



# The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### 7-Year-Old Killed

**Guwahati, January 21:** In a horrific road accident, a 7-year-old boy lost his life in on National Highway 15 in Behali's Madurali on Thursday. As per reports, the deceased identified as Suraj Chetti was hit by a passenger-carrying bus, known as Tuktuk bearing registration number AS 07C 7889. It may be mentioned that the bus was on the way back from the labour's boycott program held at Bishwanath Chariali on today evening.

### Amit Shah To Chair 69th Northeastern Council Session

**Guwahati, January 21:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair the 69th plenary session of the North Eastern Council slated to be held on January 23 in Shillong. During the home minister's visit, the Meghalaya Democratic Alliance (MDA) government led by Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma would also meet to discuss issues of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) in the entire state and inclusion of Khasi and Garo languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. The Meghalaya Assembly had adopted a resolution on December 19, 2019 requesting the centre to impose the ILP in the state.

### Republic Day in Guwahati

**Guwahati, January 21:** Preparations are in full swing for Republic Day celebrations in Guwahati. Troops from Assam Police, Veerangana, NCC cadets and from different paramilitary forces have been rehearsing for the Republic Day parade at College of Veterinary Science field at Khanapara. Special arrangements have been made at the venue of the Republic Day celebrations in the view of COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 tests have been made mandatory for all the march-past groups taking part in the Republic Day parade. On the other hand, security arrangements have been tightened at the Veterinary Science playground to ensure law and order. Security forces have been keeping vigil in other sensitive areas of the city also.

## UPPL ready to contest Assam Assembly Election

**Guwahati, January 21:** After the victory in the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) elections, the United People's Party Liberal (UPPL) has been gearing up to contest Assam assembly polls. Attending the 52nd annual conference of Kokrajhar district



unit of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), BTC chief executive member (CEM) Pramod Boro told

## Fire Breaks out at Vaccine Maker's Building in Pune , 5 Killed



**New Delhi, January 21:** Serum Institute Fire LIVE Updates: A fire has again broken out in the same building at the Serum Institute of India in Pune where five people were killed in a blaze in the afternoon today. Pune's Mayor Murlidhar Mohol said five charred bodies were found after the blaze was brought under control. A few more trapped in the building were

rescued. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained but it is being speculated that welding work caused the fire, he said. The company's CEO earlier said there was no loss of lives, but later revised his statement after the deaths were confirmed. He said there was no impact on the Covishield vaccine making process as the fire was in a facility away from the place

where the anti-coronavirus vaccines are made. Deputy Commissioner of Police Namrata Patil told PTI the fire broke out at 2.45 pm on the fourth and fifth floor of the SEZ 3 building in the Serum Institute premises. Rahul Gandhi Condolences Death | While it's distressing to learn of the tragic loss of lives in the fire incident at Serum Institute, the news of another

fire is extremely worrying. My condolences to the family of the deceased. I request the state govt to provide necessary help to the victims and their families: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi. Extremely Sorrowful Day: SII MD | Today is an extremely sorrowful day for all of us at Serum Institute of India. Regrettably, there were losses of lives in the fire that broke out in our under installation facility situated at the Special Economic Zone at Manjri. We are deeply saddened and offer our condolences to the families of the departed. In this regard, we will be offering a compensation of INR 25 lakhs to each of the families, in addition to the mandated amount as per the norms. We would like to extend our gratitude to everyone for their concerns and prayers in these distressing times: Serum Institute of India Chairman & Managing Director Cyrus S Poonawalla. Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit

Pawar said the state government has ordered a probe into the fire. PM Mourns Loss of Lives | Anguished by the loss of lives due to an unfortunate fire at the Serum Institute of India. In this sad hour, my thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives. I pray that those injured recover at the earliest: PM Narendra Modi. The tragic fire accident that broke out today at Serum Institute of India, Pune, is unfortunate. My deepest condolences are with the families who lost their loved ones, and we are with them in this hour of grief: **Contd...Page 6**

## CM participates at National Agri-Horticultural Show 2021 through virtual mode

CM stresses value addition of Agri products



**Guwahati, January 21:** Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal participated in the inaugural function of National Agri-Horticultural Show 2021 held at

Processing in association with Assam Agricultural University and Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industries. Speaking on the occasion, Chief

Minister Sonowal appreciated the initiative taken by the Agriculture department and said that the agri-horticultural show would help in introducing the youth with modern farm techniques. He observed that the young farmers would be able to acquire knowledge about technological innovations, marketing opportunities and value addition of agri products through this show. He informed that the Central and State governments have undertaken a number of schemes to boost rural economy. He also urged the farmers to work hard to increase their production and productivity and to realise **Contd...Page 6**

## Republic Day Tractor Rally: No Progress At Meeting Between Police, Farmer Unions



**New Delhi, January 21:** Republic Day Tractor Rally: No Progress At Meeting Between Police, Farmer Unions. Farmer Unions met the Delhi Police today over their plan to hold a tractor

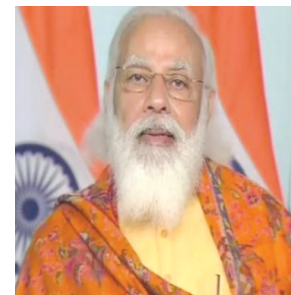
rally in Delhi on Republic Day. The second round of meeting between the police and farmer unions regarding the proposed January 26 tractor rally by them remained inconclusive today as the farmers stuck to their demand of taking out the rally on Delhi's busy Outer Ring Road. Talking to reporters after the meeting, Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav said the police wanted the farmer leaders to take out their tractor rally outside the national capital. "We will do our pa-

rade peacefully inside Delhi. They wanted us to hold the tractor rally outside Delhi, which is not possible," Mr Yadav, who is actively participating in the ongoing agitation against the Centre's new farm laws, said. Sources told news agency Press Trust of India that police officers tried to convince the protesting farm unions to hold their tractor rally on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal (KMP) Expressway instead of the Outer Ring Road, but in vain. A farmer leader, who attended **Contd...Page 6**

## PM Modi to visit Assam on Jan 23

**New Delhi, January 21:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Kolkata to address the 'Parakram Diwas' celebrations on January 23 to commemorate the 125th birth anniversary year of freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. Prime Minister will also visit Jerenga Pathar in Sivasagar, Assam to distribute 1.06 lakh land patta allotment certificates. PM Modi will preside over the inaugural function of the 'Parakram Diwas' celebrations at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, a Prime Minister's Office (PMO) release said. "In order to

honour and remember Netaji's indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation, the Government of India has decided to cel-



brate his birthday on January 23 every year as 'Parakram Diwas' to inspire people of the country, especially the youth, to act with fortitude in the face of adversity **Contd...Page 6**

## Our Gathbandhan will form the Government : Badaruddin Ajmal

**Guwahati, January 21:** Amid all speculations of alliance between the major parties for the forthcoming Assam Legislative Assembly Election, All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) chief Badaruddin Ajmal on Wednesday said that all the newly formed political parties will be forced to join the 'Mahagathbandhan'. Speaking to media persons, the AIUDF chief said, "I am confident that our alliance (gathbandhan) will definitely form the government. The people of Assam know if I am communal or not. So the



opposition does not need to make any kind of allegations regarding me being a communal leader". Ajmal also added, "The newly

formed party, Rajior Dal is working very hard in the minority areas, that don't mean that all the minority people working for the minorities are communal. This is the reason I am avoiding such statements. The future will tell that if our alliance with the Congress will work or not. And I am sure our alliance will win the upcoming Assembly Elections". "The newly formed political parties Axom Jatiya Parishad and Rajior Dal will be forced to join **Contd...Page 6**

## 'Hacha Kekan' celebrated at CEM's residence



**Diphu, January 21:** Post harvesting festival in Karbi tradition called 'Hacha Kekan' was celebrated at the residence of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member (CEM) Tuliram Ronghang at Rongtheang, Diphu on Thursday. CEM's wife Kache Terompi with traditional basket 'Hak' filled the paddy in cloth bags 'mantung' from the porch, where the paddy was kept after bringing them from the paddy field. After performing puja 'Seh Karkli' by a traditional priest, the youths while singing a rejoicing song carried the sok mantung and stored it in the barn

'sok puru'. Hacha kekan has performed in my residence to uphold the old age traditional practice in this modern era. Traditionally it is to be done three times in one generation and this is the third time to perform Hacha Kekan," CEM Tuliram Ronghang said. KAAC CEM Tuliram Ronghang also requests the Karbi community to perform Hacha Kekan annually irrespective of religions. As it is in tradition, so it cannot be mixed between culture and religion. During the Hacha Kekan, MP

Horensing Bey, KAAC Deputy Speaker Ritesh Inghi, Ems and MAC and several other dignitaries including the villagers of Rongtheang were also granted the programme. Hacha kekan is also one of the main important festivals in Karbi Community. It is mainly done after harvesting in the paddy field. It is an activity where it is ritually solemn after bringing paddy home from fields. The paddy was stored on the porch and filled up with mantung made from peh lu and carried home by the youths and stored in the barn.

## First time, farmers don't reject offer: Will discuss

**New Delhi, January 21:** Kulwant Singh Sandhu, general secretary of Jamhori Kisan Sabha who participated in the talks Wednesday, said: "For a change, today's meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere... we hardly had a confrontation with the Union Ministers". For the first time since they brought their protest against the new agriculture laws from Punjab to the borders of Delhi, leaders of farmer unions, while not giving up their demand for

repeal of the laws, did not reject the Centre's offer to keep the laws in abeyance for 18 months. They agreed to discuss the offer Thursday and return to the talks table Friday. Kulwant Singh Sandhu, general secretary of Jamhori Kisan Sabha who participated in the talks Wednesday, said: "For a change, today's meeting was held in a cordial atmosphere... we hardly had a confrontation with the Union Ministers. There was a very important development in the tenth round. The minis-

ters made a proposal of not implementing the farm laws for a period ranging from 18 to 24 months. Minister Som Prakash said the government will not implement the laws for two years, but the two other ministers (Narendra Singh Tomar and Piyush Goyal) said one-and-half years. They also said they will file an affidavit regarding this in the Supreme Court. "On MSP (farmers are seeking legal guarantee on MSP), they said let us make a committee to decide this issue, our **Contd...Page 6**





# 'Child trafficking case may increase post COVID-19 lockdown'

**IMPHAL, Jan 21** : Child trafficking case may increase post COVID-19 lockdown, cautioned resource persons and guests who attended a one-day state-level workshop on combating child trafficking post COVID-19 lockdown in Imphal on Wednesday. The workshop was jointly organised by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MCPCR) in Imphal's City Convention. The workshop was being organised with the objective to protect children from trafficking in the backdrop of reports of some child trafficking cases in the state, particularly in Tengnoupal and its border town Moreh reported post COVID-19 lockdown. Speaking at the inaugural session of the workshop, chairperson of Manipur Commission for Protection of Child Rights (MCPCR) Ph Manibabu Sharma expressed apprehension over increasing child trafficking cases post COVID-19 lockdown in the state. He cited that post COVID-19 lockdown, financial problems may be the main factor for the possible increase in child trafficking or human trafficking in

the state. Sharma said, "Issues of lack of financial support is high due to the slowing down of the economy amid the pandemic, so child trafficking may be used as a means of earning". The apprehen-

sion was felt after analysis on the finding of some cases that were reported to police and MCPCR, he said. The mapping of children and families vulnerable to child trafficking and matching them with relevant schemes of the Central government and the Manipur govern-



ment to combat trafficking is one of the objectives of the workshop, he said. Manipur's Tengnoupal district and its town Moreh bordering with Myanmar is the easiest route of trafficking and a vulnerable area.

There was the need for protecting the borderline in this area with special attention, he stressed. Earlier, addressing the inaugural function, state social welfare minister Okram Henry said child trafficking is a serious crime. "We need to make the public aware about the incidents of

child trafficking. Human trafficking has also become a serious social menace," he said. He said that children, particularly girls were in many ways misled by traffickers for the sake of money. "We all need to fight against such heinous crime," he added. At the same time, children are the future of the nation. To protect and build great children are necessary to bring a strong generation, he said. State education minister Sorokhaibam Rajen urged for awareness on child trafficking, especially among parents to protect children as well as women was highly essential. "The causes and factors of trafficking should not be taken easily. Although authorities concerned are taking the responsibility to protect children and women, cooperation from the people is needed," he added. Imphal East DC Khumanthem Diana Devi said that child trafficking or human trafficking in the state was on the rise as the state has an easy route for trafficking. Representatives from the Manipur police department, personnel from Assam Rifles and BSF and other government department representatives attended the workshop.

