes "deranged" is exactly what you need. Optimism gets a bad rap. Sometimes rightly so. This year, obviously, optimism has been partially responsible for a lot of idiocy. "It's just flu," said the optimists, as they continued to lick handrails well into April. And of course, there's been a lot of dangerously optimistic rhetoric (sincere or otherwise) from Boris "let the plebs die of Christmas" Johnson. Optimism can be a gateway drug to either recklessness or passivity. But the year my mum died - and once again this year - I couldn't have survived without it. In the last month of the cursed year that is 2020, the urge to tell

myself that everything is basically going to be OK has become a need. Unfortunately, this does mean (internally at least) screaming "SHUT UP" at every well-meaning, scientifically minded person who brings up potential difficulties in the post-vaccine Covid world. But it also means being able to get through

Eleanor Margolis

days, and even weeks, with the minimum number of depressive breakdowns. "I have a good feeling about next year," I heard myself say to the dejected looking barista at a local cafe. As much as hearing those words come out of my mouth was like an out-of-body experience (and as much as I immediately regretted it as thoughts of the virus developing the ability to shoot guns seeped in) I clearly needed to get my optimism off my chest. Even if the barista

didn't seem convinced, and I had to panic about having come across like someone who had recently joined a cult. After all, Boris Johnson did kick off this hell year with that "This is going to be a fantastic year for Britain" tweet. Which quickly became a meme about how precisely ungreat a year this has been for Britain (or the rest of the world). His double thumbs up in the accompanying picture crystallising the irony into something truly grotesque. But if optimism is a drug, then using it sensibly is really all about the dosage. Like my antidepressants, optimism should be taken daily, in the correct amount. Too much could kill me, and too little would send me into a ditch of withdrawal. Optimism needs to be balanced out with reverence for bad news, but it also needs to be enjoyed for what it is. Thoughts of hugging my friends, or masklessly



huffing the smell of baked goods in Sainsbury's, are medicinal. I also appreciate that actual medicine is medicinal, and if those making it are telling us to manage our expectations, we should probably listen to them. Is it true optimism, though, if you know you're deluded?

The left must stop mourning Brexit - and start seeing its huge potential

So this is it. Forty-eight years after Britain joined what was then the European Economic Community, the fasten seatbelt signs are switched on and the cabin lights have been dimmed. It is time for departure. Many in the UK, especially on the left, are in despair that this moment has arrived. For them, this can never be the journey to somewhere better; instead it is the equivalent of the last helicopter leaving the roof of the US embassy in Saigon in 1975. The lefties who voted for Brexit see it differently. For them (us, actually, because I am one of them), the vote to leave was historically progressive. It marked the rejection of a status quo that was only delivering for the better off by those who demanded their voice was heard. Far from being a reactionary spasm, Brexit was democracy in action. Now the UK has a choice. It can continue to mourn or it can take advantage of the opportunities that Brexit has provided. For a number of reasons, it makes sense to adopt the latter course. For a start, it is

of closing the gap in living standards with the US, the eurozone nations have fallen further behind. In their heads, those predicting Armageddon for the UK imagine the EU to still be Germany's miracle economy - the Wirtschaftswunder - of the 1960s. The reality is somewhat different. It is Italy, where living standards are no higher than they were when the single currency was introduced two decades ago. It is Greece, forced to accept ideologically motivated austerity in return for financial sup-

Larry Elliott

port. The four freedoms of the single market - no barriers to the movement of goods, services, people and capital - are actually the four pillars of neoliberalism. The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated the importance of nation states and the limitations of the EU. Britain's economic response to the pandemic was speedy and coordinated: the Bank of England cut interest rates and boosted the money supply while the Treas-



clear that the UK has deep, structural economic problems despite - and in some cases because of - almost half a century of EU membership. Since 1973, the manufacturing base has shrivelled, the trade balance has been in permanent deficit, and the north-south divide has widened. Free movement of labour has helped entrench Britain's reputation as a low-investment, low-productivity economy. Brexit means that those farmers who want their fruit harvested will now have to do things that the left ought to want: pay higher wages or invest in new machinery. The part of the economy that has done best out of EU membership has been the bit that needed least help: the City of London. Each country in the EU has tended to specialise: the Germans do the high-quality manufactured goods; France does the food and drink; the UK does the money. Yet the mass exodus of banks and other financial institutions that has been predicted since June 2016 has not materialised, because London is a global as well as a European financial centre. The City will continue to thrive. If there are problems with the UK economy, it is equally obvious there are big problems with the EU as well: slow growth, high levels of unemployment, a rapidly ageing population. The single currency - which Britain fortunately never joined - has failed to deliver the promised benefits. Instead of convergence between member states there has been divergence; instead

surely pumped billions into the NHS and the furlough scheme. It has taken months and months of wrangling for the eurozone to come up with the same sort of joined-up approach. Earlier in the year, there was criticism of the government when it decided to opt out of the EU vaccine procurement programme, but this now looks to have been a smart move. Brussels has been slow to place orders for drugs that are effective, in part because it has bowed to internal political pressure to spread the budget around member states - and its regulator has been slower to give approval for treatments. Big does not always mean better. Leaving the EU means UK governments no longer have anywhere to hide. They have economic levers they can pull - procurement, tax, ownership, regulation, investment in infrastructure, subsidies for new industries, trade policy - and they will come under pressure to use them. Many on the remainder left accept the EU has its faults, but they fear that Brexit will be the start of something worse: slash and burn deregulation that will make Britain a nastier place to live. This, though, assumes that Britain will have rightwing governments in perpetuity. It used to be the left who welcomed change and the right that wanted things to remain the same. The inability to envisage what a progressive government could do with Brexit represents a political role reversal and a colossal loss of nerve.

Student bodies hold general sessions

Dimapur, January 3 : Chetheba Town Students' Union (CTSU), Phek Students' Union (PSU), Medziphema Town Sümi Student's Union (MTSSU) held general and annual sessions Chetheba Town Students' Union (CTSU) held its 31st general session under the theme "amplify your proficiency" at town hall, Chetheba on December 29, with SDAO Chozuba, Thepusa Nakro as guest speaker. A press release by CTSU stated that, Thepusa Nakro reminded students that there was no substitute to hard work and no shortcut to success. Adding that God has created all with a purpose to be successful and not a failure, he urged them to start working hard towards the goal with their potentials as success waits in the end. Exhorting the students that everyone was a genius, he advised the students to identify the unwanted desire which prevented them from reaching the goals. He said one has to start enlarging their skills, capabilities and potentialities in order to explore and make the best of the God given talent. While there may be many obstacles to success, he said that giving up would be end of the journey but being brave to face the consequences would bring success. CTSU president Senetsolu Nyekha in her presidential address said Chetheba town was established mainly for the purpose of educational centre. President also suggested that with changes in technology and pandemic striking the world, there was need to change the method of educational approach. Chokri Baptist School headmaster Zakhoti Rokha impressed upon the students to work hard and utilise the time wisely. He also suggested the parents to find capabilities in their children and mould them at the tender age,

adding that degree oriented alone was not enough in this fast changing world. Meanwhile, 34 students were awarded meritorious awards for excellence in academic performance. Art gallery of the students was also exhibited, organised by the union during the state wide lockdown under the banner "Unlock the Mind 2020". PSU: Phek Students' Union (PSU) held its 62nd gen-

transfer and share their knowledge with one another, more importantly contribute more to make the society better. In his speech, Chivozo Soho congratulated all grade A holders including other students who successfully cleared their examinations for the year 2020. Chakhesang Youth Front (CYF) assistant social & cultural secretary, Nusata Vero challenged students to make

on December 27 at Medziphema Town Sümi Baptist Church, Medziphema town. A press release by MTSSU media cell stated that, during the session, guest speaker, professional AICRP, honeybee and pollination, NU SASRD, Otto S Awomi encouraged the students to explore their full potential. He added that no talent should ever be wasted and challenged the students to sell their talents and earn through it. He concluded by encouraging them to participate in church activities which will boost their lives and the future. Earlier, programme was chaired by advisor MTSSU, Mughato Zhimo and invocation by Pastor MTSBC, Kiyezhe Sümi. Meanwhile, the new elected office bearers for the tenure 2021-2022 is headed by Tonato Mulumi Rochill as president and Alopu Swu as general secretary. UVSU: Usutomi Village Students' Union (Usutomi Kiphimi Küghakulu) celebrated its 60th diamond jubilee from December 28 to 30 at Usutomi Baptist Church under the theme, "Visionary student (Jukucho Kiphimi)." A press release by UVSU president, Tomika H. Chophy and general secretary, Tomugha Awomi stated that, theme speaker SDO PWD (NH) Zunheboto, Er. S. Hovito Chophi said that a student's vision should be to be truly educated with positive thinking, without which one would fall into trouble. Quoting Proverbs 28:28, he reminded that one must first have faith in God, to be honest and righteous. He said that the Naga youths have adopted the American culture by sleeping during day and staying awake at night and that such behaviour has no place in Naga society. He urged the students to be productive, share one's vision with family and act according to what the family can afford, as when one is truly honest and humble God prepares

a place. Deputy registrar Co-operative Societies, Bokato Hesso and Herali Aketo Shohe asst. professor Dimapur Govt. College also spoke. Earlier, Sumi Students Union Guwahati, Jeji Kinri Hesso chaired the programme, Bolivi Shohe chaired on women's session and Miyito Kiho Social Welfare secretary UKK chaired the valedictory session. Greetings were extended by Pitovi Achumi, president Diphupar Naga Students' Union and Toiho Achumi president Shena New Students Union. PSU: Pholami Students Union (PSU) held its 58th general session, wherein BJP Nagaland state secretary, Zaveyi Kezo graced the occasion as special guest. A press release by PSU media officer stated that, speaking at the session, Kezo exhorted the students that excellence alone can bring about sustenance and stability in this competitive world. He urged students' community to focus on preserving traditional values and not be carried away by westernised cultures. Advising the students to make the most of modern technology, he also cautioned them to refrain from abusing and misusing technology. He gave a clarion call to the students to excel and go beyond and stated that the only way forward was to be humble, honest and hardworking while not forgetting their roots. Further, the special guest also made a special mention of some achievers in his address. He congratulated Batsola Medeo for securing the top 12th rank in HSLC and Er. Shede Swuro and Er. Vehiivo Nakro for securing the posts of SDO (class-I gazetted), PWD. Former ENPO president and state BJP executive member Y. P. Chilloo also exhorted the students, while former wrestling champion Vecita Khesoh and PA to minister of PHED, Keve Nuh were part of the entourage.



eral session and seminar at Phek village under the theme "committed to excellence" on December 29. A press release by PSU stated that, chairman of Phek Village Council, Chivozo Soho unfurled the PSU flag on behalf of Kuzholuzo (Azo) Nienu, MLA. Azo in his written message stated that the economy was in such a degraded state that one has to learn to be self-sufficient/self-dependent by trying hard. He cited that the theme was not something that was randomly chosen but rather an in-depth thought. To him, the theme connoted that mere degree was not as useful as it was before and what was needed today was excellence which was quality education. Challenging the students to focus on their goals, Azo also appealed to the intellectuals to

their parents and community proud through academic excellence. Headmaster in-charge, Government High School Phek village, Thupukhruyi Venuh encouraged the students to take up B.Ed in order to pursue teaching profession. Earlier, PSU education & statistical secretary, Hukuyi Venuh led the meritorious award for academic year 2020, PSU president, Tuku Venuh delivered welcome address, while RO (Estb.) SP Office Phek, Zavekho Vero and junior engineer (electrical), Nuthozo Hoshi spoke on "education is not a vessel but to be ignited" and "an approach to career planning and competitive exams" respectively. MTSSU: Medziphema Town Sümi Student's Union (MTSSU) held its 24th annual session under the theme "revitalize your education"

Fire destroys 4 houses, church

Nginu, January 3 : Four houses and a Catholic church were destroyed in a devastating fire which broke out in Nginu village in Longding district on Saturday. The fire reportedly started at the church at around 3 to 3:30 pm after the conclusion of the new year celebration. The rag-



ing fire then spread to the four nearby houses, following which, villagers hurriedly removed the roofs of several nearby houses in order to prevent the flames from spreading. No casualty has been reported, and the cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. One of the members of the Nginu Catholic church informed that the church suffered much loss as all its furniture, musical instruments and other items were completely gutted. The church member appealed to all well-wishers to extend all possible aid to the affected families.