## National Road Safety Month in Barpeta



**Barpeta, Jan 21** : A week-long awareness program on the occasion of National Road Safety Month was launched on January 20 in Barpeta district along with other parts of the country calling for strict observance of all traffic rules and regulations. On the occasion, District Transport Commissioner Diganta Das hoisted the flag at the District Transport Office and Additional Superintendent of Police Nirupam Hazarika and District Information and Public Relations Officer Bikash Sharma lit the bonfire. In his speech on the occasion, Diganta Das cited the example of developed countries in Europe, saying that the people of those countries are very much aware of the need to abide by the traffic laws. Therefore, the accident rate is quite low. In his inaugural address, DIPRO Bikash Sharma said that in the interest of responsibility towards one's family, at least one person should carefully drive a car. After this 31 branches were planted at Gokul Pathak bus stand. This program also involves planting trees with the participation of Additional Superintendent of Police, Nirupam Hazarika and DIPRO Bikash Sharma. Prior to that, a clean-up operation was carried out at the bus stand where a Bator Naat prepared by the Department of Transportation. Awareness meeting is held in presence of all the Anganbadi workers and villagers around the office of Transport in the day. District Public Relations Officer Bikash Sharma and Transport Inspector Pankaj Das also addressed the meeting which was chaired by Himanshu Das, District Transport Officer. According to the Department of Transport, such a diverse program will continue till January 25.

## Abducted Quippo employees appeal to Assam and Bihar CMs to secure their early release



**ITANAGAR, January 21** : A video of the two abducted employees of the Quippo Oil and Gas Infrastructure Limited was released on Wednesday by the ULFA (I), showing the employees appealing to the chief ministers of Assam and Bihar to secure their early release. The video comes nearly a month after radio operator Ram Kumar and drilling superintendent Pranab Kumar Gogoi were kidnapped by armed militants on 21 December from Kumchai Hka in Diyun circle of Changlang district. Earlier, on 12 January, the ULFA (I) claimed responsibility for the abduction. In the video, which was released from an undisclosed location, Ram Kumar states that he is a resident of Bahadurpur in Khagaria district of Bihar. "It's been a month since I have been kidnapped by the ULFA (I) and the

similar appeal to the Assam chief minister. "It's been a month now and the company is yet to make any progress regarding my release. I appeal to the company to talk to both the ULFA (I) and the NSCN (IM) to ensure my early release and at the same time, I also appeal to the chief minister of Assam Sarbananda Sonowal to speak with the Quippo Oil and Gas Infrastructure Limited authorities to ensure that the company is bound to step up its efforts for our release." Meanwhile, Changlang SP Mihin Gambo, speaking to this daily, informed that both the police and the army have been deployed at all possible locations and combing operations are on. "Our efforts are on and we are hopeful that we will make a breakthrough soon to secure the release of both the employees," he said.

## Heavy Pollution in Golaghat : Local people Staged Protest

**Golaghat, Jan 21**: For the past couple of days heavy pollution from the wastage of Golaghat Municipal Board dumping ground has been creating havoc in Golaghat. Local people of Ward No 1 area under Golaghat Municipal Board have staged an indefinite sit in demonstration seeking solution to the problem. Bad smell and smoke from the wastage in the dumping ground have created a polluted atmosphere in nearby areas and the people have to suffer a lot. Now the people have prevented the vehicles carrying wastage to the dumping ground. Now wastage in Golaghat Town has created another problem as these cannot be disposed. The protesters alleged that they have been complaining the Golaghat Municipal Board authorities regarding disposal of wastage in a scientific way but the authorities did

not respond. Meanwhile Municipal and District administration officials had visited the protesters and tried to discuss with them. But the discussion was not fruitful. AJP Staged Sit in Demo in Golaghat Today the newly formed regional political party in the state Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) staged a sit in demonstration protest near the DC Office Golaghat. The protesting AJP party leaders and activists demanded giving land patta to the inhabitants of Laika Dodhiya area, rehabilitation of the victims of flood and erosion, implementation of Hari Shankar Brahma Committee Report along with several other demands. The protesters stated that if the ruling BJP does not take steps to solve such relevant issues and problems of the state then the people will dethrone the BJP from power in the upcoming elections.

## Free eye check-up camp for drivers, conductors in Hailakandi

**Hailakandi, Jan 21**: As part of the ongoing month-long Road Safety programmes, an eye screening camp was conducted by a team of eye specialists from SK Roy Civil Hospital at DMTU bus stand here on Wednesday. Eye screening was conducted among drivers, conductors and pedestrians with distribution of medicine and spectacles free of cost. District Transport Officer, Syed Rafiqul Mannan disclosed that 50 numbers of drivers and conductors were screened at the camp and 20 spectacles distributed to drivers. "Eyesight is of prime importance for the drivers to ensure road safety. Once in a year, drivers should undergo eye check-up to cure their vision problems. Drivers with weak eyesight were provided free spectacles," said Mannan. Mannan said the eye screening camp organised by the District Transport Office in association with the District Motor Transport Union as part of the ongoing 32nd National Road Safety Month evoked quite a good response. The District Transport Officer said a number of awareness programmes and street corner meetings have been lined up

with focus on making Hailakandi roads free from accidents.

## 7 new COVID-cases, seven recoveries in Meghalaya

**Shillong, Jan 21** : Meghalaya registered seven new COVID-19 cases on Wednesday, taking the active cases to 133, even as seven more persons recovered from the viral infection, surging the recovery figure to 13,440. Director of Health Services (MD), Dr. Aman War informed that six new cases were detected in East Khasi Hills district and one in West Garo Hills district. East Khasi Hills district, which includes Shillong, is the most affected district in the State with 100 active cases including two patients from Armed Forces and Para-Military Forces. War said the seven new recovered cases were recorded in East Khasi Hills district. Meghalaya has so far registered 13,717 COVID-19 cases, which include 144 deaths, 133 active cases and 13,440 recoveries.

## Brahmaputra Aamantran Abhiyan

Assamerelga, South Salmara Mankachar District, 21-January-2021 Closing Ceremony celebrating the success of the Brahmaputra Aamantran Abhiyan



**Guwahati, Jan 21** : A programme to commemorate the success of the expedition was held today on 21st January, 2021 at Natasurjya Phani Sarma Bhawan, in Goalpara District, Assam. The Programme was attended by Sh. Rajiv Yadav, Chairman Brahmaputra Board, Smt. Varnali Deka, Deputy Commissioner, Goalpara District, Commandant of 1st Bn NDRF Sh. R. S. Gill, Prof. Arup Sarma of IIT Guwahati, Vice Chairman of Brahmaputra Board Sh. P. M. Scott, and the entire Rafting Team. Brahmaputra Board under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India organised the Brahmaputra Aamantran Abhiyan, which concluded on 20th January 2021 at Assamerelga, near Indo-Bangladesh Border. The rafting expedition team led by Smt. Suhashini Shekhawat with NDRF members successfully docked at the last destination point (Assamerelga) yesterday. Various Institutions and the rafting team were felicitated in the function who played an active role and were associated

with the Brahmaputra Aamantran Abhiyan. Winning students of Goalpara area who participated in the Debate and Essay Writing competition on "Living With The River" were also warmly felicitated in the function. Activities of the Abhiyan will be updated on Social Media Platforms as under:-  
\* <https://www.instagram.com/brahmaputra.aamantran/>  
\* <https://www.facebook.com/BrahmaputraAamantranAbhiyan>  
\* <https://twitter.com/BAamantran>  
Brahmaputra Aamantran Abhiyan is an initiative of the Government of India organized by Brahmaputra Board (Ministry of Jal Shakti) with a two pronged approach:-  
\* A Public Outreach Programme focusing on the younger generation to inculcate the concept of "Living with the River".  
\* A combined scientific data collection and analysis of river water quality, river sediment, river bank erosion and fish habitat along the entire route of the expedition.

## AJP staged sit-in demonstration at Biswanath Chariali



**Biswanath Chariali, Jan 21**: The Biswanath district Committee of Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) staged a three hours sit-in demonstration in front of the deputy Commissioner's office of Biswanath here on Thursday. The demonstrators shouted slogans against the state government. The Biswanath district committee of AJP staged demonstrations demanding immediate rehabilitation of the

residents of Laika-Dadhiya area, placement of erosion and flood hit people and execution of Hari Shankar Brahma committee report. The sit in demonstration was attended by Duldul Borkataky; assistant general secretary of AJP, Amrit Hazarika and Mridul Das, the Biswanath district president and secretary of AJP respectively, Dr. Dulen Bora, Chandra Baruah along with other AJP workers.

## Seeds Moves Ahead In Open Tennis Tournery Sakshi Upset Namrata



**GUWAHATI, Jan 21** : Unseeded Sakshi Barua caused upset defeating third seed Namrata Das in the Girls' Singles (under-18 years) category in the 23rd India Club-Anup Lahoty Open Tennis Championship - 2021, organised by India Club, Guwahati- premier tennis playing club of the region, held under the auspices of All Assam Tennis Association (AATA) played here to-

day. All the seeded players sealed their berths into the next round of their respective events TODAY'S RESULTS - GIRLS' SINGLES (UNDER 14 YEARS) (PRE-QUARTER FINAL) - Adrika Rajkumari (1) bt. Anchita Sukla 8-1, Nimisha Goswami bt. Nayeem Hussain 8-0, Arnabi Debnath bt. Sony Prajapati 8-3, Bishnupriya (Borgohain) (3) bt. Shreyashi Langthasha 8-2, Kinnari

Bopra (4) bt. Sheevari Gogoi 8-1, Vaanya Kayal bt. Komal Kaur 8-4, Nikita Kand bt. Annya Das 8-6, Roshni Bhardwaj (2) bt. Kabyanjali Hazarika 8-0, GIRLS' SINGLES (UNDER 18 YEARS) (PRE-QUARTER FINAL) - Roshni Bhardwaj bt. Bishnupriya Borgohain 8-3, NEEKIA Kand bt. Kalpita Rajkhowa 8-5, Adrika Rajkumari (4) bt. Sinug Langkam 8-2, Sakshi Barua bt. Katiyani Vashit 8-3, Shreyashi Langthasha bt. Rudrani Banerjee 8-4, GIRLS' SINGLES (UNDER 18 YEARS) (QUARTER FINAL) - Sakshi Barua (2) bt. Namrata Das 4-0, 2-4, 5-3, BOYS' SINGLES (UNDER 18 YEARS) (QUARTER FINAL) - Arounesh Bora bt. Ryan Kashyap 4-0, 4-1, GENTLEMAN SINGLES (PRE-QUARTER FINAL) - Md. Seikh Ifikar (1) bt. Abhigyan Barua 9-0, Anchit Gogoi (2) bt. Anuj Pratim Sharma 9-2, Uday Jyoti Das bt. Debagan Barua 9-1, Rishav Brahma (3) bt. Partha Pratim Dutta 9-0, Harshad Bora (4) bt. Anurag Saikia 9-5, Arounesh Bora bt. Nakulesh Buragohain 9-0.

## Playboys Sports Club to Celebrate Netaji Birth Anniversary in befitting manner

**Hojai, January 21** : Playboys Sports Club is going to organise 125th Birth Anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose at Club premises near Hojai Railway Station on January 23, in a befitting manner. As per a press release by the Club, Vice Chancellor of Rabindranath Tagore University Prof. Amalendu Chakrabarty will grace the occasion as Chief Guest, Former MLA Dr. Ardhendu Kumar

Dey, Present MLA Shiladitya Dev will be present as Guest of Honour. On this auspicious occasion, garlanding at the bust of Netaji will be done by the guests followed by Jatiya Sangeet, hoisting of National Flag, Azad Hind Fauj flag. Apart from this, rich tribute will be paid to the martyrs, who sacrificed their life for the nation. In the afternoon a public meeting will be

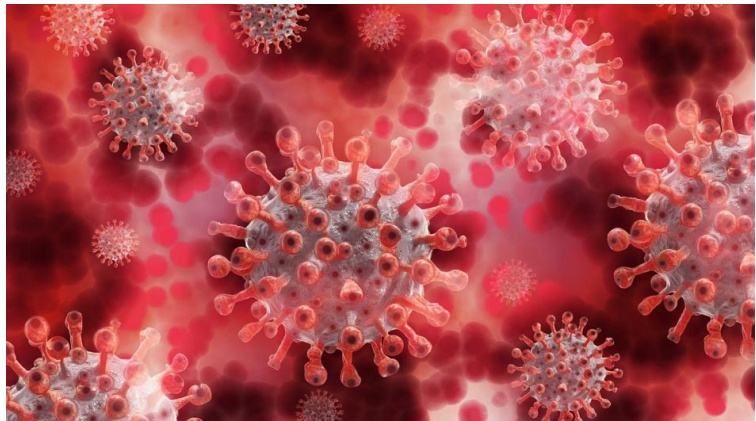
organised, where all the eminent guests will deliver their speech. In the evening, a procession will be taken out in the town with the portrait of Netaji, tableaux and a musician band comprising of 25 members from Kolkata (West Bengal). In the release, the Club has further thanked Central Government for announcing Netaji birthday as Parakram Diwas.



# Coronavirus likelier in air we breathe than surfaces touched - what scientists say we got wrong

**Bengaluru/New Delhi, January 21** : An unusual wooden paddle with a nail-studded leather face at the Smithsonian Institution, US, is a relic from 1899, when authorities in Alabama used it to perforate mail, which was then fumigated with sulphur as a precaution against yellow fever. A year later, researchers discovered that the disease was spread by a mosquito-borne virus - the exercise of fumigating mail was, thus, futile. A similar consensus is now evolving regarding Covid-19, with multiple scientists suggesting that the emphasis on contact transmission may be misplaced. Since the start of the pandemic, prevention guidelines from health agencies around the world have stressed the need to disinfect surfaces. This rationale has underpinned the easing of lockdown restrictions in India, with public places like airports, cinema halls and malls inviting customers back with the promise of rigorous disinfection drives. The belief that you can contract Covid-19 from touching a surface that hosts infectious germs or microbes has spawned an entire ecosystem of businesses - different companies now offer disinfectants that aim to rid not just surfaces like door handles and bus seats, but also fruits and vegetables, of infection risk. However, a year into the pandemic, overwhelming scientific evidence points to the fact that Covid-19 is much likelier to spread through airborne transmission than by surface contact. This means that there is a much stronger chance that you will get Covid-19 while talking to a patient - even at an appropriate distance - in a poorly ventilated room, than touching the same elevator button as one. But, hold up. Scientists are not asking you to throw away your sanitisers just yet - what harm can clean hands cause anyone, anyway? What they are saying is that health agencies need to acknowledge that the primary risk of Covid transmission is through aerosols, and ensure the public knows as much. A year into the pandemic, the general public is now widely aware of the general safety rules: To mask, distance physically, and wash hands regularly. But with the virus still raging, experts have been flagging the lack of awareness about the transmission of the virus, and thus ineffective safety measures. The main debate is whether the primary mode of transmission is through droplets, aerosols, or from surfaces. Surface or fomite transmission occurs when a viable virus (able to infect) present on a surface is touched, and one's hands then touched to the face. Precautionary measures to prevent

this are disinfecting surfaces and washing hands. Early in the pandemic, a number of studies claimed to reveal startling results for how long the SARS-CoV-2 virus survived on various surfaces. A paper published by the Journal of Hospital Research in January 2020 suggested it could survive on metal and plastics for nine days, based on existing lab studies of other coronaviruses that caused Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). In March, a study in the New England Journal of Medicine suggested that the virus can survive on plastic surfaces for over three days, and



on cardboard for upto 8 hours. Such findings garnered quick attention, leading to persistent messaging around disinfection and sanitisation. As the pandemic spread, however, aerosol experts started to sound the alarm on airborne transmission dynamics, requesting the authorities to stress on the spread of the novel coronavirus through aerosols and not just droplets or contact with infected surfaces. While 'airborne' and 'aerosol' are often used interchangeably, they actually mean different - if overlapping - kinds of transmission. Airborne transmission occurs when suspended particles of varying sizes - including cough droplets - are dispersed by air. Heavier droplets fall closer to the person who expels them, increasing risk of infection at close contact. When these droplets fall on surfaces, they become fomites. Humans produce respiratory droplets that range from 0.1 micrometre to 1,000 micrometres in size. Larger droplets are thought to be anywhere between 5 and 1,000 micrometres in size, while what is generally known as aerosols are less than 5 micrometres. The SARS-CoV-2 virus is approximately 0.1 micrometre in size. Aerosol transmission of a virus typically involves the virus either floating free in the air, or latching on to other aerosols - dust or pollutants, but mainly phlegm or water, which can encase the virus particles before

evaporating away - and floating to larger distances. In June 2020, a study published in the peer-reviewed Environmental Protection reported that people in polluted areas are more severely affected by Covid-19. Aerosol transmission was previously observed in other coronaviruses too. The 2004 Amoy Gardens SARS outbreak in Hong Kong, involving nearly 300 people, was traced to the aerosolisation of faeces of one patient in drainage pipes. Other respiratory diseases like the common cold, measles, tuberculosis, and chicken pox also spread primarily through aerosols. Aerosols can be exhaled when

simply breathing, when coughing or sneezing, and also when speaking and singing. Expulsive events like coughing or singing reportedly increase the distances they travel, as do louder voices. In May, the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reconstructed a superspreader event at a choir practice in Washington. Around 61 people met for 2.5 hours on 10 March, to sing and eat. The group included one symptomatic Covid patient. By 17 March, 53 of the attendees were ill, three had to be hospitalised, and two had died. There have been other singing events, as well as other clusters of superspreading events that have been linked to transmission indoors and in enclosed spaces like prisons and hospitals, attributed primarily to aerosol spread, driven by air currents. Perhaps the best known "viral" exposure event was described in a study by Chinese researchers last April that retraced multiple infections from one evening at an air-conditioned restaurant in Guangzhou, China. A five-member family, including an asymptomatic patient, ate there on 24 January 2020. Within two weeks, nine others who had dined there the same day fell sick. Four were relatives of the index patient but five others had caught the virus while seated on two different tables with others who did not get infected. The study researchers noted that the infected individuals had been seated in the path of the airflow from

the air-conditioning unit near the index patient. "Virus transmission in this outbreak cannot be explained by droplet transmission alone," concluded the peer-reviewed study. Then there is also the concern of the virus lingering in the air with or after an infected person. In a study led by Dr John Lednicky, a research professor at the University of Florida, the air around hospitalised Covid patients was sampled at distances of up to nearly 5 metres, and the team was able to obtain viable virus particles. He explained that one of the reasons researchers are still scrambling to get data on aerosol transmission is that our technology isn't where we need it. Capturing viable virus from air is difficult as the process of sampling itself could leave the virus unviable or effectively dead. "Inhalation of non-viable SARS-CoV-2 will not cause Covid-19," he added. "So, when people perform air samplings and the virus they collect is non-viable, the assumption is they pose no risk." More recently, a study (published on the preprint server bioRxiv) on ferrets separated by levels but connected by a PVC pipe with 90 degree turns, showed that aerosols lingered in the air and transmitted over distances greater than 1m. Said Lednicky, "When you get into particles of very small mass, it turns out they don't fall out of the air according to the rules of gravity we are accustomed to. Instead, when humidity is relatively low, they can stay adrift for long periods of time due to upward forces (air currents) we normally don't think about." "There are two or three possible cases in the literature that are consistent with fomite transmission, but even these cannot exclude airborne transmission," said Dr Emanuel Goldman, professor of microbiology at Rutgers University, US, who pointed out last July in a piece for The Lancet that fears of fomite transmission might be exaggerated. The most compelling piece of evidence, he said, was a likely transmission in China where a live virus was found on the packaging of imported, frozen seafood. Two dockworkers tested positive after handling the shipment, but it could not be confirmed that they contracted the virus because of contact with the packaging. "On the other hand, there is evidence for lack of fomite transmission. For example, in a mixed-use building in South Korea, workers in a call centre became ill with Covid-19, infecting everyone in that office. But in the rest of the occupants of that building (almost 1,000 people), only three became positive for Covid-19 (which could have been through aerosols)," he added.

# Prospects of a strong rupee face headwinds from RBI desire to hoard dollars



**Mumbai, January 21** : Bets on the Indian rupee's rebound this year are already facing headwinds. The Reserve Bank of India signaled recently it won't relent on dollar purchases that pushed the currency to the bottom of Asia's currency rankings in 2020. Analysts had forecast for the rupee to rise for the first time in four years on hopes the RBI may slow its foreign-currency accumulation after the stockpile rose to a record. The RBI's comments suggest "the large FX intervention that the central bank undertook in 2020 totaling almost \$120 billion will continue in 2021," said Khoon Goh, head of research at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group Ltd. in Singapore. "Persistent FX intervention will see INR underperforming regional currencies," he said. RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das said on Saturday that emerging markets need to build reserves as buffers against external shocks even at the risk of being added to the U.S. watchlist for currency manipulation. India rejoined the list in December due to RBI's sustained forex purchases and a large goods trade surplus with the U.S. India's central bank officials are usually reticent about commenting on the nation's foreign exchange policy. This marks a departure from the RBI's fifteen-year plus stance of intervening only to contain volatility, Indranil Sen Gupta and Aastha Gudwani, economists at Bank of America wrote in a note. Das' comments also put the spotlight on bullish rupee trades from banks

including Nomura Holdings Inc., which said in a report last week that the Indian currency may outperform the Indonesian rupiah as the RBI may allow it to appreciate in a positive inflow backdrop. Deutsche Bank AG also recommended buying the rupee against the Philippine peso. The median estimate of a Bloomberg survey shows the rupee may strengthen rise to 72.50 to a dollar by year-end. It's risen 0.1% so far in 2021 to 73.03 after three straight years of declines. Goldman Sachs Group Inc. sees it appreciating to 70 by March 2022. The rupee is under pressure to rise on heavy foreign inflows. However, that prompts the central bank to mop up excess dollars with the aim of keeping the local exchange rate stable. Deutsche Bank expects inflows to reach \$82 billion by the end of the fiscal year ending March, before continuing at a similar pace in the following 12 months. India's forex reserves rose to a record \$586 billion. That's catching up with Russia, which has the world's fourth-largest stockpile. Mizuho Bank Ltd. sees this having a positive implications for the rupee when the greenback strengthens. "This prudential FX reserve building means that on episodes of sudden USD strength, rupee resilience will be greater," said Vishnu Varathan, the Singapore-based head of economics and strategy at the bank. In a stronger-dollar scenario, and barring a surge in oil prices the rupee could fare better than peers such as the Indonesian rupiah and Philippine peso, he said.

# BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari fires fresh salvo at CM Mamata Banerjee over West Bengal assembly election

**Kolkata, Jan 21** : Bharatiya Janata Party leader Suwendu Adhikari has said that he takes the responsibility of "ensuring the victory of whoever contests from Nandigram on BJP ticket". West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee sprang a surprise

on January 18 when she declared that she will contest the assembly election from Nandigram, the seat held by him before he switched over to the BJP. BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari fires fresh salvo at CM Mamata Banerjee over West Bengal assembly election. Suwendu Adhikari has challenged West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee ahead of the upcoming state assembly election. CM Banerjee sprang a surprise when she declared that she will contest the assembly election from Nandigram. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Suwendu Adhikari on Wednesday fired a fresh salvo and challenged West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ahead of the upcoming state assembly election. Speaking in Hooghly, Adhikari told news agency ANI that he takes the responsibility of "ensuring the victory of whoever contests from Nandigram on BJP ticket". West Bengal CM Banerjee sprang a surprise on January 18 when she declared that she will contest the assembly election from Nandigram, the seat held by him before he switched over to the BJP. "I take the responsibility of ensuring the victory of whoever contests from Nandigram on BJP ticket. Didi (Mamata Banerjee) has announced to contest from there, relying on 62,000 votes but I have 2.13 lakh people who chant 'Jai Shri Ram'," said Adhikari. He also said, "At a rally, TMC state president Subrata Bakshi said -- 'Jai Shri Ram nahi chalega'. In the election, people of Nandigram will give a befitting reply to those who coin such slogans." On Tuesday, Adhikari had said the TMC is like a private limited company run by two people, referring to Banerjee and her nephew Abhishek.