Kataria assures to address soil erosion issue at DEWS

Pasighat, January 3 : Union MoS for Jal Shakti, Rattanlal Kataria, who is on a three-day tour of East Siang HQ Pasighat, on Thursday assured to protect the rich flora and fauna of the Daying Ering Wildlife Sanctuary (DEWS), located on the riverine islands of the Siang river, whose rare and endangered wild animals and birds are threatened due to habitat destruction by yearly soil erosion caused by the flooding of the Siang river. Kataria assured to protect the endangered wildlife species by initiating flood control measures at vital locations of the



DEWS to minimize the massive soil erosion. The minister was apprised of the need for protecting the sanctuary by yearly flood erosion by DEWS DFO Tasang Taga and State Board for Wildlife member Maksam Tayeng. They submitted a memorandum to the MoS, seeking the Centre's attention towards "considering the soil erosion and habitat destruction issues of the sanctuary while coming up with any major flood control projects in both left and right bank of the Siang river in and around the riverine sanctuary." The DEWS, which is located in the middle of the Siang river on several islands, needs protection from flood erosion, especially in the woodland and the highlands where most of the wildlife are homed.

Protect biodiversity for healthier ecosystem: Mein

Chowkham, January 3 : Deputy Chief Minister Chowna Mein called upon the civil society to take up the responsibility of protecting and preserving nature and its biological diversity for a healthier ecosystem. "The tribal way of life and the food habits revolve around Mother Nature. It is, therefore, equally important to protect and preserve Mother Nature and its rich natural resources in order to maintain ecological balance, as well as to keep alive the rich culture and traditions," Mein said in a meeting at

the Chongkham Buddha Vihara campus here in Namsai district on Saturday. The meeting was convened by the Namsai district administration in view of the rampant destruction of forest resources and natural vegetation in the district. Mein also called upon the people to refrain from illegal hunting and fishing. "Our state is blessed with rich flora and fauna with huge forest coverage. We must strive to protect and preserve it," he said. Saying that the state's pristine nature, rich with flora and fauna, can attract

tourists the most, Mein appealed to the visitors to respect the shrine areas and maintain the sanctity of the pagodas. Namsai MLA



Chau Zingnu Namchoom emphasized the need for carrying out massive afforestation activities in order to maintain the water-flow in the rivers and underground water. Former minister CT Mein also spoke. Tai Khamti chief Chow Khanseing Namchoom submitted a seven-point memorandum to the DCM, which included a proposal for upgrading the Chongkham EAC HQ to ADC HQ; posting of sufficient police personnel at the Chongkham police station; and establishment of a separate fire station in Chongkham. Namsai DC RK Sharma said that indiscriminate destruction of

nature and unregulated extraction of forest resources are posing a threat to the culture and traditions of the local people. The meeting

Opposition parties urge Centre to revoke 'disturbed area' extension

Kohima, January 3 : Two days after Nagaland was declared as "disturbed area" for another six more months by the Government of India (GOI), the opposition party-Naga People's Front (NPF) urged the centre to revoke its decision. The NPF expressed shock that the Centre took this decision during a "crucial period" of the negotiations and talks to the vexed "Naga Political problem". The NPF reminded the Central Government that extension of the Disturbed Area Act for six months "only shows the insincerity on the part of the Central Government", and urged the Central Government to reconsider its stand and revoke the Act. Further, it urged the Centre to exhibit its sincerity and expedite the peace talks.

M Panging Pao

Yet another new year dawns! The sun's rays over Dong in Arunachal Pradesh ushered in another new year, 2021. With the dawn of the new year, the world bid farewell to 2020, which was maybe the worst year of our times. Over the past year, the Chinese-origin Covid-19 pandemic affected the entire world, infecting more than 8.5 crore persons with more than 18.5 lakh fatalities. India has over one crore infections with 1.5 lakh fatalities. Arunachal has 16,711 cases till date with 56 fatalities. The Covid-19 pandemic is infecting thousands of persons daily; America and Europe are undergoing a second phase of lockdown. The Covid-19 pandemic created

panic in the world with prolonged lockdowns, rendering millions of people jobless, leading to massive recession in the economy. In India, about 27 million youths lost their jobs and almost 53 percent of businesses were adversely affected or closed. Supply chains were disrupted and a large number of farmers are also facing uncertainty. The nationwide lockdown led to closure of industries, hotels, shops, travel and offices, which resulted in millions of job losses, leading to the exodus of millions of migrants back to their home states. The interstate travel ban led to disruptions in supply chains, leading to shortage in goods

and products. The pandemic led to the closure of schools/colleges for months with students suffering endlessly. Marriages/family functions were truncated or postponed. Most sporting events were cancelled and the few remaining were held without spectators. Even the Summer Olympics was postponed. Due to lockdowns and fear of Covid-19, many ailing patients of other diseases suffered or expired. Covid-19 led to such fear and panic that many persons suffered from psychological problems. Former prevalent forms of greetings like handshake, hugs and kisses were discarded. Lifestyles and ways of living of millions of per-

sons were turned upside down. Other bad events of 2020 include cyclones Amphan and Nisarga, floods ravaging Assam and Arunachal, violent Sino-India skirmishes in eastern Ladakh and Sikkim, year-ending farmers protests, etc. There were bad years earlier also. In 1919, the



Covid-19 vaccination dry run conducted

Itanagar, January 3 : A dry run for the anti-Covid-19 vaccination programme was conducted at the urban PHC in Rakap Colony, Naharlagun, and the UPHC Itafort in Itanagar on 2 January. A five-member vaccination team exercised the mock drill, registering 25 healthcare workers as beneficiaries at both the sites with an attendance of 100. The baseline data collection for healthcare service provid-



ers and entry of the same in the CoWIN portal has been completed and the portal was frozen on 31 December. The Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network is also known as CoWIN. The CoWIN module provides comprehensive solutions for national and state level administration. Once the vaccination of the healthcare service providers is completed, the baseline data for subsequent phase of vaccination will be uploaded to the portal on receipt of directives from the central government. The dry run carried out all the processes for anti-Covid vaccination preparedness to ensure effective delivery of the service. The team members were able to deliver their job responsibilities

as per the guidelines. Also, the beneficiaries participated well in the drill by following the instructions provided from the point of entry to the point of exit at the session site. The mock drill was carried out to create awareness among the healthcare service providers about the know-how of the Covid-19 protocols to be followed during vaccination at the session sites. All the districts will be conduct-

ing mock drills at the district level. The analysis of the dry run can be done through the Co-WIN app. The state team, comprising the NHM MD, the state immunization officer, the UNDP SPO and vaccine and cold chain manager monitored both the sessions. The union health & family welfare ministry has been spearheading the preparation for anti-Covid-19 vaccination across the country since September 2020. The vaccination will be done in phases. In the first phase, the healthcare service providers of all the health facilities across the country will be covered, and it will be followed by vaccination of police personnel and military personnel, before finally covering the general public.

Chief of defence staff visits forward areas in Arunachal

Itanagar, January 3 : Chief of Defence Staff Gen Bipin Rawat on Saturday visited several air bases located in forward areas near the line of actual control in Arunachal and took stock of India's overall security scenario in the eastern sector, official sources said. They said Gen Rawat interacted with army, ITBP and soldiers of the Special Frontier Force (SFF) deployed in the bases, including in Dibang Valley and Lohit sector of Arunachal. The chief of defence staff complimented the soldiers for the innovative measures adopted to maintain effective surveillance and enhanced operational readiness, they said. He said only Indian soldiers could remain vigilant under such "challenging situations" and ever willing to go well beyond the call of duty to safeguard the borders, according to the sources. "Nothing can deter the Indian armed forces from remaining steadfast in their call for duty," a source quoted him as saying. The army and the Indian Air Force have significantly bolstered their combat readiness in all the key formations along the LAC, including in Arunachal and Sikkim, in view of the border row with China in eastern Ladakh.



Was 2020 the worst year?

villages. The 1962 Sino-India conflict resulted in over 6,000 soldiers killed, thousands injured or taken as prisoners of war. However, there is hope in the air. Covid-19 vaccine has just been cleared for use in India. Vaccination for lakhs of Indians, including Arunachal, is planned to begin in the next few days and weeks. Human enterprise cannot be defeated by a virus. Year 2021 brings hope to humankind to overcome fear and start living normal lives. To paraphrase Robert Frost: "The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but Arunachal has promises to keep, and miles to go before Arunachal sleeps, and miles to go before Arunachal sleeps."

THE ASSAM RISING

VOL. NO. V, ISSUE NO. 330 MONDAY, JANUARY 04, 2021

The issue of GST

GST collections touched a record high of over Rs 1.15 lakh crore in December, reflecting festive demand and reflation economy. The gross GST revenue collected in the month of December 2020 is Rs 1,15,174 crore and is the highest since the introduction of Goods and Services Tax from July 1, 2017, the Finance Ministry said in a statement. "This is the highest growth in monthly revenues for the last 21 months. This has been due to combined effect of the rapid economic recovery post-pandemic and the nation-wide drive against GST evaders and fake bills along with many systemic changes introduced recently, which have led to improved compliance," the Finance Ministry said in a statement. The total number of GSTR-3B Returns filed for the month of November up to 31st December 2020 is 87 lakh. During the month, revenues from import of goods were 27 per cent higher and the revenues from domestic transaction (including import of services) are 8 per cent higher than the revenues from these sources during the same month last year. In line with the recent trend of recovery in the GST revenues, the mop-up in December crossed Rs 1 lakh crore mark for the third month in a row and was 12 per cent higher than over Rs 1.03 lakh crore collected in December 2019. During December Central GST mop-up is Rs 21,365 crore, State GST is Rs 27,804 crore, Integrated GST is Rs 57,426 crore (including Rs 27,050 crore collected on import of goods) and Cess is Rs 8,579 crore (including Rs 971 crore collected on import of goods). The government has settled Rs 23,276 crore to CGST and Rs 17,681 crore to SGST from IGST as regular settlement. The total revenue earned by the Central Government and the State Governments after regular settlement in the month of December is Rs 44,641 crore for CGST and Rs 45,485 crore for the SGST. The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), Nagpur has come across fraudulent transactions of Rs 290.70 crore, including fake input tax credit (ITC) of Rs 25.22 crore, after searches at a private firm and one person has been arrested, an official said on Monday. As per a DGGI release, searches were conducted on a Mumbai-based firm, M/s M & M Advisors and Consultants Private Limited, as follow-up of the detection of a non-existent advertising firm in Dhule. The searches uncovered documents which revealed the company was engaged in licensing rights of film production houses for broadcast on national and international channels. "They were purchasing rights of movies produced by top banners and transferring these rights under contract system to Rights Assignors, which was availing input tax credit. We have found fraudulent transactions of Rs 290.70 crore and fake ITC of Rs 25.22 crore passed on to Rights Assignors," the release said.