# Govt's cow panel drops chapters calling Jersey cows 'lazy', linking slaughter with earthquake



**New Delhi, January 21** : The Modi government's cow commission has dropped 10 chapters from the "reference material" compiled for its nationwide 'cow science' exam after many of the claims made in the text were termed unscientific. The controversial text - running into 54 pages, spanning 12 chapters - sought to link cow slaughter and earthquakes, and called Jersey cows (a foreign breed) lazy and prone to diseases. The Print had broken the story about its controversial content - which also projected cow milk and urine, among other products, as treatment for skin

conditions - on 6 January, the day it was uploaded on the Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog's website. The material was taken off the website two days later. A fresh version was uploaded Monday, but it is one-third the original length and only includes two chapters. Reached for comment, a media representative of the Aayog said they had removed the material to address some "technical glitches", adding that the chapters will be "uploaded one by one" with links to "more authors and publishers". The Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog was set up in 2019 with a mandate that includes organising "animal

husbandry on modern and scientific lines" and taking "steps for preserving and improving breeds". The reference material in question is supposed to guide those who take the Aayog's 'cow science exam', which is scheduled for 25 February. Two officials in the Union Animal Husbandry Department, under which the Aayog was set up, said the initiatives taken by the commission are not discussed with them. The affair, they added, had "humiliated" them. The two chapters uploaded Monday are revised versions of the earlier text. In the title of one, the commission has changed the term "Kamdhenu Mata" to "Desi Cow". It is now called "Desi cows and some shlokas in scriptures". The Aayog has also dropped two shlokas dealing with "administration and direction for cow grazing" and "other aspects of the cow". In the second chapter, "Indigenous cattle breeds of India", the list has been updated with 'Kasaragod gidda' from Karnataka and Kerala. The 10 chapters that have been dropped are: 'The difference between Native (Desi) and Exotic cow', 'Panchgavya and its

usefulness', 'Feeds, fodder and scientific bhoomi', 'Ethnoveterinary formulation', 'Care and management of cow and calf', 'Cow - environment and climate change', 'Cow: an engine of progress and prosperity', 'About Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog', 'Which dignitary said what about cow', and 'Patent'. In the chapter 'The difference between Native and Exotic cow', the commission listed 21 "distinct qualities" of the two. The text then sought to portray indigenous cows as being superior to the Jersey breed, which has its origins in the UK. "Indian cows maintain hygiene, are hardy and clever enough to not sit in dirty places while Jersey cows are known to be very lazy and prone to diseases," it said. "Whenever an unknown person comes near a desi cow, she immediately stands while no emotions are displayed by the Jersey. Desi cow is very active in nature and shares warmth with all while the Jersey cow sits idle and very inactive," it added. In the chapter 'Panchgavya and its usefulness' - panchgavya comprises cow milk and its two derivatives, ghee and butter, apart from urine and dung - cow dung was

described as an antiseptic with disease-preventive properties. Cow urine, meanwhile, was referred to as "a gift to mankind" and equated with Gangajal. Another chapter quoted a theory by physicists M.M. Bajaj, Ibrahim and Vijayraj Singh that links animal slaughter to natural calamities like earthquakes. "The theory examines the complex role of nociceptive waves (the waves generated by the animals on the verge of being butchered) in shear wave splitting which is related to seismic anisotropy," it states. Nociceptors are neurons that sense danger and alert the body. Seismic anisotropy is described as "the directional dependence of seismic velocity". The material also stated that cow protection and ox power could solve all the modern-world problems, such as air and water pollution, crime, poverty, unemployment, war, famine, floods, pestilence, and global warming. The general direction where science is headed in India under Modi. Now a national exam on COW SCIENCE, and these are the purported good effects of drinking cow piss. Rationalism is more urgent than ever before.

## MISSING INFORMATION



The above is photograph of Sri Sandip Goswami (35/40 Yrs) Asstt. Manager of Hatigarh T.E. S/O. Unknown, Vill- Hatigarh T.E. PS - Harisinga, District- Udalguri who has been missing since- 10/01/2021 from Hatigarh T.E.

This refers to Harisinga PS GDE No- 185 Dtd; 10/01/2021 and this office Man Missing Register Entry No. 07 Dtd. 12/01/2021.

### Descriptive Roll of the Missing Person :

1. Complexion	-	Fair
2. Age	-	35/40 Years
3. Built	-	Healthy
4. L/known	-	Assamese
5. Height	-	5,6 Feet
6. Wearing apparel	-	Pant & Shirt

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

Sd/-  
Superintendent of Police,  
Udalguri, Assam

Janasanyog/D/9883/20



## The new era begins in America

There was no acknowledgment of, still less apology for, his deranged delinquency in the face of Covid, or of his election defeat-failures that made the nervy, locked-down inauguration of Joe Biden inevitable. But Trump leaves having changed America. Biden did his best today. He had been absolutely the right candidate to defeat Trump at the polls. He calmly out-smarted the incumbent through the campaign; his appointments have been good; and there is no one in American politics better placed to begin the healing of wounds that ran through everything he said at the inauguration. The address by Biden on Capitol Hill did not mention Trump by name, but it was saturated in his blowhard predecessor's divisive legacy. The riot of 6 January hung over the occasion, the speech and even the images. The speech struck necessary and reassuring notes of realism, humility, hope and consistency. It was wholly unTrumpian. But Biden cannot remake America by trying to lead it back to a better yesterday. That would fail. To describe it as a presidential inauguration without parallel is to risk a lack of historical awareness on the one hand or journalistic hyperbole on the other. America, its institutions and values have survived civil war before, as well as assassination. America will probably survive the horrors of Trump's corrupt tenure, which Biden called "this uncivil war". But survival may no longer be enough in an America that has been led too close to the brink of a deeper conflict by a wanton leader, abetted by a weak-willed party, an elite of morally supine tech companies and the lie machines of Rupert and Lachlan Murdoch. Yet it is also true that Trump is not a one-off. Consider this: "American politics has often been an arena for angry minds. In recent years we have seen angry minds at work mainly among extreme rightwingers ... But behind this I believe there is a style of mind that is far from new and that is not necessarily right wing. I call it the paranoid style simply because no other word adequately evokes the sense of heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy that I have in mind." Each one of those words could have been written this week. In fact, the historian Richard Hofstadter wrote them six decades ago, after the failed 1964 presidential bid of the rightwing Republican Barry Goldwater. Hofstadter drew the argument not only from the delusions of the 1960s, but from a line of conspiracy theories that stretched right back to the French Revolution in the 1790s and forward to McCarthyism in the 1950s – and beyond. This tells us two things that need to be remembered in the light of the Biden inauguration. The first is that the battle to extend and bolster democratic values needs to be as sleepless as the tradition of those who oppose them. Biden's words, that "disagreement must not lead to disunion", indicate the scale of what is at stake. Disunion can wreck a nation. The rioters of 6 January adhere to what the columnist David Brooks calls a "violent Know-Nothingism that has always coursed through American history". They sometimes see themselves as refighting America's 18th-century war of independence. It is more accurate to see them as refighting the 19th-century civil war from the side of the Confederacy, whose racial legacy still scars the United States 150 years later. They have to be punished and defeated. Biden said nothing about that. Yet, as the Economist said last week, you do not overcome division by pretending that nothing is wrong but by facing it. The US senate has to finish the job by convicting Trump too. The second lesson is that, while America sometimes echoes and influences the politics of other nations, including Britain's, it is also extremely different. In most respects, and far more than many politicians elsewhere understand, the United States follows its own distinct path. It is a foreign country, and the better you get to know it the more aware of that you become. Trump has turbocharged that. This is the America that Biden now leads. Foreigners, especially English-speaking foreigners, need to control their delusions about America. Until 2017, every inaugural was watched from Europe as a statement of the terms on which our own politics here would be set for the coming years. Trump changed all that. American carnage broke the dials, which sadly the former British prime minister Theresa May failed to see. Biden's warm words now will not reset the dials. There was surprisingly little in his address about foreign policy. The future of America's place in the world is not definitively settled by the change of administration. Trump lost the election, but he has changed things for a generation. Biden's address was an implicit acknowledgment of that. The European nations, Britain included, need to grasp the same thing. Just as the era of American domestic bipartisanship remains for the foreseeable future a thing of the past, so the era of American global leadership is not for rebuilding quickly or perhaps at all. Under Donald Trump, the arrogance of global greatness came perilously close to breaking America. If Biden and his successors fail, that may still happen. But Brexit has shown that Britain suffers from an arrogance of greatness all of its own. Britain is a vessel sailing the oceans in the dark without charts or lights. Biden's America will not come to the rescue any time soon. It has its own problems to solve. Joe Biden has taken oath of office as the new President of the United States of America, and Kamala Harris as the Vice President with the gaze of the entire world focused on Washington, with the hope that the new era beginning will calm the frayed tempers. A few weeks ago it hadn't appeared possible that the transition from Trump to Biden would be easy. What transpired in the US capital in the past few weeks was unprecedented, leading to the Donald Trump presidency ending with him being impeached a second time in the term and this instance for inciting a riot, as his supporters stormed Capitol Hill and even entered the Congress. Washington DC was sewn tight for the Biden-Harris inauguration with the National Guard out on the streets to thwart any possible attack on the Capitol. This has never happened in the US before, but then no president of the United States of America has caused the administration to take such precautions. Even as he demitted office, Trump did not back down from the claim that the election was rigged. A claim that casts a shadow on the Biden presidency, as there exist conspiracy theorists who support this idea despite the lack of evidence. It also damages the faith of the people in the democratic process, an idea that the US has stood for and defended in the long years of the cold war. That's the past, what from now on for Biden and Harris? Trump leaves behind a massive workload for the new president. Biden is perhaps inheriting a nation that has not been as deeply divided as it is now, since the end of the American civil war. Harris, as the first woman, first black and first South Asian vice President has a huge role to play here. The struggle to unite the people again will only be rivaled by the new administration's fight with the COVID-19 pandemic that has absolutely crippled the nation. The United States has the largest number of COVID-19 cases and the largest number of deaths from the virus.

## The British public are careful and calm-the problem is that the government isn't

This is what a true crisis feels like.

The UK has now recorded more than 100,000 deaths from coronavirus and, according to the government's chief scientific adviser, the daily toll will continue to be awful "for some weeks". Our capital city is so overrun that Covid patients are being moved to intensive care units hundreds of miles away, and across England nearly 4.5 million people are now waiting for operations. A test-and-trace system that was meant to be "world-beating" is almost irrelevant; we now learn that the £78m plan for daily mass testing in English schools has not been approved by the agency that oversees medicines and health products. Vaccinations will eventually ease the situation, but everywhere else you look, there are government blunders, delays and failures which – in a more predictable world – would already have had huge political consequences. What kind of country allows this to happen? In the polls, the Conservatives are either ahead or neck and neck with Labour. Among many people I have interviewed and some I know, there seems to be a shrugging belief that, because the virus is unprecedented, disaster of some kind was always inevitable, and on balance, Boris Johnson and his ministers are doing as well as anyone could. Sometimes, in fact, I wonder whether calamity is so built into our understanding of politics and power that some of the public almost expect nothing less: as Fintan O'Toole put it in his book *Heroic Failure*, "the grand balls-up is not new, and in English historical memory it is not shameful". One reason, perhaps, is bound up with an ingrained unseriousness that has periodically surfaced in our national life – and which Johnson has revived, to keep people's expectations of his government low and shield him and his colleagues from their own failures. What have been his most memorable phrases since the crisis began? "Squash that sombrero"? "Send coronavirus packing" in 12 weeks? "Operation last gasp"? Or his grim characterisation of the virus as an "in-



John Harris

visible mugger"? Though most observers are seemingly too polite to admit it, when Johnson hosts press briefings or makes television announcements with his hair freshly ruffled, and the sense that a smirk may not be too far from his lips, there is an implied deflation not just of the gravity of his message, but of his own accountability. And a similar spirit runs through the entire government. Last week, the fisheries minister admitted that she had not read the Brexit trade deal because she had been "very busy organising the local nativity trail". The reason Gavin Williamson is still the education secretary has something to do with the same syndrome: given low public expectations, brazen incompetence is priced in, and the pantomime carries on. There is an associated set of questions about what the government thinks about the public, and how those perceptions have shaped its responses to the crisis. A lot of official thinking seems to be derived from the pages of the rightwing papers, and a picture of Britain – or, more specifically, England – as a country that always verges on the ungovernable, and tends to view orders from on high with the utmost scepticism. In this reading, millions of people have greeted every new restriction with howls of anguish, captured in a long run of headlines: "Pubs shut till Xmas" (The

Sun); "Families ask when will the nightmare end" (Mail Online); "Fury of golfers as they are banned from the links" (Daily Mail). There is no little irony in the fact the same outlets tend to hark back to a wartime Britain that was supposedly determined to keep calm and carry on. This view of the country's mood has embedded the idea that, if the government has often been hasty and irresponsible in loosening the lockdowns, it was only responding to a public "clamour". Last summer, given that many people were tiring of confinement in balmy weather, the pubs simply had to reopen. Christmas is such a non-negotiable part of everyone's calendar that the government would inevitably plan to drastically relax the rules for a few days, to avoid some kind of national uprising. In the same way, exiting the first lockdown was never going to be framed as something best done cautiously, but a spell of joyous freedom kicked off by "happy Monday", when barbecues would be lit, and all would once again be well. Even at the time, plenty of people knew what was happening was reckless. But the public gets what the public wants. For the people at the top, one corollary of all this has now proved to be very useful. The narrative of an impatient, risk-taking population means that millions of us can be held to be complicit in the

government's failures. In the last fortnight, this has been reflected in the idea that, as hospitals are nearing breaking point, much of the blame must lie with everyday rule-breakers, from people on beaches to the miscreants who think nothing of driving miles to "beauty spots". The disaster, it seems, belongs to us all: it is not that Johnson and his colleagues have screwed up, but that the whole country proved unequal to what the virus demanded (remember that Dominic Cummings, in the prime minister's view, "followed the instincts of every father and every parent"). Self-evidently, this is light years from the truth. A recent study by University College London – which collected responses from more than 70,000 participants – found 96% were following most or almost all of the rules for the week ending 10 January, the highest figure since April of last year. According to YouGov, 85% of people endorse the new lockdown, and 77% think it should have happened sooner. All over the country, there is a sense of dutiful and resigned acquiescence, however difficult some of the rules may be for millions of us. There are genuine echoes here, perhaps, of the autumn of 1939, and the Labour politician Richard Crossman's observation that people greeted the introduction of conscription with "an apathetic equanimity impossible a year ago". If the government is ever going to be held to account, this is the country we need to hear a lot more about. Indeed, for the Labour party – which currently seems to be floundering around in search of a message, and bloodlessly fixating on either "competence" or the need for tougher rules – telling a story about the contrast between the country the political right imagines and the one that actually exists might be a good idea. Most of the public are stoic rather than impatient, and possessed of a calm and a sense of duty the government seems to have long since mislaid. Make this point often enough, and the politics and morals of 2021 might become much easier to see, along with the deep ditch we have all been led into.