Tibet back as fulcrum of new Cold War as US-China tension grows

As part of the continuing US pressure on China, the US Congress has passed a bill to step up US support to Tibetans. The Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA) has been passed by the two houses of Congress as an amendment to the \$1.4 trillion government spending bill and the \$900 billion COVID-19 relief package. The Act will bring on economic and visa sanctions on any Chinese officials who interfere with the succession of the Dalai Lama and will require Beijing to allow the US to establish a consulate in Lhasa, before it can open any more consulates in the US. The Dharamshala-based Central Tibetan Administration is ecstatic, with Lobsang Sangay, its President (Sikyong), declaring this to be a "momentous landmark for the Tibetan people." Recently, Sangay, who was educated at Harvard University and is an American national, was invited to the White House where he met with Robert Destro, the newly appointed US special coordinator for Tibetan issues. Decades after the US pushed the Tibetan resistance movement under the bus, in its bid to befriend Beijing, Washington seems to have developed some remorse. But in reality, what has happened is that the geopolitical world has taken a complete circle. Modern politics should not really be concerning themselves with issues like the reincarnation of a high lama. But the Dalai Lama belongs to a category of his own. Ever since he fled China and took up exile in India, he has symbolised the Tibetan struggle against Chinese oppression. His personality and message have reverberated through the world and despite strenuous efforts by Beijing, he is still received in the capitals of the world with respect and, by his followers, with adoration. The Dalai Lama himself has been clear about the need to pursue the Tibetan struggle in a non-violent fashion and has repeatedly made it clear that what he seeks is greater autonomy from China, rather than independence. But Beijing refuses to buy this and terms him "splittist." Tibetan Buddhists, like many Hindus believe that everyone goes through a cycle of re-incarnation which is decided on by your karma. But high lamas,

or Tulkus, of whom the Dalai Lama, a reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, is the senior most, can determine when and where they will be reborn. Usually, the high lama confides the details of his new reincarnation with some chosen acolytes who then set about finding him. As he ages, the present Dalai Lama has thought a great deal about the issue. He has been worried that the process of reincarnation will be hijacked by politics. On one hand he has wondered whether it was time that he does not reincarnate at all. On the other, he has expressed an interest in working out clear-cut guidelines to ensure that there "is no room for doubt or deception" in the process. This is aimed at the Chinese who will almost certainly set up their own successor Dalai Lama when this one passes. This is what worries the Dalai Lama. A Chinese "capture" of the Dalai Lama would result in a discrediting of the high office. As the Dalai Lama said in his statement, the Chinese Communists "who explicitly reject even the idea



of past and future lives," leave alone the concept of Tulkus, should hardly meddle in such areas. The Chinese believe that the final authority in appointing a high lama belongs to them, sanctioned by history and custom. In 2007, the State Administration for Religious Affairs in China had decreed that reincarnations must be approved by the government or they would be deemed invalid. Earlier in 1995, the Chinese had reinstated a Qing dynasty rite that mandated that prominent Tibetan monks be identified through a draw of lots from a golden urn. In May that year, the Chinese authorities had negated the Dalai Lama's selection of six-year old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama, and installed Gyaincain Norbu in his place. Nyima and his family have not been seen again.

Traditionally, the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama have played the role of each other's preceptors and the Dalai Lama's choice was based on the tenets of Tibetan tradition. However, the Chinese reverted to a process begun at the instance of the Manchu Emperor in the late-18th century to confirm rimpoches, lamas, and other high authorities of Tibetan Buddhism. The rules were established after a Qing army helped the 7th Dalai Lama to re-establish his authority and also extend Chinese authority over Nepal in 1720. According to the Manchu law, names of candidates for the top Lamas, including the Dalai and the Panchen were put in urns in temples in Lhasa and Beijing and a draw of lots decided the candidate.

MANOJ JOSHI

Though this practice was only fitfully carried out, the Chinese now claim that this has been a practice of Tibetan Buddhism. The People's Republic of China claims itself to be the successor "central Administration of China" whose history goes back millennia. Further, it sees no contradiction in a Marxist-Leninist state claiming the imperial borders, or for that matter, the imperial culture of its predecessors. So, in this case, the Chinese have built their case with their own interpretation of the relationship between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese empires which in two important cases were not Han Chinese. Tibet was first conquered by the Mongols, who also conquered China in the 13th century, and many Mongol kings viewed Tibetan Lamas as religious preceptors. The Ming Empire that succeeded the Mongols in the 14th century left Tibet alone, but Tibetan religious leaders were welcomed at the court. At this time Tibet was dominated by independent Mongol kings who patronised the Dalai and, indeed, the fourth Dalai Lama was reincarnated in the family of a powerful Mongol chief Altan Khan. The next Dalai Lama, the Great Fifth (1617-1682), was both the religious and temporal ruler of the country. Historian Sam van Shaik has noted that "though many modern Chinese historians have taken his visit [to Beijing to meet the emperor] as marking the submission of the Dalai Lama's government to China, such an interpretation is hardly borne out either by the Tibetan or Chinese records of the time." The

reality is that China, itself never viewed itself as China till the 20th century. The relationship of its various empires with other regions were complex and not comparable to modern practice. Indeed, the British deserve a lot of blame for inventing the concept of "suzerainty," which was some kind of semi-sovereignty, to legitimise Chinese rule over Tibet to serve their own imperial goals. At various points in time in the last three decades the Chinese and Tibetans have made efforts to negotiate a settlement. But as China ascended the world order beginning 2008, it began to take a hard line on Tibet and terminated the negotiations. In 2013, Yu Zhensheng, a ranking Politburo Standing Committee member in charge of Tibet had categorically declared that the Dalai Lama's call for autonomy was against the Chinese constitution. Yu added that until the Dalai Lama "publicly announces that Tibet is an inalienable part of China since ancient time, gives up the stance of 'Tibet independence' ... can his relations with the Communist Party of China Central Committee possibly be improved." As of this point the Chinese control over Tibet is firm. Indeed, going by the recent remarks of President Xi Jinping, China would now like to "Sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism. Just what that means is not clear. But at a meeting on Tibet's future governance, Xi called for the authorities to build an "impregnable fortress" to maintain stability there and for a struggle against the forces of "splittism." The Chinese are seeking to come up with "re-educational" campaigns and programmes to push Tibetan Buddhists in the desired direction. Molding Tibetan Buddhism to conform to the CPC's beliefs is not unusual. China, especially under Xi Jinping, insists that every faith, Buddhist, Daoist, Christian or Islam, must conform to the CPC's values. Notwithstanding decades of repression and campaigns against "splittism" and Buddhism, Tibetans remain loyal to their culture and refuse to identify with China and the Han race as their premier identity. This is not very different from the situation in Xinjiang. But the CPC insists on trying to merge them all to create "one nation." To a large degree, China's India policy has been shaped by its interests in Tibet. The Chinese don't want to accept the fact that Tibet and India have had traditional relations that neighbours have.

AstraZeneca, eBay to Tropicana - the 5 worst corporate PR blunders of 2020

2020 will be remembered as a year of crises. Many of the corporate variety were self-inflicted. As in years past, executives often failed to apply the most basic principles of crisis and reputation management. With no shortage of contenders, here are the top corporate PR blunders of the year: 1. AstraZeneca Plc's omission of key details in its vaccine announcement: When the company and the University of Oxford released preliminary results on their Covid-19 vaccine, they didn't mention the error that caused some trial participants to get half doses - which inexplicably turned out to be more effective - nor that the most promising results excluded data from older people. Predictably, Astra is now widely perceived as secretive and untrustworthy, which will make it much harder to drum up faith in any vaccine it later releases. It's especially jaw-dropping that the company wasn't better advised on one of the most-awaited announcements of the year. 2. Sherwin-Williams's decision to fire a top TikTok influencer: In July, the company fired Tony Piloseno, a college student who had already amassed over 1.2 million followers on his paint-mixing TikTok channel (@tonesterpaints). Piloseno said that Sherwin-Williams accused him in part of stealing paint, but that he was actually purchasing the cans with his employee discount. I suspect the company simply wasn't comfortable with a staffer using its products in ways it couldn't control. Whatever the thinking, it was a shockingly shortsighted move. The TikTok channel was generating a huge amount of free, positive publicity for its brand. The lesson is that to reap the benefits of influencers and

superfans, companies need to get comfortable not being able to script their messages as tightly as in the past. This wasn't lost on the competition: Piloseno soon had job offers flooding in from rivals like Behr and Benjamin Moore. (He chose to work for a smaller competitor, Florida Paints, perhaps having learned a lesson about overbearing corporate control.) 3. eBay Inc.'s alleged harassment of newsletter publishers, including by sending porn to neighbors and live roaches to their home: Although the alleged events happened in 2019, the details only came to light in an indictment this June - followed by predictably bad publicity. Six former staffers were charged with conspiracy to commit cyberstalking and witness tampering. They're said to have harassed critics by, among other tactics, posting ads inviting strangers to their home for sex. Shockingly, eBay's former chief communications officer, Steven Wymer, reportedly told a former top security officer at the company that he wanted one of the newsletter publishers "DONE," indicating "I want to see ashes." As the New York Times noted, private security teams of other companies, such as Tesla and Hewlett-Packard, have also been caught engaging in disturbing acts of aggression. The moral of the story, obviously, is simply not to do this. The reputational (and legal) damage can be devastating. 4. Tropicana's ad suggesting parents stressed out by the pandemic secretly make mimosas: Obviously it's never a good idea to propose that the answer to peoples' problems is surreptitiously consuming alcohol, but this one was



especially ill-timed given that problem drinking did rise during the pandemic, especially among women. The lesson here is that brands will suffer backlash if they try to make light of problems that have people genuinely feeling overwhelmed. Empathy would have been a better way to tap into the cultural moment. 5. Edelman - the world's largest PR firm - cutting jobs less than three months after its chief executive promised no Covid-related layoffs: In highly unpredictable circumstances, companies shouldn't make promises like this. Chief executive Richard Edelman was no doubt well-intentioned when he made the no-layoff pledge at the start of the pandemic. But reneging on the promise didn't only hurt staffers who may have made life decisions about mortgages, spouses' jobs and more with his commitment in mind. It also

caused unnecessary reputational fallout for the agency when it later announced the cuts, since it suggested the CEO can't be taken at his word. Finally, a major dishonorable mention goes to McKinsey, long considered one of the world's most elite consulting firms, for its astonishingly imprudent work with Purdue Pharma. The New York Times revealed in November that the company helped fuel the opioid epidemic by seeking to "turbocharge" sales of OxyContin, then later discussed destroying related documents. The report prompted a rare apology from the consultancy. The incident reminds us all that in order to avoid bad publicity - and a spot on this list next year - every business decision an organization makes needs to be considered in light of its long-term reputation. There's no better time to start than in 2021.

India & the world face slow-burn problems that could become crises And then there's China

In 2014, India's economy finally began growing faster than China's, and stayed ahead for the next three years. In 2018, the forecast was that the ranking would stay unchanged till 2020. As things turned out, China soon pulled ahead, and then the gap grew. This year, its economy will see growth of an anticipated 2 per cent, while India experiences a sharp recession. Adjusting for relative changes in the rupee's and yuan's dollar values, the International Monetary Fund now says China's economy grew by 146 per cent in the 2010-20 decade while India managed barely a third of that: 52 per

cent. Yet the Indian story wasn't bad at all, since its growth outpaced every trillion-dollar economy other than China. Of the 13 other countries in that club, as many as seven saw their economies shrink in the course of the decade. America's growth rate in 2010-20, at 39 per cent, was among the best of the



cent. Yet the Indian story wasn't bad at all, since its growth outpaced every trillion-dollar economy other than China. Of the 13 other countries in that club, as many as seven saw their economies shrink in the course of the decade. America's growth rate in 2010-20, at 39 per cent, was among the best of the

TN NINAN

cent. Yet the Indian story wasn't bad at all, since its growth outpaced every trillion-dollar economy other than China. Of the 13 other countries in that club, as many as seven saw their economies shrink in the course of the decade. America's growth rate in 2010-20, at 39 per cent, was among the best of the

Everything you need to know about Covaxin, India's controversial Covid vaccine candidate

New Delhi, January 3 : India's indigenous Covid-19 vaccine candidate, Covaxin, has been recommended for restricted emergency use authorisation by the subject expert committee appointed by India's drug watchdog - Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) - despite not having released any effi-



cacy data. Officials told ThePrint the subject expert committee clearance means Covaxin can be included in the government's vaccination drive, as long as any adverse events following immunisation are reported within a stipulated time period. The SEC was appointed by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation to advise and make rec-

ommendations to the government regarding Covid-19 vaccines. The vaccine, produced by Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and National Institute of Virology, Pune, has courted many controversies since it first began human trials on 29 June,

can still recognise the virus, even though it is inactivated, which is what triggers an immune response. The vaccine was made by the NIV by isolating an Indian strain of the virus. On 22 December, Bharat Biotech published data from its phase 2 trials with a follow-up on its phase 1 trial, on a non-peer reviewed website. The data showed that the vaccine was safe with no serious adverse effects having been observed. The study also "hypothesized" that T-cell and B-cell immunity generated from the vaccine "may persist until at least 6-12 months after the second vaccination dose." The study also said that an evaluation of safety outcomes would require a large-scale phase 3 trial. Bharat Biotech was granted permission to conduct phase 3 trials on 25,800 volunteers on 23 October - making it the country's largest ever efficacy trial. On 22 December, the company announced that it had crossed the half-way mark after recruiting over 13,000 volunteers. The vaccine became a source of controversy after a letter, signed by ICMR chief Balram Bhargava, came to light on 2 July. In the letter, he asked principal investigators to conclude all trial phases for a rollout by 15 August. The ICMR later denied hav-

ing set a deadline, saying, "Our internal communication is being misinterpreted. We only said that we envisage to have a vaccine by 15 August and it is not a deadline." On 28 December, reported that Bharat Biotech advised principal investigators (PIs) to encourage volunteers by telling them that enrolling in the phase three trial could give them immunity against Covid-19. "It may take many months for the subjects above the age of 50 years to be immunised for Covid-19 vaccine," said the document given to the PIs, which added, "Hence, it will be advisable to participate in the Phase 3 Efficacy Trial for Covaxin and get vaccinated to protect yourself against Covid-19." On Saturday, the SEC recommended that the vaccine be given restricted emergency use access despite not having released any efficacy data - meaning, so far, any data proving the vaccine's efficacy has not been published in the public domain, including any results of an interim analysis. Bharat Biotech first applied for EUA on 7 December, and was asked by the government's expert panel, appointed by the Drugs Controller General of India, to return with additional data from its ongoing phase 3 trial on several occasions.



shows people skiing at a ski resort during the New Year holiday in Zunhua City of Tangshan

Out of jail on 'Covid leave', Ajay Chautala goes on Goa holiday

Chandigarh, January 3: Out of jail for several months now, former Haryana MP and head of the Jannayak Janata Party (JJP), Ajay Chautala, seems to be making the most of his "Covid leave" from Tihar jail. The 59-year-old leader recently visited Goa where he was seen with Independent MLA Gopal Kanda, the controversial former minister in Bhupinder Singh Hooda's cabinet (2009-2012). Ajay Chautala's son Dushyant is the deputy Chief Minister of Haryana. Their party JJP is an alliance partner of Manohar Lal Khattar's BJP government in the state. Ajay and his father Om Prakash Chautala - a four-time chief minister of the state - are serving a 10-year jail term in Tihar following their conviction in government job recruitment scam in 2013. According to sources in Tihar, Ajay and Om Prakash Chautala were released on emergency parole in March last year, along with 1,100 others due to the coronavirus outbreak. Sources said that prisoners out on this parole do not need any special permission to move around the country or travel to any state, and no special approval is sought from local police. This emergency parole was last extended for six weeks for all those convicts who are already out. They are required to surrender on or before 9 January 2021. Sources close to the Chautala family told The Print that the entire family led by Ajay Chautala, his wife Naina Chautala, who is also an MLA, and Dushyant, along with his wife and younger brother Digvijay had

left for a trip to Gujarat on 27 December. There they visited several religious places. While the rest of the family returned on 1 January, Ajay Chautala went to Goa for a day, before returning to New Delhi. A picture of Ajay Chautala with Gopal Kanda in Goa surfaced

Airlines, accused him of harassing her and later committed suicide. In 2014, Kanda formed Haryana Lokhit Party, but unsuccessfully contested the assembly polls. In 2019, he contested assembly election from Sirsa and won. Apart from other businesses,



on social media Saturday. Ajay and Dushyant are already in the firing line from the opposition for supporting the BJP over the three new farm laws. There has been a growing demand for Dushyant's resignation from the Haryana government. While Dushyant has been saying that he will resign if the farmers do not get MSP on their procured crops, Ajay has said that the central government should add a "sentence or two" in its farm acts guaranteeing MSP and procurement to the farmers. The JJP, which was formed by Ajay and Dushyant in 2018, after breaking away from Om Prakash Chautala's Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) is primarily a Jat-centric peasant party. Kanda, a former cabinet minister in the Bhupinder Singh Hooda-led Congress government in the state from 2009-2012, had to resign after an airhostess, who worked with his MDLR

Kanda has an offshore casino in Goa. Last year, a five-day 'Indian Poker Championship' was organised at the casino that was attended by international poker stars. Kanda, who started his career as a small time businessman in Sirsa, was once extremely close to the Chautalas. For several years, he looked after the real estate interests of the Chautalas. However, the Chautalas and Kanda parted ways ahead of the 2009 assembly polls when the INLD refused to launch Kanda's political career. He contested elections as an Independent and won the Sirsa seat. Kanda supported the Hooda government that came to power. Ajay Chautala's meeting with Kanda marks the possibility of the friends-turned-enemies getting back together again. Kanda could not be contacted despite repeated attempts on his phone number.

'Tantalisingly untrue': Amartya Sen denies he phoned Visva-Bharati VC in recent years

Kolkata, January 3 : Amid the controversy over Nobel laureate Amartya Sen telephoning Visva Bharati Vice-Chancellor Bidyut Chakraborty and introducing himself as Bharat Ratna, the famed economist has denied having any conversation with the VC in recent times, according to a teachers' association of the central university. In a mail to Sudipta Bhattacharya, who is the president of the Visva Bharati Faculty Association, the Nobel laureate said the phone call that the varsity

on the 3rd of July, and went to Delhi first, and then Calcutta and Santiniketan. I was not in India at all in June 2019. I am extremely rarely in India in June. I prefer to come only after the monsoon settles in - so it tends to be July, not June." The VC or any other senior official of the central university could not be reached for comments. Bhattacharya had in December last year said that the VC had claimed during a recent online meeting with the faculty that he had got a phone call from a person who introduced himself as "Bharat Ratna Amartya Sen" and requested him not to evict hawkers from near his Shantiniketan house as his daughter "buys vegetables from them". The faculty body president had sent a mail to Sen seeking his remarks about the VC's claim. Bhattacharya said Sen had previously denied such claims by Chakraborty.



authorities claim was made by him is "tantalisingly untrue" and that he had spoken to Chakraborty a few years ago, not in June 2019 as was being said. Visva Bharati authorities had in a recent statement claimed that Sen had called the VC from a number in India either on June 2 or 14 in 2019 and complained about the eviction of hawkers from near his Shantiniketan residence. Following this, the teachers' association president had sent a mail to Sen seeking his comment about the university's statement and got a reply on December 29 last year. "On June 2, 2019, I was in France, attending a meeting in Paris. On June 14, 2019, I was in America, at our home in Cambridge Massachusetts. After that I was in England, in the English Cambridge," Sen said in his reply to Bhattacharya. About speaking to the VC, Sen said, "On your other question, I have talked with the present VC of Visva Bharati, Bidyut Chakravarty, only once, to the best of my knowledge. This was a few years ago when he was chairing a meeting for the release of a book by Pranab Bardhan. "His claim that we have talked on the phone and I had introduced myself as Bharat Ratna is tantalisingly untrue. Thanks for your interest in preventing injustice and untruth!" Sen said. Responding to Bhattacharya's query on the Nobel laureate's visit to India in the summer of 2019, the economist said, "I came



A staff member cleans snow at the Hongguangshan scenic spot in Urumqi, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region

'How can I trust BJP's vaccine?' Akhilesh Yadav says won't take Covid shot

New Delhi, January 3 : Former Uttar Pradesh chief minister and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav has said that he is not going to get vaccinated because he doesn't trust the "BJP's vaccine." "How can I trust the BJP's vaccine? When our government is formed, everyone will get free vaccine," Yadav said in Ayodhya, soon after he met several Hindu saints and Muslim holy men at his party office. "Those talking about 'taali, thaali' are now speaking about vaccines," he said, referring to the lockdown dry run last March

when Prime Minister Narendra Modi asked the people to come out and bang their plates to commemorate health workers who would be fighting the Covid-19 pandemic. Akhilesh also raised the issue of Ayodhya's development during his press meet. He accused the Yogi Adityanath government of only cutting ribbons after the work done by Samajwadi Party. "More development work will happen in Ayodhya when Samajwadi Party will form government in the next assembly elections," he added.

40 minutes, 3 hospitals, medical teams on standby - How Delhi held its Covid vaccine dry run

New Delhi, January 3 : A total of 40 minutes on an average is what it will take for a person to get a Covid-19 vaccine, according to the dry run conducted across three sites in Delhi Saturday morning. At least 15 trained vaccination officers carried out the dry run in Central, South-West and Shahdara districts, a process that also involved 75 healthcare workers. The three sites in Delhi included the Venkateshwara Hospital in South West district, Guru Tegh Bahadur (GTB) Hospital in Shahdara and the Urban Primary Health Care Centre at Daryaganj in Central district. While teams began lining up from 8:15 am onwards at the sites, the process, which was initiated at 9 am, went on until noon Saturday. The dry run was conducted in all states and Union Territories across the country, primarily to test the CoWin portal, which will be used to register beneficiaries during the actual drive. This is the second such exercise - a dry run was held on 28 and 29 December in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat. A total of 25 healthcare workers each were among the test beneficiaries for the dry vaccine run. Teams of five vaccination officers were constituted to execute the process. This included two officers, an auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM) who administered the vaccine, a civil defence volunteer (CDV) at the entrance and a data entry operator for registration. A tour of the dry run at GTB hospital revealed that the sites will comprise three rooms - a waiting room, vaccination room and an observation room. To begin with, civil defence volunteers do thermal scanning at the entrance following which the beneficiary shares his/her details and is allowed in only if his/

her name is on the list of people to be vaccinated. Once allowed in, there is a waiting room for the test beneficiaries. Soon after, a beneficiary proceeds for registration to the data entry operator who enters details into the Co-WIN application. The portal contains details of all the beneficiaries. After this, the beneficiary proceeds to the main vaccination room where a trained officer administers the vaccine, which is stored in cold chain boxes at a certain temperature. Once this is done, the beneficiary is sent to an observation room where they were made to wait for 30 minutes in case they develop adverse effects. If there is no issue, then the person is automatically released and vacated from the area. In case of any health emergency or Adverse Effect Following Immunisation (AEFI) teams constituted for this purpose at the district level are roped in. These include medical officers and ambulance drivers who are immediately contacted. Indicators and markings on the floor urge beneficiaries to maintain social distancing while moving from one room to another. Sanjeev Kumar, district magistrate Shahdara, who was present at the site, told ThePrint, "My team is also here to ensure that adequate security arrangements are in place." He added that the cold chain points and vaccine transportation are crucial to the entire process. The dry run was used to check the operational feasibility of the Co-WIN application in a field environment and also identify if there is any gap between planning and implementation. The Co-WIN application is where data operators at three sites in Delhi will enter the data of the person who will be vaccinated as part of

the mock drill. Dr Monica, district immunisation officer, south west district, where the drive will be carried out at Venkateshwara Hospital, said: "The idea is to ensure crystal clear coordination between district level, state level and union government teams for the dry run." Sub district magistrate, Kodali, Arvind Rana, who was overlooking the process at the Daryaganj dispensary, said they also got some teachers to volunteer Saturday to ensure proper social distancing was maintained. "However, we witnessed overcrowding due to large media presence but we will ensure this doesn't happen on the actual day of vaccination," Rana added. Rani, an



anganwadi worker in central district, who was one of the test beneficiaries at the Daryaganj dispensary said, it was natural to feel slightly nervous in the beginning. "But I honestly cannot wait to receive the vaccination since I have been on duty from day 1 and more than myself, it is also for the safety of my family," Rani told. Dr Sheetal, in charge at the Daryaganj clinic, said, "We also have to