## Why senior Labour figures think their party needs to start upping its game



Whenever Labour gets excited about the failings of the

Tories, the party should remember a vital statistic. In the past 75 years, only three Labour leaders have ever won parliamentary majorities. This dismal history is constantly in the thoughts of Keir Starmer, as is the desire to make himself the fourth name on the brief list composed of Clement Attlee, Harold Wilson and Tony Blair. Though very different personalities operating in very different contexts, Labour's victorious trio had key things in common. Each came to power after a long span of Conservative rule had stretched the elastic of the public's tolerance of the Tories. Each of those successful leaders persuaded the country that they and their teams were sufficiently competent to govern. And each of Labour's rare winners galvanised support by offering Britain a compelling story of national renewal. How is Mr Starmer doing on that checklist for success? We can place a tentative tick on the first item. By the time of the next election, the Conservatives will have been in power for more than a decade. Without knowing what else might happen between now and then, we can already say that the Tories will have gone through three leaders and possibly more during that time, while imposing an austerity that even they now acknowledge was overdue, presiding over a chaotic exit from the EU with enduring economic consequences and being responsible for the serial bungling of the coronavirus crisis. None of

that is a guarantee of Labour victory,

but it should be some encouragement. A professionally led party ought to be able to get a hearing for the "time for a change" argument at the next election. It is with the second requirement on the checklist for success – a reputation for competence – that Labour has often faced a steep challenge. This is not entirely the party's fault. A significant chunk of the electorate tend to work on the assumption that the Tories are more to be trusted with running things, despite the copious contemporary and historical evidence to the contrary. Mr Starmer has thus far done very well in persuading voters that he has what it takes to be the country's leader. He is looked on as a potential prime minister in a way Ed Miliband wasn't and Jeremy Corbyn could never hope to be. He passes the "shut your eyes test". People can shut their eyes and imagine him on the doorstep of Number 10. He's built some of his profile with the public by defining himself against his party's recent, torrid past. If he has cut through with anything, it is with the claim to represent "new leadership", the strapline that appears whenever he speaks from a Labour podium. "He's not the last guy. He's definitely ticked that box," remarks one senior Labour MP. The recent election of Christina McAnea as leader of Unison, the UK's largest trade union, who saw off competitors less sympathetic to Mr Starmer, was welcome to the Labour leader. The resignation of Richard Leonard offers some hope, though

### Andrew Rawnsley

absolutely no guarantee, that a fresh Labour leader in Scotland might revive the party's parlous position north of the border. Mr Starmer has harvested dividends from the coronavirus crisis. A dithering prime minister and a notably weak cabinet have made the Tories look incompetent. The Labour leader has drawn on his talents as a prosecutor to interrogate the government's many blunders. He has also been afforded opportunities to demonstrate that his own judgment can be acute. On several occasions during the crisis, the best way to guess which decision Boris Johnson would be forced to make has been to pick the policy that he ridiculed when the Labour leader first advocated it. While the prime minister has squandered the boost he received to his personal ratings during the early "rally around the flag" phase of the crisis, the voters have reacted positively to Mr Starmer. He is now the most popular opposition leader since Tony Blair was making his march on Number 10 in the 1990s. Where he's struggled is translating personal popularity into trust in his party. For some time, most headline polls have put Labour roughly neck and neck with the Conservatives. There's a glass half-full way of looking at this. It's only a bit over a year since Labour went down to a catastrophic defeat and the party was polling more than 20 points behind the Tories when Mr Starmer took over. So some Labour MPs are content to settle for neck and neck. Others are troubled. Because there's also a glass half-empty way of looking at the polling. Level-pegging is not a terrible position for the Tories at this stage of the parliament. Some Conservative MPs are astonished to find themselves doing that well when their government has made such a hash of handling a public health emergency that has cost so many lives. "I'm one of those worried about the polling," says a member of the shadow cabinet. "We've got the bounce from not being as loony as Corbyn was. But we haven't won the battle with the Tories in any shape or form." Another Labour frontbencher remarks: "We still have a massive mountain to climb. We are only at base camp." The deep damage done to the Labour brand during the Corbyn years, when many voters concluded that the party had

become nasty, factionalised and extremist, will take much more work to repair. In the realm of competence, being trusted with the economy is a critical weak spot, as it so often has been for Labour historically. The leadership is sharply aware of this. That is evident from the recent speech delivered by Anneliese Dodds, the most significant she has made since she became shadow chancellor. Its overarching political intent was essentially defensive, being designed to persuade the country that a Labour government would be responsible and efficient stewards of the national finances. She pledged herself to a balanced budget over the economic cycle, while the National Audit Office would be empowered to provide more independent invigilation of the effectiveness of government spending. "It is Labour's cast-iron commitment to delivering value for money for the British people." There is nothing novel about a shadow chancellor swearing up to fiscal constraints in an attempt to gain public confidence. On the path to Labour's victory in 1997, Gordon Brown bound himself to "golden rules" about spending and borrowing as a major element of his effort to persuade the electorate that Labour would not be reckless. In the run-up to the Tories taking office in 2010, George Osborne sought to purchase credibility as a future chancellor by pledging to establish the Office for Budget Responsibility. Ms Dodds is following the template used by others who have held her role. I say this not as a criticism, but as a compliment. After all, Messrs Brown and Osborne both succeeded in becoming chancellor. One speech alone is not going to be enough. Far from it. Labour has a long way to go to win trust among the public, but at least it has a senior leadership team that recognises how vital this is. The largest question hovering over Mr Starmer is the final one. Does he have a vision of national renewal of the kind that powered Labour's victories in 1945, 1964 and 1997? Is he in possession of a compelling story about how Britain will be different and better under a government led by him? If he does have a story, does he have the capacity to inspire the public with it? In private conversation, Mr Starmer agrees this is imperative.



# The Grand Side of Thrill: The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine launched in India

**Guwahati, Jan 21 :** BMW India has launched the new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine in the country. Locally produced at BMW Group Plant Chennai exclusively for the Indian market, the car is available in both petrol and diesel variants at all BMW India dealerships from today onwards. The long wheelbase 'Gran Limousine' is a new addition to the BMW 3 Series family. It is the long wheelbase version of the highly successful BMW 3 Series. It has been launched in India considering the clientele's preference for long sedans. The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine takes on the position of the longest, most spacious and comfortable car in its segment and sets a new benchmark in the class. It offers sportiness, comfort and innovations exclusively for the Indian market. Mr. Vikram Pawah, President, BMW Group India said, "The 3 Series is the soul of the BMW brand and has won over millions of customers around the world. The ultimate sports sedan has now set the ultimate standard in luxury in a new form - the BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine. With its elongated design, enhanced space, luxurious comfort and dynamic performance, the new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine has a unique and captivating character. It delivers sheer driving pleasure and indulges in superlative luxury, making it a perfect choice for individuals as well as the family. The Gran Limousine has been tailored with an innovative proposition that will attract young, progressive Indians who want a perfect combination of sporty performance and higher practicality for family usage in this segment." The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine blends the joy of driving and the outstanding comfort of an extremely spacious sedan. The grandeur rises many notches higher, thanks to a modern design with a larger, elongated body and bigger rear doors. Due to the extended wheelbase, there is more room to unwind, more legroom for rear passengers and a pleasant seating experience even on long journeys. The powerful engine ensures thrilling performance and acceleration. The long list of indulgence features such as Panorama Glass Sunroof, Comfort Seats in front, bespoke 'Vernasca' leather upholstery, luxurious rear seat, Parking Assist with Reverse Assist, Ambient Lighting, BMW Live Cockpit Professional and Wireless Charging adds to its appeal. The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine is available in two attractive design schemes - Luxury Line and the exclusive M Sport 'First Edition' which is limited to launch phase only. Luxury Line indulges movement in style and endows elegance. M Sport 'First Edition' bestows a masculine character with distinguished M elements evoking the racing spirit. The additional features of M Sport 'First Edition' are BMW Head Up Display, BMW Gesture Control, Comfort Access and Surround view cameras with 360° view including top, panorama and 3D view. The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine is available in one diesel variant (BMW 320Ld Luxury Line) and two petrol variants (BMW 330Li Luxury Line and BMW 330Li M Sport 'First Edition') which

are locally produced. The ex-showroom prices are-

BMW 330Li Luxury Line	: INR 51,50,000
BMW 320Ld Luxury Line	: INR 52,50,000
BMW 330Li M Sport 'First Edition'	: INR 53,90,000

Price prevailing at the time of invoicing will be applicable. Ex-showroom prices inclusive of GST (incl. compensation cess) as applicable



but exclude Road Tax, Tax Collected at Source (TCS), RTO statutory taxes/fees, other local tax cess levies and insurance. Price/options are subject to change without prior notice. \*For further information, contact an authorised BMW dealer. The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine is available in four exciting metallic paintworks - Mineral White, Melbourne Red, Carbon Black and Cashmere Silver. The choice of upholstery combinations includes Leather Vernasca Cognac | Black and Oyster | Black. Thanks to BMW India Financial Services, customized and flexible financial solutions can be designed as per individual requirements. BMW 360° offers exclusive packages with great value and peace of mind. Customers enjoy hassle-free ownership with low monthly payments starting INR 59,999\*, assured buy-back up to four years and flexible term-end options. Exclusive interest rates will also be applicable for a limited period. Service Inclusive and Service Inclusive Plus further reduce cost of ownership. Customers can choose from a variety of service plans according to duration and mileage. The packages cover Condition Based Service (CBS) and maintenance work with plans ranging from 3 yrs / 40,000 kms to 10 yrs / 2,00,000 kms. Service Inclusive packages for the new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine start from INR 39,530 for petrol variants and INR 56,522 for diesel variants. Additionally, the packages can be extended during the run time by just paying a differential amount. Repair Inclusive extends warranty benefits from third year of operation to maximum sixth year, after the completion of the standard two-year warranty period. For 3 years, unlimited mileage on the new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine, it costs INR 32,804 for both petrol and diesel variants. The regular service cost for petrol cars starts at less than INR 1 per km and diesel cars starts at less than INR 1.5 per km. The new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine The exterior body design of the new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine blends the new, extremely precise design language and sporting aura of the BMW 3 Series with distinctive proportions. The unique character in long-wheelbase guise stems from an extra 110 millimetres of wheelbase and

the associated increase in seating comfort and legroom in the rear compartment. Encompassing an exterior length of 4,819 millimetres and a 2,961-millimetre wheelbase, the exterior dimensions of the new BMW 3 Series Gran Limousine outstrip those of any other car in its class. Creating a striking front look is the large BMW kidney grille with single surround for the two elements and LED headlights with ex-

tended features. BMW's hallmark sporting prowess is embodied here by short overhangs, a long bonnet and a set-back passenger compartment. The model's stretched silhouette underscores its inherent elegance and hints at the enviable spaciousness of the interior. A sporty look is created by the slim three-dimensional L-shaped LED taillights along with two large freeform taillipies.