counsel the beneficiaries since many of them tend to be nervous." Health authorities also carried out a demonstration at the clinic wherein a test beneficiary was instructed to "faint" after a few minutes of getting the vaccination shot. This was held to test the AEFI process and the response time of the emergency team and ambulance. Asked whether she would take the vaccine, Kirna Kumari, a nurse at Venkateshwara Hospital, said: "Every medicine has a side effect. Maybe this will have it, maybe it won't. We can't say anything now. I will take it." At Venkateshwara Hospital, a private facility, the dry run was a three-day procedure. Chief district medical officer (south west) Dr Anjana Kaushal, said, "On day 0, which was 31 December, we got a user ID through which we had to upload the beneficiaries. At 1 pm on the day, we transferred the vaccine at the cold chain point in the district. By the second day that is today, we had registered our 25 beneficiaries on the CoWin application. Since this is a private hospital, we got the vaccine from the cold chain point by 8 am here." South west district magistrate, Naveen Aggarwal, who was monitoring the process at Venkateshwara Hospital, said, "We will allow a group of people. Like today we allowed six six people who were checked by a vaccination officer." "The main challenge is that we had at first uploaded details of all

healthcare workers from government and private on the CoWin portal for the vaccine," he added. "There are quite a few beneficiaries. In our district itself, details of over 17,000 beneficiaries have been uploaded." Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan visited GTB hospital followed by the dispensary in Daryaganj to review the preparations for the vaccine rollout. He arrived at GTB hospital at 9:30 am, wherein he spent about 10 minutes taking a round of the facility. This was followed by a brief interaction with the media here, following which he also visited the clinic in Daryaganj. Speaking to the media, Dr Harsh Vardhan said, "I appeal to people not to pay heed to rumours. Ensuring safety and efficacy of the vaccine is our priority. Different kinds of rumours were spread during polio immunisation but people took the vaccine and India is now polio-free." He further said that feedback received after the dry run in four states last month was included in the guidelines for vaccination drive Saturday. "Except for giving the actual vaccine, each and every procedure is being followed during the drill," the minister said. Delhi Health minister Satyender Jain also visited the central district dispensary at 10 am to review the arrangements. Review meetings will now be held at the district level to discuss the outcome of the dry run following which Delhi government health department officials will also do a video-conference with the district officials to address any gaps that might have been encountered. This will eventually be communicated to the union government authorities later in the day, through a video conference.

Contd. From Page 1

CM presents Srimanta Sankardev

about starting the mission. Stressing on the importance of strengthening the Namghars in the State, Sonowal said that to inculcate moral values among the youth they must be encouraged to visit Namghar regularly while underlining the need to impart humane values in today's development oriented society. He also highlighted State Government's initiative to instil Gurujana's ideals among the younger generation through education by setting up institutions such as Madhabdev University, Aniruddhadev University etc. Sonowal appreciated the efforts of Srimanta Sankardev Sangha in setting up Srimanta Sankardev University to propagate the ideals of Gurujana while informing about the State Government's initiative to preserve the prestige and stature of each big and small community living in the state. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of Finance, Health, Education etc. Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma elaborated on the intricate values of Gurujana's teachings and the spiritual movement he started to reform the greater Assamese society. Minister of Cultural Affairs Department Naba Kumar Doley also spoke at the programme which was attended by MP Queen Oja, Media Adviser to Chief Minister Hrishikesh Goswami, Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister Paban Kumar Borthakur, Commissioner & Secretary of Cultural Affairs Department Pritam Saikia and several Satradhikars among others.

DCGI finally approves Serum In

We reiterate our gratitude to doctors, medical staff, scientists, police personnel, sanitation workers and all Corona warriors for the outstanding work done, that too in adverse circumstances. We will remain eternally grateful to them for saving many lives," he said in a series of tweets. WHO has also welcomed the move and said the decision would help India intensify and strengthen the fight against coronavirus. "WHO welcomes the first emergency use authorisation given to COVID-19 vaccine in the WHO South-East Asia Region. This decision taken today by India will help intensify and strengthen the fight against COVID-19 pandemic in the Region. The use of vaccine in prioritised populations, along with continued implementation of other public health measures and community participation will be important in reducing the impact of COVID-19," said Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director WHO South-East Asia Region. The DCGI, on Sunday, announced that it has approved Oxford-AstraZeneca's coronavirus vaccine as well as Bharat Biotech's candidate Covaxin for emergency use. "After adequate examination, CDSCO has decided to accept the recommendations of the Expert Committee and accordingly, vaccines of M/s Serum and M/s Bharat Biotech are being approved for restricted use in emergency situation," said the DCGI. Both the vaccines would need to be stored at 2-8 degree Celsius, said the drug regulator.

PM Narendra Modi hails DCGI

nation. Congratulations India. Congratulations to our hardworking scientists and innovators. DCGI approves restricted emergency use of Serum Institute, Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccines," PM Modi said. "It would make every Indian proud that the two vaccines that have been given emergency use approval are made in India! This shows the eagerness of our scientific community to fulfill the dream of an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, at the root of which is care and compassion," PM Modi said in another tweet. The Serum Institute of India, the world's largest vaccine manufacturer, has tied up with Oxford-AstraZeneca to manufacture Covishield. Covaxin has been indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Covaxin has been indigenously developed by Bharat Biotech in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). Serum Institute of India's CEO Adar Poonawalla tweeted, "Happy new year, everyone! All the risks Serum Institute of India took with stockpiling the vaccine, have finally paid off. COVISHIELD, India's first COVID-19 vaccine is approved, safe, effective and ready to roll-out in the coming weeks." The approval by the DCGI was given on the basis of recommendations submitted by a COVID-19 subject expert committee (SEC) of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO). This paves the way for the roll out of at least two vaccines in India in the coming days.

Children Can't Get The Covid-19

vaccines are not tested on children younger than or equal to 12 yet. The vaccines are typically tested first in adults and once the vaccine is found safe with adults, that will be tested on children. Another major reason is that Covid-19 appears to mostly affect adults than children. As per the CDC report from September last year, there were only 121 children among the 190,000 people who had died due to coronavirus. Also that the children are found to be spreading at the rate of half to that of adults, though they are great carriers. Moderna reportedly is planning to start pediatric clinical trials in children between 12 and 17, soon.

BJP, UPPL to jointly fight Assam

communities of the region." He also said, "Massive corruptions took place during the Hagrama Mohilary-led BTC government and the existing coalition government in BTC will institute an inquiry into the anomalies in the big schemes and projects implemented in the region." Sarma, who is also the education minister of the state said, "The HSLC and HS examinations in the state will begin from May 11 and 12 respectively." The BJP meeting, which emphasized on fielding candidates in the 12 constituencies under BTR, was addressed by Assam BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Dass, MP Dilip Saikia, former Rajya Sabha MP Biswajit Daimary. The meeting was also attended by Assam minister Bhabesh Kalita, MPs Pallab Lochan Das and Ashok Shinghal, MLA Angoorlata Deka, ex-MLA Rekha Rani Das Boro and other senior leaders. Meanwhile, the state BJP also felicitated new BTC chief Pramod Boro and deputy chief Gobinda Basumatary during the felicitation programme. Speaking to media persons, BTC chief Boro said, "To ensure corruption-free governance in BTR and check the misappropriations by the previous government, we have taken various initiatives." He said, "The schemes undertaken by the previous government are being checked and verifications of the ongoing projects are also going on." Himanta Biswa Sarma, who is also the PWD minister, had a meeting with higher officials of the PWD of BTC in the BTC auditorium hall after the end of the BJP meeting. Assam health, finance, education and public works department (PWD) minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday held a meeting at Kokrajhar with Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) chief Pramod Boro, PWD officials and other functionaries to discuss the works of the department in the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR). Sarma reviewed various projects undertaken in the region. He discussed future plans for the infrastructure development in the BTR. Along with minister Sarma and BTC chief Pramod Boro, BJP national general secretary Dilip Saikia, state BJP president Ranjeet Kumar Dass, BTC deputy CEM Gobinda Basumatary were also present in the meeting. Earlier, he had attended a felicitation programme and organisational meeting of the BJP in BTR. "Today in #Kokrajhar, attended felicitation ceremony & organisational meet of #BTR along with BJP National GS

Rattled China attacks Trump ad

crossroads, and a new window of hope is opening," he was quoted. Biden defeated President Trump in the November 8 Presidential election and is scheduled to take oath on January 20. According to Wang, the US-China relations have faced unprecedented difficulties during the Trump regime. "What has happened proves that the US' attempt to suppress China and start a new Cold War has not just seriously harmed the interests of the two peoples, but also caused severe disruptions to the world. Such a policy will find no support and is doomed to fail. We are ready to develop with the United States a relationship based on coordination, cooperation and stability. We know that some in the US are uneasy about China's rapid development. However, the best way to keep one's lead is through constant self-improvement, not by blocking others' development," Wang said. "We believe that as long as the United States can draw lessons from the past and work with China in the same direction, the two countries are capable of resolving differences through dialogue and expanding converging interests by cooperation," Wang added.

COVID-19 vaccine dry run to

uploaded and a mock exercise for the vaccine was conducted in all the centres. The state Surveillance Medical Officer of the World Health Organisation (WHO) visited many centres and discussed the issues related to the vaccination with the health officials and the district administrations. Along with other parts of the country, a dry run to check the best way to vaccinate people against COVID-19 and plug loopholes in logistics and training has also started in Guwahati. Dry run for COVID-19 vaccination administration is being conducted at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) of the city. This massive drive in all the states across the country will also test the operational feasibility in the use of CoWIN application in a field environment. Short for COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network, CoWIN is a digital platform to roll out and scale up the vaccination drive. The massive exercise comes a day after a panel of government-appointed experts recommended approval for the Oxford COVID-19 vaccine, manufactured by Serum Institute of India, to the regulator Drugs Control Authority of India. Today's exercise is the second dry run being conducted in the country – the first was on December 28 and 29 in Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Gujarat. Across India, the dry run is being conducted in 116 districts across 259 sites. Some 96,000 vaccinators have been trained for this, the Health Ministry had said. Of these, 2,360 participants have been trained in the National Training of Trainers and over 57,000 with district-level training in 719 districts. The process, in which 25 health workers will receive dummy vaccines at each spot, is meant to test the mechanisms and reveal possible gaps in the system ahead of the actual vaccination drive. "An important focus of the dry run will be on management of any possible adverse events following immunization," the Health Ministry said in a statement. Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has asked officials in all states to ensure that the vaccination sites and those in charge follow the checklist and standard operating procedure prepared by the Health Ministry and shared with all the states and Union Territories to guide them in the dry run. "During this entire drive, we have done massive preparations... just like we do during elections," the Health Minister said, explaining the scale of dry run.

Rescue operation leads to

Hossain's captors had contacted his family over the phone from a Bangladeshi number and demanded a ransom of Tk 5 lakh. Dilwar Hossain's family also agreed to pay the amount and the kidnappers gave some instructions and asked Elimuddin, a person from neighbouring Nayagram, to bring the money. But after the police arrested Elimuddin, the kidnappers released Hossain, the report said. After his return, the police interrogated Hossain and he revealed about the secret tunnel. On Friday, a special team led by the Karimganj district superintendent of police conducted an operation in the Balia area in search of the tunnel and the cops discovered a tunnel more than 200 metres long. The report quoted Kumar as saying that the location of the tunnel was covered in plants and there was a barbed wire fence above the tunnel. Hossain revealed that the tunnel leads to Sylhet in Bangladesh and miscreants regularly use it. He said there are around 63 "natural gaps" along the international border with Bangladesh in Karimganj. The SP informed that the BSF has been asked to close the Indian part of the tunnel with immediate effect.

To reduce risk of transmission

Taskforce (CC19TF) said it will implement the modality under the directive of the National COVID-19 Task Force (NC19TF) with effect from Sunday (Jan 3). It includes transportation of goods to Thimphu and transit of goods to other Dzongkhags via Thimphu. "This transport escort modality is being implemented to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and to ensure seamless flow of essential items during the lockdown," the CC19TF said in a statement. Earlier, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Bhutan, in a statement on Facebook said the National COVID-19 was in the process of reviewing modalities to ease the nationwide lockdown. "This will, however, depend on the epidemiological evidence, latest disease patterns and other related issues on the ground," it had said. Vehicles for the transportation of goods entering Thimphu from the south will be provided escort service starting from the Thimphu City Welcome Gate to the respective place of unloading. Vehicles entering from the east shall be provided with escort service from Hongtsho to the respective place of unloading, CC19TF said. The vehicles will be allowed to unload till 9 PM, and the drivers will be escorted back to the respective exit points for immediate exit from Thimphu after unloading of goods. Vehicles in transit via Thimphu to other Dzongkhags will be stopped at the Thimphu City Welcome Gate and at Hungtsho by Security, and the vehicles will be escorted till their respective exit points (Thimphu City Welcome Gate or Hongtsho). To implement the escort arrangement and to ensure smooth movement of the vehicles, the Suppliers/Drivers of goods vehicles are requested to observe the following registration process: a) Register with the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MoEA) for groceries and essentials like POL, Gas, etc. The contact details of MoEA focal officials are: b) Register with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests (MoAF) for agricultural and livestock products. The contact details of MoAF focal officials are: Karma Tshering, #17116505, email: karmat@moaf.gov.bt (Agricultural products) Dr. Kuenga Namgay, #77437743, email: knamgay@moaf.gov.bt (Livestock products) Jigme Wangchuk, #17708169, email: jigmewangchuk72@gmail.com (Livestock products) c) Register with the Public Service Call Center 1010 for goods other than groceries, essentials, and agricultural and livestock products; d) After completion of the verification process and with the details captured in the Check Post Management System (CPMS), approval for the movement will be accordingly granted via message (SMS). Once the vehicle reaches its designated loading/unloading point in Thimphu, the driver must remain inside the vehicle at all times. Drivers should carry food and water with them and not come in contact with any person at the unloading point. Dealers/wholesalers should put in place a dedicated portable toilet at the godown sites for exclusive use by the drivers. Non-compliance to the health protocols by any driver shall be dealt as per the law.

NRL pays interim dividend to Assam Govt.



Guwahati, January 3: Managing Director, Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) S.K. Barua today presented the cheque of company's first interim dividend amounting Rs. 122,60,88,144/- (Rupees one hundred twenty two crore sixty lakh eighty eight thousand one hundred and forty four) to Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal for the financial year 2020-21 at Chief Minister's official residence. This was the dividend for the 2nd quarter of the financial year till September. Notably, Chief Minister Sonowal received the cheque as part of the dividend against Government of Assam's equity holding of 12.35 per cent in the company. The final dividend will be decided at the NRL's annual general meeting after the current financial year ending on 31st March 2021. Chief Secretary Jishnu Baruah, Additional Chief Secretary to Chief Minister Paban Kumar Borthakur, Commissioner and Secretary of Industries and Commerce K.K. Dwivedi, senior officials of NRL were present during presentation of the dividend cheque.

The ceremonial Distribution of Dr. Banikant Kakati Award under PB at DWS.



Kheroni, January 3: All round the West Karbi Anglong District the Ceremonial distribution programme of free Scooty/Electric Scooter to selected meritorious girls Students who had scored 1st Division in Higher Secondary Examination 2020 conducted by AHSEC under Pragyan Bharati Schemes Dr. Banikant Kakati Meritorious Award, 2020 held at Donkamukam Waisong Stadium here today (Sunday). The programme was presided by Anil Chandra Das ADC Hamren, as attended chief guest Tuliram Ronghang CEM of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Diphu and accompanies Horensing Bey (no.3 Parliamentary St MP) Dr. Mansing Rongpi (No.20 Baithalangso LAC Constituency) KAAC'EM Rupsing Teron, and MAC's Praphat Chandra Taro, Pavan kr. Rai, Rina Terangpi, Richardson Tokbi, etc. Lecturer's of Govt College, Students and their Parents. The KAAC'CEM Tuliram Ronghang while addressed that total of 235 in Karbi Anglong & 47 Students from West Karbi Anglong Districts will be received. In addition to this, a revealed that the main objective of launching this scheme done by the Govt. of Assam is to provide properly get resources to all of girl's students who have been studying across the State in various places in order to encourage the girls to take up to great higher education and be independent on their own and helping them in traveling. KAAC is Committed To Impart Quality of Education in the District" Says Tuliram Ronghang KAAC'CEM of KAAC, Diphu at the Ceremonial distributions of free Scooty in programmed to 47 Girls Students. All the girls were Free of cost for the process of Driving license who received the scooty also added. In the Karbi Anglong there are 26th MAC Constituency. The govt. of BJP try to look equal parts of doing development regards said by CEM Tuliram Ronghang KAAC'CEM.

Rajasthan imposes night curfew from 8 pm to 6 am in Jaipur, 12 other districts

Jaipur, January 3: The restrictions will be in place from 8 pm to 6 am in Kota, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Udaipur, Ajmer, Alwar, Bhilwara, Nagore, Pali, Tonk, Sikar and Ganganagar, according to an order issued by the Rajasthan Government. The Rajasthan Government has decided to impose a night curfew in 13 districts of the state amid a surge in cases of coronavirus. The restrictions will be in place from 8 pm to 6 am till 15 January in Kota, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Udaipur, Ajmer, Alwar, Bhilwara, Nagore, Pali, Tonk, Sikar and Ganganagar, according to an order issued by the Rajasthan Government, as per a report. All offices, restaurants, commercial places, and markets will remain shut during the given time. The staff has been directed to leave at 7 pm so that they reach home by 8 pm, the circular read. All offices, restaurants, commercial places, and markets will remain shut during the given time. Offices, restaurants, commercial places, and markets will remain shut during the given time. However, this will not be applicable for: 1) Factory with production of continuous nature. 2) Factories having night shift. 3) IT and IT companies. 4) Chemist shops. 5) Offices related to essential emergency services. 6) Marriage-related gathering. 7) Any workplace related to Medical services. 8) Passengers coming/going to bus stand, railway station and airport. 9) Movement of all trucks and other goods carrier vehicles and persons employed for loading and unloading goods. Rajasthan had earlier imposed a night curfew from 8 pm to 6 am within urban limits of 13 district headquarter towns of Kota, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Bikaner, Udaipur, Ajmer, Alwar, Bhilwara, Nagore, Pali, Tonk, Sikar and Ganganagar from 1 December to 31 December. Meanwhile, four more people died from Covid-19 in Rajasthan on Friday as 609 fresh cases surfaced, taking the number of infections to 3,08,852. As many as 2,700 people have died from the infection in the state so far. On Friday, Jaipur, Jodhpur, Sikar and Tonk reported one death each while maximum 91 new infections were reported from Jaipur. Jodhpur recorded 85 cases. At present, the state has 9,223 active cases while 2,96,929 people have recovered from the disease till now.

Honey Trapping gang busted, Nagaon Police amuses with funny tweet

Guwahati, January 3: Policing is a serious business. But besides maintaining law and order, Assam Police keeps exhibiting its sense of humour in many occasions. Nagaon Police is not also an exception. The police in Nagaon district of middle Assam recently busted a honey trapping gang in the district. The police arrested four persons including a woman in connection with the honey trapping case. They have been sent to judicial custody after the arrest. What amuses the netizens, is not the arrest of the four accused, but the quirky tweet Nagaon Police posted. "This gang used HONEY for TRAPPING victim

and demanded 10 lakhs. Team Nagaon used BHOOT JALAKIYA for TRAPPING the gang and send them for Honey "Sun and Moon" at Jail." Nagaon Police tweeted. Bhoot Jalakiya or Bhot Jolokiya which literally means Bhutanese chili in Assamese, is an interspecific hybrid chili pepper cultivated in Northeast India. It is a hybrid of Capsicum chinense and Capsicum frutescens and is closely related to the Naga Morich. In 2007, Guinness World Records certified that the ghost pepper was the world's hottest chili pepper, 400 times hotter than Tabasco sauce.

Mexican Doctor Hospitalised After Receiving Pfizer Covid Vaccine

Mexico City, January 3: Mexican authorities said they are studying the case of a 32-year-old female doctor who was hospitalized after receiving the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. The doctor, whose name has not been released, was admitted to the intensive care unit of a public hospital in the northern state of Nuevo Leon after she experienced seizures, difficulty breathing and a skin rash. "The initial diagnosis is encephalomyelitis," the Health Ministry said in a statement released on Friday night. Encephalomyelitis is an inflammation of the brain and spinal cord. The ministry added that the doctor has a history of allergic reactions and said that there is no evidence from clinical trials that anyone has developed an inflammation of the brain after the vaccine's application. Pfizer and BioNTech could not immediately be reached for comment. More than 126,500 people have died from COVID-19 in Mexico. The country began distributing the first round of COVID-19 vaccines to healthcare workers on Dec. 24.

Lacazette double rounds off Arsenal's demolition of West Brom in snow

London, January 3 : Fairweather footballers? Not Arsenal, at least not here. Mikel Arteta's team made light of fierce conditions and desperate opponents to produce possibly their best performance of the season. Kieran Tierney,



brought in last month to guide this team to survival but has yet to find a way to stop them bleeding goals. Allardyce had billed this as a fight between relegation rivals but Arteta is looking up after three wins in a week. "The table looks much better," said Arteta. "Wins bring a different momentum and energy and the players have the handbrake off." We were very close against West Brom to what I want. There was a lot of movement, good energy and real purpose. "Sam Johnstone has been the Premier League's busiest goalkeeper this season and it took less than three minutes for Arsenal to force him into another save, with the keeper using his feet to deny Hector Bellerin. He then had to deny Saka as Arsenal looked smooth, as unperturbed by the elements as they were by opponents who played some pretty stuff at times but had neither the precision nor physicality to unsettle the visitors. Although Saka tormented the makeshift wing-back Grady Diangana, Arsenal's breakthrough came from the other flank, from where Tierney produced a brilliant solo goal in the 23rd minute. After knocking the ball past

Darnell Furlong, Tierney dashed to retrieve it and then tricked his way into the box and curled a superb right-footed shot into the far corner. The snow, having suddenly resumed, fell like confetti on Arsenal's celebrating players. They rejoined again five minutes later after increasing their lead thanks to a glorious collective move orchestrated by two of their youngest and most exciting talents. Smith Rowe and Saka combined with Lacazette to cut through the heart of the nonplussed home defence before Smith Rowe squared

for Saka to prod into the net from close range. Allardyce put Diangana out of his misery at half-time as West Brom switched to a back four. They briefly looked more coherent. But Arsenal plundered a third goal on the hour thanks to a blend of their own excellent play and slapstick defending. Saka instigated it, gliding down the right and floating over a cross that Sami Ayari smashed against his own post. Johnstone saved Smith Rowe's follow-up but could not stop Lacazette from whacking the rebound into the net. West Brom have a tendency to concede goals in clusters and Arsenal soon struck another. Lacazette escaping his markers to prod a cross by Tierney into the net from close range. Johnstone remained the main barrier in preventing Arsenal scoring a fifth goal, while at the other end Bernd Lenno denied Rekeem Harper a crumb of comfort in the last minute, tipping away a fine shot from distance by the substitute.