The interior is designed to accentuate grand cabin spaciousness. The rear doors are 110 millimetres longer than those of the BMW 3 Series sedan, allowing for an extra 43 millimetres of legroom in the rear compartment, which sets a new benchmark in the class. The comfort-oriented character is highlighted through improved padding and pampering Vernasca leather upholstery of the rear seats, newly designed headrest and the central armrest between the rear seats. The large 480 litres luggage compartment meets the needs of long distance travel. The automatic tail-gate operation increases access convenience by enabling the boot lid to be opened / closed at the press of a button. The M Sport 'First Edition' has Comfort Access which goes a step further and allows completely handsfree operation of the bootlid. Welcome Light Carpet, projected from the side sill, welcomes passengers in glamorous style. Added to which, the car comes with illuminated door sill plates. The driver and front passenger settle into electrically adjustable Comfort Seats with Sensatec door trim. The driver-focused cockpit includes a sports leather steering wheel in Luxury Line and M leather steering wheel in M Sport 'First Edition' with multifunction buttons along with the instrument cluster/control display grouping. The modern design of the centre console with galvanic embellisher adds to the cabin's premiumness. Filling up the cabin with a sense of spaciousness is the large Panorama sunroof. Ambient Lighting with six dimmable designs creates an atmosphere for every mood. In another model-specific feature, the ambient lighting also includes an illuminated contour strip on the back of the front seats. The three-zone automatic climate control with active carbon filters optimizes air quality. The optimised

acoustic properties reduce noise levels and make the journey peaceful. Thanks to unrivalled BMW TwinPower Turbo technology, the petrol and diesel engines meld maximum power with exemplary efficiency and offer spontaneous responsiveness even at low engine speeds. The two-litre four-cylinder petrol engine of the BMW 330Li produces an output of 258 hp and maximum torque of 400 Nm at 1,550 - 4,400 rpm. The car accelerates from 0 - 100 km / hr in just 6.2 seconds. The two-litre four-cylinder diesel engine of the BMW 320Ld produces an output of 190 hp and a maximum torque of 400 Nm at 1,750 - 2,500 rpm. The car accelerates from 0 - 100 km / hr in just 7.6 seconds. The eight speed steptronic sport automatic transmission performs smooth, almost imperceptible gearshifts. At any time, in any gear, the transmission collaborates perfectly with the engine, enabling it to develop its full power and efficiency. For even greater driving pleasure, it comes with steering wheel paddle shifters and cruise control with braking function. Using Launch Control, ambitious drivers can achieve maximum acceleration with optimized traction from a standstill. Using the Driving Experience Control switch, the driver can choose between different driving modes to suit the driving conditions - ECO PRO, Comfort, Sport and Sport+. A host of BMW ConnectedDrive technologies continue to break the innovation barrier in automotive industry. Modern cockpit concept BMW Live Cockpit Professional includes 3D Navigation, a 12.3-inch digital instrument display behind the steering wheel and a 10.25 inch Control Display. The occupants can operate a number of functions simply by speaking to their BMW Virtual Assistant. Hands do the talking with BMW Gesture Control that recognizes six pre-defined hand movements for control of a number of functions (available in M Sport 'First Edition'). The smartphone holder integrated into the centre console allows inductive, Wireless Charging for mobile phones. Wireless Apple CarPlay® and Android Auto ensure seamless smartphone connection with the car to access several functions. The car has a Harman Kardon Surround Sound system with 16 loudspeakers. The BMW Head-Up Display in M Sport 'First Edition' projects driving-related information onto the windscreen and directly into the driver's field of view. It employs full-colour graphics and provides a wealth of information to the driver without having to divert their eyes from the road. Parking Assistant with Rear View Camera makes parking in tight spots easier. Reversing Assistant provides unmatched support in reversing out of a parking spot or through narrow driveways. It keeps a record of the last 50 metres driven and assists by taking over the steering. The M Sport 'First Edition' features surround view cameras with 360° view including top view, panorama view and 3D view. BMW Efficient Dynamics includes features such as 8-speed Steptronic Sport Automatic Transmission, Auto Start-Stop, Brake-Energy Regeneration, Electronic Power Steering, 50:50 Weight Distribution and ECO PRO mode in Driving Experience Control.

## Republic Day Sale FLAT 50% Offer launched by SohumiEmporia and SohumiShopee across all stores

**Guwahati, January 21:** Sohumi, one of the most sought after destinations for shopaholics of the region has launched "SOHUM CELEBRATES THE BIGGEST REPUBLIC DAY OFFER OF THE SEASON" - FLAT 50% OFF\* on all Brands across all stores located in Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Naharlagun & Tezpur. CEO Siddharth Jalan said Republic Day Flat 50% sale started from 22nd January to 26th January in our all stores. One can find commendable mix of merchandise for their best selection across the stores; categories ranging from Watches, Sunglasses, Footwear, Men's, Ladies, & Kid's Apparels, Leather Accessories, Fashion Bags, Home Utility & Décor Items, Toys, Food items, Cosmetics, Baby Care products, Artificial Jewellery, and Home Furniture and Furnishing Categories. He further said Sohumi boasts of a very strong brand mix - Watches like Rado, Tag Heuer, Fossil, Diesel, Seiko, Tissot, Michael Kors, Armani Exchange and many more. Men's Apparel like Tommy Hilfiger, Superdry, Armani Exchange, Calvin Klein, Van Heusen, Louis Philippe, Jack & Jones, Levi's and many more Women's Wear brands like Vero Moda, Only, Kazo, Coverstory, Forever New, W. Biba, AND, Global Desi, FabAlley and many more Kid's wear brand like United Colors of Benetton, Allen Solly, US Polo and more. The store also offers Ladies and



Men's Bag from brands like Baggit, Cerz and many other fashion houses. Sohumi Shoppe has become a household name with strong recognition in the entire north-east region in its journey of two decades. We aim to have a 'first hand' or 'personal' interaction with customers and providing them with such a satisfying experience that they would like to enjoy it repeatedly. We intend to make fashion presentable and make retail elegant.

## Amway Forays into Vegetable and Fruit Hygiene Category to Cater to the Growing Consumer Needs for Hygiene Products

**Launches Amway Home™ Fruit & Veggie Wash**



**Guwahati, January 21 :** Amway India, one of the country's leading FMCG direct selling companies today announced the launch of its latest innovation in-home care category with Amway Home™ Fruit & Veggie Wash. Building on its expertise in home-care solutions and in its endeavor to cater to the growing need for hygiene care products, Amway forayed into the vegetable and fruit hygiene space with this launch. Amway Home™ Fruit & Veggie Wash is a 5-in-1 cleaning solution for fruits and vegetables. The cleaning solution has no added chlorine, bleach, alcohol, artificial color or animal-based ingredients. It is scientifically lab-tested against 197 pesticides and is proven to remove surface germs (bacteria and fungus), surface pesticides, waxes, surface heavy metals along with dirt and dust from fruits, vegetables and cereals without leaving any residue. Commenting on the launch, Anshu Budhraj, CEO, Amway India said, "The homecare category has

grown significantly in the recent years, fueled by consumers' need for good home hygiene, rising incomes, urbanization along with increased products' penetration. Given the current environment, consumers have become even more hygiene conscious, and we have observed a significant shift in the consumer behaviour as well as the consumption pattern. The sudden spike in attention for healthcare has made home hygiene as one of the top priorities. Continuing our commitment to offering the highest quality and versatile products, we have launched Amway Home™ Fruit & Veggie Wash. The product contains naturally derived cleansing agents with no harmful residue. Riding on Amway's 60 plus years of expertise in developing environment-friendly homecare solutions, this innovation aims to address the growing need of our consumers for hygiene products." Talking about the innovation, Ajay Khanna, Chief Marketing Officer, Amway India, said, "In the current times of heightened health and hygiene awareness, there is expected worry over ingesting harmful chemicals and bacteria that remain after regular cleaning of fruits and vegetables. Amway Home™ Fruit & Veggie Wash is best defined, as the home care solution that combines the one-two punch of cleaning. With frequent reports of consumers limiting discretionary expenses, Amway Home™ Fruit & Veggie Wash offers value for money. With a unique concentrated formula, this cleaning solution follows the philosophy of less is more leading to the low cost per usage." We are confident that Amway Home™ Fruit & Veggie Wash will be able to cater to the immediate need of our direct sellers and customers". Comprising of 11 products in the home care portfolio, the company is foreseeing the category to register INR 250 crores by 2025. Priced at just INR 249.00 for 500ml, Amway Home™ Fruit & Veggie Wash will be sold through Amway Direct Retailer/Amway Direct Sellers or can also be purchased through a servicing Amway Direct Retailer/Amway Direct Seller by visiting [www.amway.in](http://www.amway.in).

## Most shareholders of Franklin MF favour closing of 6 schemes



**New Delhi, Jan 21 :** Five of these six schemes are now cash positive, with the cash available at over Rs 9,000 crore as of January 15, fund house's counsel Harish Salve told the Bench. While posting the matter for further hearing on January 25 to decide on the procedure for disbursement of funds to the unitholders, the apex court clarified that it would not stop disbursement of refunds for want of audit report. While posting the matter for further hearing on January 25 to decide on the procedure for disbursement of funds to the unitholders, the apex court clarified that it would not stop disbursement of refunds for want of audit report. An "overwhelming majority" of unitholders of the Franklin Templeton MF's six debt schemes that the company proposed to wind up on April 23 has voted in favour of the move, the Supreme Court said, while reading the observers' report. The SC said

more than 97% investors of the six schemes are in favour of the winding up. The e-voting to seek the consent of the unitholders was held on December 26-28. Sebi, on the directions of the SC, had appointed former chief election commissioner TS Krishnamurthy as observer to the process. HCLT's guidance for the March 2021 quarter of 2-3% on revenues includes ~1.1% contribution from DWS acquisition, implying organic sequential revenue of 0.9-1.9%; the range appears a touch lighter than our expectations. HCL Technologies Rating: add - A good showing by the firm in third quarter. Disclosures on RBI resolution book and portfolio quality suggest a stable asset quality outlook. HDFC Bank Rating: Buy - A resilient performance by the company. While 97.22% unitholders of Franklin India Low Duration Fund voted in favour of winding up, 96.78% unitholders of Franklin India Ultra

Short Bond Fund voted for the same. In case of Franklin India Short Term Income Plan, 97.61% voted for winding up while 97.97% of unitholders of Franklin India Credit Risk Fund voted in favour. In case of Franklin India Dynamic Accrual Fund and Franklin India Income Opportunities Fund, 97.62% and 96.89%, respectively, voted favourably. The court gave various parties, including Sebi and unitholders, three days to file their objections to how the voting was conducted. It also sought suggestions from Sebi and Franklin Templeton trustees on how to proceed further on disbursement of funds if objections to voting results are rejected in the next hearing. While posting the matter for further hearing on January 25 to decide on the procedure for disbursement of funds to the unitholders, the apex court clarified that it would not stop disbursement of refunds for want of audit report.



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## PM Modi to visit Assam

as Netaji did, and to infuse in them a spirit of patriotic fervour,” the release said.A permanent exhibition and a projection mapping show on Netaji will be inaugurated on the occasion. A commemorative coin and postage stamp will also be released by the Prime Minister. A cultural programme “Amra Nuton Jouboneri Doot”, based on the theme of Netaji, will also be held.Before this event, Prime Minister will visit the National Library, Kolkata, where an International Conference “Re-visiting the legacy of Netaji Subhas in the 21st century” and an Artists’ Camp are being organized. Prime Minister will interact with the artists and conference participants.On the same day (on January 23), PM Modi will distribute 1.06 lakh land pattas/allotment certificates in Sivasagar, Assam.According to the PMO release, taking into account an urgent need to protect the land rights of indigenous people of the state, the Assam government came out with a comprehensive new Land Policy with a renewed emphasis on protecting the land rights of the indigenous people.“The issuance of patta/allotment certificates for indigenous people of Assam has been given highest priority in order to instil a sense of security amongst them. Assam had 5.75 lakh landless families in 2016. The present Government has distributed 2.28 lakhs land pattas/allotment certificates since May 2016. The ceremony on January 23 marks the next step in this process,” the release stated.