Josh Beaumont's late try seals Sale's scrappy comeback win at Gloucester

London, January 3 : Josh Beaumont marked his return from a 14-month injury lay-off with the decisive try two minutes from time to give Sale a welcome first win since Steve Diamond's departure. Beaumont had not featured for the Sharks since November 2019 due to a long-term knee problem but he came off the bench to provide the decisive intervention, stretching over a pile of bodies to score late on. It was a sight to warm Sale hearts - none more so than interim head coach Paul Deacon's, who finally has a win to his name. It was a fiery contest, terribly tense throughout



the second half, as demonstrated by the fight that broke out in the final minute and led to a yellow card for Billy Twelvetrees for clashing with a Sale water carrier. The Gloucester head coach, George Skivington, was unimpressed with the member of Sale's backroom staff in question for preventing Twelvetrees getting to the ball to take a quick lineout, with the centre sent to the sin-bin for taking matters into his own hands. That sparked a melee between both sets of players which could have further repercussions, and the same could be said of Daniel du Preez's tackle on Chris Harris five minutes from time which left the Gloucester player need-

adjusting after the exit of one of their most influential figures in Danny Cipriani. The new year has not brought fresh beginnings for either of these sides just yet but after three previous defeats under Deacon, this was a hard-fought win for the visitors. Gloucester, meanwhile, find themselves bottom of the table after Worcester were awarded four points following a Covid-19 outbreak at Harlequins that caused their fixture to be cancelled. In other words, it demonstrates just why Premiership ring-fencing - or at the very least doing away with relegation this season - is rapidly moving to the top of the clubs' agendas. There are still 17 rounds to go but

Gloucester's position will be of some concern given that Covid cancellations are having such an impact on the league standings. Gloucester began on the front foot with their No 10, Will Evans, and Alan MacGinty exchanging penalties before the former kicked to the corner and a mass of Cherry & Whites drove over, with Fraser Balmain awarded the try. Sale registered another penalty straight after the restart through MacGinty but Gloucester put their foot on the pedal when the visiting skipper, Jono Ross, was sent to the sin-bin just before the half-hour for a no-arms tackle on Val Rapava-Ruskin. Louis Rees-Zammit's try came from a lineout on the left with the ball whipped by Stephen Varney to Evans. The timing of his pass, and the way it slid perfectly behind Sam James and into Harris's hands, was straight from the Cipriani playbook, and once Rees-Zammit was in possession of the ball there was no stopping him. Evans kicked another penalty, giving Gloucester a 16-6 lead, but MacGinty cut the deficit to seven again with a well-taken kick from the right. Soon after the restart MacGinty notched penalties number four and five - the second with Gloucester's captain, Lewis Ludlow, in the sin-bin - before Evans responded. Beaumont, though, had the last word. "It's fantastic, a fairytale I suppose," said Deacon. "[It] is a long time in the life of a rugby player to be injured but the celebrations showed what he means for the team. It's great for Josh, and great to have him back playing."

Harry Kane and Son Heung-min score as Tottenham beat Leeds to go third

Paris, January 4 : José Mourinho has been a little grouchy of late, moaning about the inability of his Tottenham players to follow on-field orders and railing at the perceived failings of authority, namely the late decision to postpone Wednesday's game against Fulham. The last thing he needed was for the news to break on the eve of this game that three of his players had flouted coronavirus rules by attending a Christmas party. What was going through the minds of Sergio Reguilón, Erik Lamela and Giovanni Lo Celso? Presumably nothing. None of them played here, although Lo Celso was never going to because of a hamstring injury. Mourinho, though, could feel the storm clouds lift as his team won for the first time in five Premier League matches and won well, with a reassuringly stable presence helping to make the difference, to go third in the table. Harry Kane had celebrated the birth of his third child last Tuesday. Here, he turned the game in Spurs' favour with a 29th-minute penalty before his show-stopping moment - a clinical pass that took out two Leeds defenders and allowed Son Heung-min to add the second with his 100th goal for the club. Leeds were broken and the cold truth was that no team can afford to defend as generously as they did. There was plenty to admire about their swashbuckling spirit but the second half became a non-event after Illan Meslier had carried a Toby Alderweireld header into his own net. Spurs were efficient and could have scored more and the only blot for them was the stoppage-time dismissal of Matt Doherty. Already on a booking, he was late into a tackle on the substi-

tute Pablo Hernández - a misjudgment that summed up his stuttering start to life at the club. Leeds made the running at the outset, their defenders stepping up with the ball at their feet, their determination to find spaces in the final third clear. They had the chances to have been in front by the midway point of the first half, with none better than the header that Patrick Bamford blew on 23 minutes. All alone inside the area after Doherty's cover melted away, he was picked out by Raphinha's delivery only for his sights to be awry. Everything changed after Kane's breakthrough. The downside to Marcelo Bielsa's creed at Leeds is that mistakes will be made at the back. Risk-taking carries a string. Twice, Leeds had been loose with their distribution and on the third occasion they paid. Bielsa has made the point that Meslier is generally solid with his short passing game but the keeper played one straight out to Harry Winks, who fed the ball back into Steven Bergwijn on the edge of the area. The subsequent error belonged to Ezgjan Alioski, who went in clumsily on Bergwijn to concede the penalty. It feels like a symbol of Leeds's enterprise that Alioski, the left-back, wears No 10 and he was rather better going forward than defending. Kane's conversion was typically clinical. Spurs had flickered through Kane and Pierre-Emile Højbjerg; the former flashing high from an angle, the latter shooting straight at Meslier. Now they went for the kill. Leeds were far too loose in their defensive third, particularly in the one-on-ones. Spurs got around the back twice, first when Højbjerg beat Alioski too easily to pull back for Alderweireld, whose shot was blocked, and then when

Ben Davies did likewise to Raphinha. From his low cross Tanguy Ndombele manoeuvred a glorious opening only to blaze high. Mourinho cursed in the technical area. A failure to turn 1-0 into 2-0 has been a problem for his team but not this time. Højbjerg won the ball with a measure of comfort and when he found Kane the striker's pass for

and Alderweireld got in front of Calvin Phillips to nod goalwards, it was the prompt for a horror moment. Meslier had the ball in his hands but as he tumbled back he carried it over the line. His attempt to throw it out at the last moment was in vain. The referee, David Coote, felt the notification from the goalline technology. Spurs could



Son was a beauty - the latest example of the understanding between the pair. Alioski had been prominent in Leeds's bright opening, as had the left-winger Jack Harrison. The pair combined for Alioski to blast into the side-netting while they swapped roles in a move that ended with Harrison having a shot blocked by Doherty. Leeds could also point to a Harrison curler on 42 minutes that was just too high. It was not Meslier's day. He pushed an Ndombele shot around the post for a corner at the start of the second half but when Son swung it over

enjoy themselves and they cut through Leeds at will for a period. Kane lashed into the side-netting, Son missed a final pass and Meslier saved from Ndombele and Kane - the former a very smart block. "We have been through problems similar to the ones today," Bielsa said. "And not through a lack of experience or the need for longer adaptation to the league. We are in conditions to take better decisions. Spurs' goals came about through errors by us. We created 10 chances, they created 12 and scored three. The fundamental difference was the efficiency."

Gerwyn Price sets up PDC world final showdown with Gary Anderson



London, January 3 : If they handed out world championships on the strength of talking, it would be no contest. Sunday's final between Gerwyn Price and Gary Anderson pits Wales against Scotland, a first-time finalist against a two-time champion, insurgent brawn against world-weary indifference. While Anderson is an all-time great who speaks of himself as a run-of-the-mill pub thrower, Price finally stands on the verge of cashing the cheques his mouth has merrily been writing for

years. When he awakens in his hotel bubble on Sunday morning, the 35-year-old from Markham will know that he stands one game away from claiming it all. A first world championship. The No 1 world ranking. And most importantly of all, the fulfilment of a promise that has sustained him ever since he gave up a career in rugby union to chance his arm on the travelling sideshow of competitive arrows. But in his way stands a competitor who he underestimates at his peril. The 50-year-old Anderson may often give the impression of a player who feels his best days are behind him. He hasn't won a major title for more than two years. "It felt atrocious," he said of his semi-final victory here, a 6-3 demolition of Dave Chisnall. When it was pointed out to him that he had averaged 100 and hit 13 180s, he simply shrugged. And yet for all Anderson's gloomy, glass-half-empty schtick, here he is: in a fifth world final, and without ever really hitting his best form. He may only be the No 13 seed, but he scores heavily and consistently, keeps an even temper and

knows how to win the big games: partly, you feel, by refusing to acknowledge that they are big games in the first place. This was where Chisnall fell down. Fresh from his 5-0 trouncing of world No 1 Michael van Gerwen in the quarter-final, Chisnall looked skittish and distracted, a man gripped by the occasion. The scoring was characteristically heavy, the finishing frequently outstanding: a 170 in the second set, a clutch 124 in the fifth with Anderson sitting on tops. What he lacked was the composure to ride out the key moments. Price, meanwhile, came from 3-1 down to beat the tireless Steven Bunting 6-4 in the first semi-final: a match of supreme quality and thrilling shifts in momentum, where every leg began to feel like its own mini-epic. The standard of finishing verged on the surreal: 13 100-plus finishes in total, a record. And while Bunting marched into the lead, Price relied on his banker doubles - tops, double-10 and double-12 - and gradually took control. Of all the sport's colourful characters, it is Price who always had the most complex relationship with the paying punters, and who has arguably benefited most profoundly from their absence. The prevailing orthodoxy

for much of 2020 was that without the boos and the barracking, without the febrile and often openly hostile energy of the crowd to fuel him, Price would be a milder and less dangerous player: just another bloke in a silk shirt throwing darts in an empty room. Instead, the tranquillity and evenness of the setting seems to have focused him more intently. Not only is he less easily distracted, but with nobody in the arena the stage is his and his alone. He is a more consistent player these days, too: less perturbed by bad darts, more comfortable with the nuance and turbulence of set play. "I just find that little edge when I need to," Price said. "The better someone plays against me, the better I play." There is needle with Anderson from the past, an ill-tempered final at the Grand Slam of Darts in 2018 that saw the pair almost come to blows. And even if Price seems a calmer figure these days, as well as a slight favourite on form, then this remains the great unknown: how he deals with the new and unique cauldron of a world final. For years, he has been telling us this day would come: the moment when he redrew the map of darts forever. Now, we will finally discover if he is as good as his word.

Lions tour of South Africa in doubt as talks held over new coronavirus variants

London, January 3 : The British & Irish Lions will decide by next month whether their tour to South Africa that starts in July will go ahead after new strains of coronavirus that have emerged there and in Britain add to the uncertainty over whether fans will be allowed to watch matches. The British government is currently advising anyone against travelling to South Africa, which last weekend became the first country in the continent to reach one million cases of Covid-19 and has banned the sale of alcohol as well as imposing a nationwide curfew. The view of the four home unions, and their hosts, is that a tour without supporters - at least 30,000 visiting fans are expected - would neither be desirable nor commercially viable. There is no timetable yet for a vaccination programme in South Africa. "We

are making plans on the latest information available to us," said the Lions managing director, Ben Calveley. "Given the uncertainty that continues to be caused by the pandemic in both South Africa as well as the UK and Ireland, we are very aware of the need to make a timely decision on the best way forward." Not least so that we can provide clarity to supporters booked to travel to South Africa or those thinking of making the trip. The Lions' board has had repeated meetings to discuss all scenarios available and is in constant dialogue. It will meet throughout January and into February, if required, to review all relevant information and data. "The Lions are due to play eight matches in South Africa, starting with the Stormers in Cape Town on 3 July and ending with the third Test against the World Cup

holders in Johannesburg on 7 August. The Springboks have not played since defeating England in the World Cup final 14 months ago. "We will be providing an update in due course," said Calveley. "We continue to be in discussion with various government departments in the UK, Ireland and South Africa to get as much information as possible on this fast-evolving, complex situation." The former England outside-half Andy Goode said that if the Lions tour were called off, the Six Nations could be moved to fill the gap and at a time when supporters in the UK may be allowed back into grounds, but it would be bad timing for the broadcasters who have commitments to other sports, not

least the Olympics in Tokyo. Pushing the Lions tour, which is a financial necessity for the South African Union, back to 2022 would be problematic with



England set to tour Australia while Ireland are in New Zealand and Wales are due in South Africa 15 months out from the World Cup in France.

Walking with giants, talking with stars : this sporting life is grand

London, January 3: Journalists of a certain era tend to embrace the perpendicular pronoun with all the enthusiasm of Scrooge hugging Tiny Tim. "I" might be the skinniest word but it punches its weight in vanity. Hugh McIlvanney famously would perform linguistic gymnastics in his perfectly crafted sentences so as to refer to himself as "this reporter", thus diluting any suggestion it was the great man himself at the centre of the story - even though it often was. He understood the pleasant fact that we are regularly hurled into the orbit of the famous. It can be a perilous place, where the trick is to balance professional distance and disguised awe, then avoid the gentle chiding of envious colleagues, friends and family. In one oft-quoted instance, the photographer Andy Hall and myself pretended not to be the least bit starstruck for nearly four hours in a New York hotel room as Muhammad Ali interrupted his flow of anecdotes and tricks to chat with Will Smith on

ing fallen short of that mountain top, it's been untold fun writing about the doings of others, from political scallywags and criminals, arty types of varying pedigree (from Van Morrison to Barbara Carrera) and a few giants of sporting life, too. Without wishing to send you all to sleep, the journey began for this reporter on a local paper in Maitland, New South Wales, in 1970 and ended up in the Shangri-La of our business, Fleet Street, where nobody grows old, even if every hungover muscle and bone says otherwise. Fifty sun dappled summers on - as the darling Frank Keating might have said - and I'm the last man in and just an over or so left till stumps ... What an unexpected stagger to the finishing line it has been: banged up all year on Zoom in front of the compulsory bookcase pretending to be far closer to the action than the kitchen and the coffee. It's been odd for all of us, of course, including the people we write about. The paradox is they live

ery utterance like a leg-break looking for a home; Don King was one long comedy act, especially during a mad week in Cairo, with underlying menace; and Jimmy Greaves, who finally has been awarded a gong he is possibly too ill to appreciate, was heartwarmingly human and very, very funny. Getting to know some of them has been an unexpected joy. It was in Cincinnati a few years ago that I (apologies) got my first full-throated laugh out of Andy Murray. It had been a while coming. "So, do you think you'll retire before me?" this reporter asked as we chatted about air miles, rubbish restaurants, boxing and bad backs. He'd already won two grand slam titles and several Masters with a body that was knocking like an old banger. His draught-horse limp was in its early stages. But he was far from done. "You wish," he said, allowing himself a wide grin as if he'd just won a bet. Privately, our little clique of travelling witnesses would wonder how many times Andy would say "tough" in a press conference. Thousands, probably. We never told him. Now he knows. Murray told me recently he'd like to believe in God but couldn't because there was so much inexplicable suffering in the world. Of all the things he'd ever said, it was the most illuminating and, from now until he retires, it will most completely inform my understanding of him. What has been a privilege to witness is how champions differ from the rest of us in nearly every respect. They have no self-doubt. They're ruthless, sometimes selfish and even cruel. They practise until they drop, and they can touch heights others dare not dream about. They are also usually way richer. Let's face it, they are not normal. They do it because they love what they're mysteriously more brilliant at than nearly anyone else alive - a gift they never properly understand. It's like they had been vaccinated against mediocrity at birth. Sport is not only their job, it's their drug, their destiny, they would say, and sometimes their

curse. Yet, with the inevitability of a deadline, they all come to realise that one day the magic will leave them and then they'll be like the rest of us. No overs left to bowl, no saxophone. When 47-year-old Oscar De La Hoya confirmed this week that he intended to box again, he said it was because he missed it. Really, he is scared to walk away for good. They are meteors and we are earthbound. Few elite athletes last much longer than a decade while we're still banging on until we have to turn to golf to squeeze into last year's trousers. The pandemic also has given us time to reflect on how leisurely things once were, when the cricket and football seasons tripped over each other, when pitches were muddy, our heroes skinny and our bellies flat. There were long summer days when you could hear all the birds, smell all the flowers, take some of the wickets. 1) The Australia dressing room at the Oval, last day of the fifth Test of the Ashes, 2005. I'd been ghosting John Buchanan all summer, and I'm standing among the vanquished, with Shane Warne (who seriously did not like Buchanan) grinning over my shoulder, as the coach now has to say nice things about him, when he would gladly have wrung his neck. Doesn't get much weirder than that. 2) Madison Square Garden, 1997. Chatting with Budd Schulberg, famous for writing the best line of any boxing movie: "I coulda been a contender." We'd just watched Naseem Hamed get up three times to knock out Kevin Kelley. "He could be the biggest thing in boxing since Ali," Budd says, "except he won't be. His ego will stop him." The frail, stuttering nonagenarian who once stared down Ernest Hemingway was right on both counts. 3) Long past midnight in Jimmy's Corner, New York's best dive bar, half a block from Times Square, the tail end of summer, 2012.



the phone, while Don King cackled in the background, sitting alongside one of Louis Farrakhan's scowling lieutenants. Ali and King then collapsed on the sofa and sang a passable version of Frankie and Johnny, a song whose lyrics echoed a dark episode in the promoter's past. It would be perverse not to cherish such surreal moments. What I (sorry) really wanted to do growing up was play saxophone for Duke Ellington but Johnny Hodges refused to die. I didn't even own a saxophone. Hav-

in a bubble most of the time anyway. Falling between name-dropping and a humble brag is an impossible task in this business, but those who have been generous enough to share their time all left an impression. Michael Schumacher was unexpectedly kind, vulnerable and utterly obsessed; Seve Ballesteros was boyish but imperious; Dave Mackay (with whom I spent most of a summer) was stern but welcoming; Richie Benaud (whom I knew away from the cameras) judged ev-

Fulham virus outbreak sees EPL game at Tottenham called off



London, January 3: It is the second match this week to be called off in the Premier League due to COVID-19 cases after Manchester City's game

on Monday at Everton also fell by the wayside. A coronavirus outbreak at Fulham has forced the postponement of the Premier League match at

Tottenham, hours before kickoff on Wednesday. It is the second match this week to be called off in the Premier League due to COVID-19 cases after

Manchester City's game on Monday at Everton also fell by the wayside. "Fulham lodged a request with the Premier League board to rearrange the fixture following a significant rise in positive COVID-19 cases, as well as a number of players showing symptoms today," the league said in a statement. "The Premier League board has consulted its medical advisors and the decision to postpone the game has been taken as a precaution and with the health of players and staff as the priority. The group will now be re-tested immediately." With low numbers of positive tests across the overwhelm-

ing majority of clubs, the Premier League continues to have full confidence in its COVID-19 protocols and being able to continue to play our fixtures as scheduled. "The league wishes those with COVID-19 a safe and speedy recovery and will rearrange the postponed fixture between Tottenham Hotspur and Fulham in due course. "Earlier, Tottenham manager Jose Mourinho expressed irritation with a post on Instagram laced with sarcasm as he waited for the postponement decision to be made: "Match at 6 pm... We still don't know if we play. Best league in the world."

Club where he made his name as a second row Leicester

London, January 3: Steve Borthwick will watch Leicester's match on Sunday against Bath, the club where he made his name as a second row, at home on television with the volume turned down as he isolates following a Covid-19 outbreak at Welford Road, seeking a cure for a malady

made some development, but we are nowhere where we need to be. "Borthwick's efforts to get Leicester, who used to be a fixture in the Premiership final at Twickenham, back to where the best-supported club in England expects to be have been hampered by the pandemic. The Tigers have had

turn there before the start of the latest round, with Worcester likely to be awarded four points following the cancellation of their match against Harlequins. The number of games being called off with no time to rearrange them has prompted some to question whether rel-



that started long before 2020. "When we won in Bayonne last month, it was the first time Leicester had done so in France for seven years," says Borthwick, who took over as head coach in July when the Tigers were one off the bottom of the Premiership but spared a relegation scrap because of Saracens' disgrace. "That reflected the decline of the club. When I started, we had a lineout and scrum ranked 11th in the Premiership and our attack and defence statistics were poor. The first priority was to get the team fit because 12 times in the two years before I joined, Leicester were winning the going in the final 20 minutes but lost. We have

to shut their training ground twice because of an outbreak of the virus and they go into the Bath game having trained together for two days and below strength. "It is frustrating, but there are a number of people in the world in a worse situation than us," says Borthwick. "We need time on the training field to develop in the areas we need to, but it has not been the most straightforward time in which to develop. "We are fortunate to have Aled Walters on the coaching team: his technical knowledge is outstanding and he has the ability to get players to give more. "Leicester have finished in the bottom two in the past two seasons and were set to re-

legation should be suspended. "I only focus my attention over things I have an influence over and that question is not one of them," says Borthwick. "Everyone is trying their hardest in challenging circumstances and we are managing the circumstances as well as we can. At a time like this you need to be adaptable. I make a number of plans so that you can pull the necessary one off the shelf. "Fixtures between Leicester and Bath were once the highlight of the club season, but the clubs fell some way behind Saracens and then Exeter in the Premiership and Europe. "We know we have a big challenge on Sunday," says Borthwick.

স্মৃতিগ্রন্থৰ বাবে লেখা আহ্বান

বিগত বৰ্ষৰ দৰে এইবাৰো আলোকপ্ৰভঞ্জন ৰেলফেয়াৰ ছ'চাইটিৰ সৌজন্যত দৈনন্দিন **বাৰ্তা** গোষ্ঠীয়ে আয়োজন কৰিছে **Assam Rising** বঁটা প্ৰদান আৰু সম্বৰ্ধনা অনুষ্ঠানৰ। এই উপলক্ষে প্ৰকাশ পাব এখন স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থ। আগ্ৰহী লেখক-সাংবাদিকে উক্ত স্মৃতিগ্ৰন্থলৈ লেখা প্ৰেৰণ কৰিব পাৰিব **১৫ জানুৱাৰী, ২০২১** তাৰিখৰ পূৰ্বে। লেখাৰ বিষয়বস্তু প্ৰাধান্য 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 —

ই-মেইল : araward2021@gmail.com

The bond of love and devotion.

Caps

100% DEPENDABLE... That's our guarantee !

CHIMNEYS WITH APPS | R.O. WATER PURIFIER | HOBS | GAS STOVE | OTHER KITCHEN APPLIANCES

Abhayapuri-94350-22784 | Agartala-98560-93668 | Baihata chariali-94351-42568/98641-40488 | Bangaigaon-7002184811, 9435547654,9435121367 | Barpeta road-94350-17865 99541-41975 | Barpeta town -94350-25127 | Bhawanipur-7002206773 | Bandaradewa-98649-84753 | Bijoyanagar -99570-98392/94010-01157/94353-40662 | Boko-94010-02588 | Chaygaon-9435014549 | Dadara -98546-98027 | Dhupdhara-96785-16189 | Dhamaji-99546-51322 | Dhubri-94350-29279 | Diphu-94350-66701/94350-66643 | Dudhnoi-94357-21505/94351-28048 | Goalpara-70023-10904/88762-23858 | Golaghat-96132-30384 | Guwahati -94355-59057/97065-94950 | Hajo-94353-47024/88763-09327 | Hojai-94357-29521/84028-59256 | Jorhat -94350-53934/98541-06776 | Kharupitia -98541-44223 | Kokrajhar-97070-29429/99548-88721/94354-81234 | Karimgunj-97061-39061 | Krishnai-88224-15337 | Lumding -94351-63327/97066-14137 | Mangaldoi -94350-87284/94351-86435/97065-39174/73994-79163 | Mirza-98540-71983/99572-81858 | Morigaon -94350-64986/80111-17171 | North lakhimpur-88224-21077 | Nagaon-97061-79408/94355-18665 | Nalbari -98644-14515/98540-30209 | Pathsala-80110-06658 | Dhekiajuli-98548-29934 | Dibrugarh-98548-11265 | Rangia -94351-05888/96782-26563 | Silchar -97061-39061/70054-86129 | Silapathar-70028-94393 | Shillong-90869-66640 | Suwalkuchi -98643-54859 | Tinsukia-94350-35156/94350-35511/94350-36463 | Tezpur-97060-73481 | Tihu-97068-53124 | Udalguri-97063-46492

Trade enq. 9435146909/9435559057/9435559056 www.capsindia.in Toll Free: 1800 103 4646