## Fire Breaks out at Vaccine

Maharashtra Home Minister Anil DeshmukhSerum Institute of India's building in Manjri (Pune) caught fire due to some ongoing welding work. Insulation material, which is inflammable, was kept near the work site. So far, 5 deaths have been reported: Maharashtra Health Minister Rajesh TopeFire Breaks Out Again | Fire breaks out again in one compartment of the same building at Serum Institute of India (SII), in Pune. Fire fighting operation is underway. More details awaited. Fire had broken out at Manjri Plant of SII today afternoon and claimed five lives.Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray will visit the unit of Serum Institute of India in Manjri, Pune, where the fire mishap took place, to inspect & take stock of the situation tomorrow at noon: Office of the Chief Minister of MaharashtraPained to know that around 5 people lost life in SII fire incident. My deepest condolences to their families. Praying for speedy recovery of the injured ones: BJP leader Devendra Fadnavis.Pratik Pashte from PuneMaharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray speaks with Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla. To visit Pune at 2 pm tomorrow.Pune Commissioner of Police Amitabh Gupta says bodies found at SII facility are so charred that they can't be identified. Anguished to learn about the unfortunate news of loss of lives due to the fire break out at SII's facility in Pune. My thoughts & prayers with the bereaved families. Appreciate efforts of Pune City Police & Fire Department to bring the fire under control.India has started the world's largest vaccination programme against Covid-19 last week and lakhs of healthcare and frontline workers have already been inoculated against the virus, but hesitancy over...6334 new COVID-19 cases, 6229 recoveries and 21 deaths have been reported in Kerala today. Number of active cases stands a 69,771, so far 7,96,986 patients have recovered. Death toll stands at 3545.Today 34 healthcare workers got vaccinated for COVID-19 at Safdarjung Hospital: Spokesperson, Safdarjung Hospital, Delhi.Five charred bodies recovered from Serum Institute of India (SII) building where fire broke out in afternoon: Fire official.Those Dead May Be Construction Workers: Mayor | The five people who died, were perhaps the workers at the under-construction building. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained but it is being speculated that welding, that was going on at the building, caused the fire: Pune Mayor Murlidhar Mohol5 Bodies Found: Pune Mayor | Four people were evacuated from the building but when it came under control, five bodies were found by our jawans, says Pune Mayor Murlidhar Mohol on fire at Serum Institute of India.Lives Lost in SII Fire | We have just received some distressing updates; upon further investigation we have learnt that there has unfortunately been some loss of life at the incident. We are deeply saddened and offer our deepest condolences to the family members of the departed: SII CEO Adar Poonawalla.A major fire broke out at a facility of the Serum Institute of India, the Pune-based manufacturer of vaccines, on Thursday afternoon after 2 pm but it was brought under control in around two hours.As per the information we've received, the fire is under control. There have been no casualties so far. The fire had not broken out at the COVID vaccine unit: Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray.Fire at the Serum Institute of India building is under control, cooling process is underway. No casualty reported, cause of the fire is still unknown: Prashant Ranpise, Chief fire officer, Pune Municipal Corporation. As per the information we've received, the fire is under control. There have been no casualties so far. The fire had not broken out at the COVID vaccine unit: Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray, on fire at Serum Institute of India.No Loss of Covishield: Adar Poonawalla | I would like to reassure all governments and the public that there would be no loss of COVISHIELD production due to multiple production buildings that I had kept in reserve to deal with such contingencies at Serum Institute. Thank you very much Pune City Police & Fire Department: SII CEO Adar Poonawalla.PM to interact With Vax Beneficiaries in Varanasi | Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with beneficiaries and vaccinators of Covid vaccination drive in Varanasi on January 22 at 1:15 PM via video conferencing. The participants in the interaction will share their first hand experience of vaccination. The Prime Minister will also hold a dialogue and discussion with scientists, political leaders, officials and other stakeholders to proactively ensure smooth conduct of the vaccination drive.The Maharashtra government announced that an inquiry has been launched into the incident, even as the company's CEO Adar Poonawalla assured that the fire will not result in any loss of Covishield production. He said multiple production buildings had been kept in reserve to deal with such contingencies.Photos and videos from the scene showed dark, thick clouds of smoke rising from the building, but there were no casualties or injuries because of the fire. The fire was reported at the institute's biotechnology park, inaugurated by Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan last year. A total of 15 fire engines, and ambulances were rushed to the spot and the blaze was brought under control.Amid concerns over impact on the production of COVID-19 vaccine Covishield, the government has said there has not been much damage to the area where vaccines are manufactured. Further, the facility, where fire has been reported, is used for manufacturing Rotavirus and BCG vaccines and not coronavirus shots.

## Republic Day Tractor Rally

the meeting with the police, said, "The government wants us to take out our rally outside Delhi, but we want to hold it inside Delhi. No decision was taken in today's meeting."Joint Commissioner of Police (Northern Range) SS Yadav coordinated the meeting held at Mantram Resort near the Singhu border.The meeting was also attended by Special Commissioner (Law and Order-Western Zone) Sanjay Singh, Special Commissioner of Police (Intelligence) Dependra Pathak and other senior officers from Delhi, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh police.A similar meeting was held on Wednesday between the union leaders and officers of Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana police at Vigyan Bhawan to discuss the route and arrangements of the proposed rally on January 26.However, the farmer unions had rejected a suggestion by the police officers to hold the rally on the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway instead of Delhi's busy Outer Ring Road, sources Thousands of farmers, mostly from Punjab and Haryana, have been protesting at several Delhi border points against the Centre's new agriculture laws for nearly two months. The unions representing the farmers have begun holding tractor rallies at villages in Punjab to mobilise people for the demonstration on Republic Day.The farmers are vehemently opposing the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020; the Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020; and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act 2020.Enacted in September last year, the three laws have been projected by the Centre as major reforms in the agriculture sector that will remove middlemen and allow farmers to sell their produce anywhere in the country.However, the protesting farmers have expressed their apprehension that the new laws would pave the way for eliminating the safety cushion of MSP (minimum support price) and do away with the "mandi" (wholesale market) system, leaving them at the mercy of big corporates.

## Our Gathbandhan will form

the gathbandhan after the assembly elections. I think that both the parties will not get more than 5 seats each. I think Lurinjyoti Gogoi of BJP and Akhil Gogoi of Rajjor Dol isn't the people of BJP. They are like us and I am sure they will be forced to join our gathbandhan to form the government," said the AIUDF chief.Ajmal also stated that it will be impossible for the parties to form the government under such circumstances. BJP and Rajjor Dol will only be left with the option of either joining the BJP-led coalition or gathbandhan.

## CM participates at National

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of doubling farmer's income by 2022. The Chief Minister while calling upon the farmers for value addition of theagricultural products, also asked them to put efforts to capture national and international markets. He informed that the central government has adopted schemes like Krishan Samman Nidhi, Krishi Sinchai Yojana, Soil Health Card, KCC etc. to benefit the farmers besides announcing 1 lakh crore package to strengthen agricultural infrastructure. Stating that the Assam government since its formation have been sincerely working to develop the Agriculture sector, the Chief Minister informed that steps like distribution of tractors under Chief Minister's Samagrya Gramya Unnayan Yojana, financial aid under Krishi Sa Sajuli Yojana etc. were taken to increase farmer's income. The Chief Minister also called upon the farmers to take advantage of the Act East Policy enunciated by the central government and to contribute in boosting the economy of the state. Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare Narendra Singh Tomar while speaking on the occasion through virtual mode said that Assam is fast emerging as a global hub in terms of agricultural production. Reiterating the central government's commitment for boosting the agricultural sector of Assam, the Union Minister said that Assam produces 50% tea and 28% bamboo of the country. He informed that the Union Food Processing Ministry has initiated move to set up mega food park which would help in increasing farmers income and GDP of the state. Highlighting the steps taken by Union Government for welfare of the farmers, Union Minister informed that around 13 lakh crore bank loans were sanctioned to farmers in the country. Minister of Agriculture, Horticulture and Food Processing etc. of the Government of Assam Atul Bora said that the agri-horticulture show organized with an aim to provide a platform for farmers, agricultural scientists and common public for better interaction, farmers training, exhibition, seminar etc. would attract the farmers towards commercial farming. He also urged the farmers to work with competitive mentality to be economically self-sufficient. Minister of State (i/c) for P & R D Naba Kumar Doley, Chief Minister's Media Adviser Hrishkesh Goswami and Chief Minister's Legal Adviser Shantanu Bharali were present at Janata Bhawan while the Chief Minister addressed the participants through virtual mode today. On the other hand, Water Resources Minister Keshab Mahanta, MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, MLAs Bhaben Bharali and Mrinal Saikia, Principal Secretary of Agriculture Rajesh Prasad, Commissioner and Secretary of Agriculture Akash Deep, High Commissioners of Nigeria, Ghana, Mongolia, Fiji, Bhutan, Congo, Vice Chancellor of Assam Agricultural University Dr. Bidyut Chandra Deka, Director of Kaziranga National Park P Shivakumar, Secretary of Veterinary Department Ashok Barman, Secretary of Indonesia, Head of Political and Economic Session of Vietnam, DC Golaghat Bibash Modi, Director of Horticulture, Chairman of Assam Seeds Corporation etc. were present among others.

## UPPL ready to contest Assam

Rongali Bihu festival and the process will be finished before the CBSE Board exams beginning on May four. The Commission is sensitive towards festivals held in the various states "and we have already taken into consideration this before coming here for the review meetings", the CEC told reporters in Guwahati.The political parties during interaction with the full bench of the poll panel had made a plea to keep in view the Bihu festival while deciding the poll schedule to encourage more voter turnout and also to ensure that the monsoon, which usually arrives early in the state, is avoided.Rongali Bihu, also known as Bohag Bihu, is celebrated by the people of Assam to mark the Assamese New Year. It is usually observed in the second week of April with the onset of spring."The Bihu festival dates will be taken into cognisance and factored in while drawing up the schedule of election dates accordingly", the CEC added. The commission had meetings with Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) officials to decide on the poll schedule framework and "we have decided that the election process will be finished before the Board exams begin on May four", he said.The CBSE board exams are scheduled to start from May four and end by June 10. The term of 126-member Assam house is ending on May 31, 2021. The political parties had also impressed upon the commission to hold the elections with strict COVID-19 protocols and this will be adhered to strictly with the number of auxiliary polling booths increased in the state, Arora said.The maximum number of electors at a polling station has been reduced from 1500 to 1000, he said. Accordingly for Assam, the number of polling stations would go up by about 5000 and likely to be more than 33,000 for the forthcoming elections, the CEC added. The CEC said the Bihar assembly polls were held amidst tight COVID protocols and the officers "literally burnt midnight oil to ensure its success which was a big leap of faith for us and we plan to replicate it in other states as well".The political parties, keeping in view COVID norms for ensuring social distancing,had urged that the number of polling booths be increased and list of such auxiliary polling booths be made available, in time, so that the parties can organise their booth committees and logistics in time, he said. The parties had also stressed on the need for adequate security even at the remote polling stations and deployment of commensurate security personnel, he said.Some representatives drew attention of the commission to deputing observers from outside the state and there is "an unwritten rule that observers for every election are sent from outside the state after due scrutiny. Among them 99.1 per cent uphold the sanctity of the constitution while the 0.1 per cent of the black sheep are ruthlessly dealt with," he said. If required, special observers will also be deployed in sensitive/critical constituencies/districts to monitor and ensure that elections are conducted in a totally free and fair manner, he said.Among other issues, some representatives of the political parties wanted that the expenditure limits be hiked, Electors Photo Identity Cards be distributed well in time and the timelines for publishing the criminal antecedents of candidates in media be made more realistic, the CEC said.Concerns regarding misuse of social media for spreading communal speeches, misuse of government machinery, misuse of money power and COVID-19 protocol violations were also expressed by some representatives, he added. All the political parties assured the commission of their full cooperation in ensuring free, fair and peaceful elections and "we expect them to play a positive role in maintaining harmony and to ensure that the COVID-19 protocols are maintained", the CEC said.The commission has zero tolerance on misuse of money power or government machinery and in this regard, a specific meeting was held with the enforcement agencies to crack the whip wherever required. The increase in the number of polling stations in turn would have other logistics and manpower implications and the commission has directed that assured minimum facilities (AMF) including drinking water, toilets, waiting area and ramps be provided at all polling stations along with voter assistance booth, Arora said.As an extension of AMFs, all polling stations will ensure social distancing, sanitising, temperature check, gloves and polling personnel will also be provided along with COVID kits.The special summary revision of photo electoral rolls 2021 exercise has been completed on January 18 with the final publication of the electoral roll. House-to-house visits were conducted for facilitation of Form 12 D to senior citizens and persons with disability (PwD) electors so that they can exercise their option for postal ballot if they desire, he said. This will be made available from date of announcement till 5th day following notification of elections, Arora said.The auxiliary polling stations would be located at ground level and in the vicinity of the main polling station, to the extent feasible, and in consultation with political parties. The cec,accompanied by Election Commissioners- Sushil Chandra and Rajiv Kumar- was on a three-day visit to the state from Monday to conduct an indepth review of preparedness for the forthcoming assembly polls in the state.

## First time, farmers don't reject

union members can also be part of it. We did not give them any instant reply. Our 32 Punjab farmer unions will be meeting on Thursday morning and the Samyukta Kisan Morcha will be meeting in the afternoon to discuss these crucial issues. We will get back to the government on January 22. I would call this meeting a very important meeting for all. Finally, the government is in a mood to resolve the issue... As of now, our decision to hold a Republic Day tractor parade stands," he said.Kavitha Kuruganti, leader of Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch who also attended the talks, said: "Farmer unions told them (the Centre) that they want the laws repealed, but would still discuss this proposal tomorrow."“The government is talking about submitting an affidavit in the Supreme Court on suspending the laws for a mutually-agreed period and creating a committee to look into our pending demands,” she said.Prem Singh Gehlawat, Haryana president of All India Kisan Federation, said: “At the meeting, the government stand was very soft... All protesting farmer unions will take a call Thursday on this important proposal... It is a significant proposal... On MSP, they have asked us to make a committee. We need to discuss these proposals and get back to government on January 22.”Balbir Singh Rajewal, president of BKU (Rajewal), said: “We came with the demand for total repeal of all farm laws, but we told the Union Ministers that their proposal can be discussed... we can get back to them with a concrete reply on January 22.”Joginder Singh Ugrahan, president of BKU (Ugrahan), said: “We assumed that Wednesday’s talks will also end with another meeting date. But after the lunch break, they came up with an important proposal of staying the laws for one-and-half years and forming a committee to look into repeal of these laws... this proposal needs to be discussed... Regarding the NIA notices, the ministers said they will get the notices withdrawn if these are connected to the agitation of farmers. This shows that notices were sent to weaken the agitation. This list will be given to the government soon.”Rakesh Tikait of the BKU said: “The government offered to suspend the laws for 1.5-2 years. They also said the government will be submitting an affidavit in the Supreme Court... We will inform the government of our decision on Friday... Our stand has been very clear that the legislation needs to be done away with and a law on MSP needs to be made.”

## Assam Tea Workers Association: demanded for wage hike



**Biswanath Chariali, Jan 21:** A huge gathering was organized at Kamala Kanta Khetra; Biswanath Chariali by the Assam Tea Workers Association (Asom Chha Majdur Sangha) on Thursday wherein nearly twenty thousand tea tribe people from the north bank of the Brahmaputra assembled together. Pawan Singh Ghatowar and Rupesh Guwala, the president and secretary of Asom Chha Majdur Sangha graced the public gathering and had placed various demands in favour of tea-tribe people including immediate inclusion of 106 tea-tribe community in schedule tribe community list, land patta issue, granting land for the landless tea-tribe people, reservation for tea-tribe people in government jobs, revive of fourteen tea gardens under Assam Tea Board etc. The public gathering was called on to place the eleven point demand for the state government. The president and secretary of the labour's organization said, ‘if their demands are not fulfilled before the upcoming election, then they will go for indefinite strike’.

## Akhil Gogoi and his party Rajjor Dal is working for BJP : MP Pradyut Bordoloi

**NAGAON, January 21:** Why has Akhil Gogoi termed AIUDF's chief Badaruddin Ajmal as a communal leader is more significant as he and his organization earlier worked together with Badaruddin Ajmal - the local MP and senior Congress leader Pradyut Bordoloi said today here at Neelbagan in Hojai district when he was asked a question by a scribe.

Replying to a question, MP Bordoloi said there is not only AIUDF with Congress, rather some other parties including several groups of left fronts are also in the mega alliance. Will Akhil and his political party Rajjor Dal term all those groups of left front as communal? We need to observe whether Rajjor Dal and Akhil Gogoi usually are working as a 'B' team of the ruling BJP.

Significantly, during the interaction, Bordoloi also criticized minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma as communal. It is pertinent to mention that in a political rally held at Doboka in Hojai district, KMSS leaders as well as leaders of Rajjor Dal like Raju Bora and Bhasku D Saikia recently slammed Congress and AIUDF as communal parties.

## 21 Former Presidents' and Secretaries of MYM werw Honoured

**Hojai, January 21 :** On the directions of State President Mohit Nahata,Marwari Yuva Manch Hojai Branch honoured its 21 Former Presidents' and Secretaries' of the branch on the 37th Foundation Day of All India Marwari Yuva on Wenesday night. A MYM Team Comprising of Amit Bhimsaria,Subham Kejriwal, Nikhil Kumar Mundra, Aman Kejriwal and Manoj Tolawat visited the residence of the dignitaries and honoured them with phulam ghoomcha and gifts. The Presidents' and Secretaries' who were honoured are Lalit Kejriwal,Rajesh Kejriwal,Kailash Bhimsaria, Manoj Kejriwal,Lalit Bora,Sunil more, Ratan Kayal, Rajkamal Sureka, Sunil Bhimsaria, Ramesh Mundra, Binod Sarwagi,Praveen Sarawagi, Om Prakash Bajaj,Mukesh Bajaj, Pradeep Sureka,Ankur Saraf, Dr.Manoj Swami,Niranjan Sarawagi Ram Chandra Sharma,Vibhash Sharma and Dr.Hari Prasad Goenka. On the otherhand, Former President Ramesh Mundra felicitated the MYM team and praised this exemplary step. On the otherhand, everyone were overwhelmed with the honour, they wiswed MYM best wishes in their future endeavors.

## NAME CORRECTION

I Kazinur Islam S/O Zahirul Islam Resident of Village-Kuchnimara P.O & P.S- Mankachar Dist-South Salmara Mankachar, do hereby affirm and declared that my actual and correct Name is Kazinur Islam, but is some of my Educational documents my Name has been wrongly Recorded as MD Kazinur Islam instead of Kazinur Islam. On 18th January 2021 I swear before Notary South Salmara Mankachar Govt. Of Assam That MD Kazinur Islam and Kazinur Islam is the Same Person having Single Identity.



Tim Paine vows to soldier on as Australia captain despite defeat to India



Paris, January 21: Tim Paine is looking no further ahead than a tour of South Africa but feels confident he is the right man to lead Australia, after his team crashed to a 2-1 series defeat to India on Tuesday. Australia's star-studded attack failed to run through the tourists on day five of the series-deciding fourth Test, as was the case on day five of the drawn SCG Test. The shock loss to an inexperienced Indian XI, minus a stack of injured stars plus captain Virat Kohli, will ensure near-unprecedented scrutiny of Paine. Adam Gilchrist has already questioned Paine's tactics, pointing to the fact the Tasmanian is juggling the burden of batting, wicketkeeping and captaining. Australia's next Test assignment is a tour of South Africa, which is yet to be locked in because of the Covid-19 pandemic but likely to start in early March. Paine, who was just three years old when a star-studded West Indies inflicted Australia's last Test loss in Brisbane, knows he will now "cop heaps of flak". "This has certainly been slightly different for me in the last two weeks with lots of criticism coming my way," Paine said. "In the past, it probably hasn't come my way. But that's par for the course. International cricket is a big-boy business and you have to have a very, very thick skin."

## Newbury seeks to extend vaccine programme



London, January 21: The old maxim that 'no good deed goes unpunished' appeared to be proved true once more on Wednesday when, a week after allowing itself to be used as a Covid-19 vaccination centre, Newbury racecourse was subjected to strongly-worded criticism on social media for a one-day return to its day job. Course officials insisted that the NHS had planned around the track's long-established fixture list and that the racing which took place here on Wednesday did not cause a delay to the vaccination process but hecklers on Twitter appeared reluctant to accept that point. In an apparent attempt to please everyone, Newbury has now sought permission from the sport's ruling body to allow vaccinations to continue in one of the grandstands on the site on days when racing is taking place. Its next fixture is Betfair Hurdle day on Saturday 13 February, which would normally be among its most popular with racegoers but seems sure to be held behind closed doors this year. Newbury received support from the Twitter account of a local GP's surgery, the Downland Practice tweeting that the one-day closure for racing would have "no impact" on the vaccine rollout because all the available doses in the area had been administered by Tuesday night. "We get no more vaccine until Thursday," it added. A BBC tweet on the subject attracted conflicting responses, with some accusing the corporation of pushing "a non-story" while others described the one-day suspension of the vaccination programme

as "disgraceful". Newbury issued a statement saying: "Newbury Racecourse is extremely proud to play a small part in the fight against Covid-19. Given the centre is not providing vaccinations to the public seven days per week, [the NHS has] planned their vaccination programme accordingly to work around the two racedays we host in the next 42 days." The British Horseracing Authority indicated that both vaccinations and racing might take place on the site at the same time in future. A spokesman said: "The aim is to make arrangements which allow racing events to take place alongside the vaccination rollout where possible." Fans of Champ, a last-gasp winner of the RSA, must wait a little longer than expected to see him back in a race. Nicky Henderson said on Wednesday that next week's Cotswold Chase at Cheltenham is no longer the plan. Instead, Champ will be aimed at the Denman Chase at Newbury in mid-February, which will be his one prep-run before a tilt at the Cheltenham Gold Cup. It gives Henderson a bit more time to get a racecourse gallop into Champ, which the trainer said was desirable so that the horse is ready for his reappearance outing. "He's going very well," Henderson said during racing at Newbury on Wednesday. "He's going to have a good spin somewhere in the near future and that'll put him right for the Denman. I wanted to do something with him first, so that it isn't really his first run." Meanwhile, Henderson has given up hope that Haydock's fixture on Saturday will go ahead, to allow Buveur D'Air to return to action. Instead the former champion hurdler will probably have to go to Sandown early next month. "We'll just have to see what happens," the trainer said. "Haydock's going to be out, yeah. He's ready to go." Haydock officials will stage an inspection on Thursday morning, the track having been waterlogged by Wednesday morning and rain continuing to fall.

## European roundup: Real Madrid crash out of Copa del Rey to third-tier side

London, January 21: Real Madrid have sensationally been knocked out of the Copa del Rey by Alcoyano, a third-tier Spanish side, who scored a dramatic winner in extra time after being reduced to 10 men. Zinedine Zidane rested some key names for the last-32 tie but still started with a host of international players, including Marcelo, Karim Benzema, Federico Valverde, Éder Militão, Vinicius Júnior, Casemiro, Lucas Vázquez and Isco. Militão headed in a Marcelo cross at the back post to give Madrid a first-half lead but the minnows fought back in the second period, with José Solbes equalising to send the match into extra time. Zidane brought on Eden Hazard and Marcos Asensio and Madrid looked likely to win the tie when Alcoyano's Ramón López was given a red card in the second half of extra time. But Juanan Casanova nipped in at the near post to volley a 115th-minute winner and send Zidane's team out of the competition - Madrid's worst cup defeat since being knocked out by Alcorcón in 2009-10. "It's not an embarrassment, it's something that can always happen in football," Zidane said after the match. "Something like this can happen in a footballer's career but I take responsibility for it and we'll keep on working. We're not going to go crazy over this." When asked whether he feared for his position as manager, Zidane replied: "When you lose people always talk about that but I take responsibility and whatever will be will be. I'm very relaxed, our players want to win every game, they always try to but

sometimes something else happens." Cristiano Ronaldo arguably became football's all-time leading goalscorer by firing Juventus to Italian Super Cup glory against Napoli. The match is played to contest the winner between the champions of last season's Serie A and Coppa Italia. Lorenzo Insigne had a chance to ruin Ronaldo's milestone moment but missed an 80th-minute penalty before Álvaro Morata wrapped up the win for



Andrea Pirlo's side deep into stoppage time. Ronaldo registered the 760th strike of a remarkable club and international career in the 64th minute to help reigning Serie A champions Juve claim the trophy with a 2-0 win. The 35-year-old former Manchester United and Real Madrid forward moved one goal ahead of Czech player Josef Bican, who officially managed 759 strikes between 1931 and 1955. There has been some contention over scoring records in recent weeks. Lionel Messi became the all-time top scorer for a single football club after scoring his 644th Barcelona goal

in December, surpassing Pelé's previous record tally for Santos, but the Brazilian club hit back by claiming Pelé's total club tally actually stands at 1,091, adjusted to include goals scored in one-off games during the tours of the 1960s. These exhibition matches are not widely accepted to be part of official records, although the fixtures were often against the best teams of the age. Bundesliga top scorer Robert Lewandowski struck

a first half penalty to help Bayern Munich earn a nervous 1-0 victory at Augsburg on Wednesday and stay four points clear at the top of the table at the season's halfway mark. Lewandowski put the visitors in front with a 13th minute penalty, his 22nd league goal, the most for any player halfway through a Bundesliga season. He has featured in 16 of Bayern's 17 league games this season. The striker had several more chances to add to his record-breaking goal haul and also hit the post in a dominant first half. Instead of scoring again, however, to make sure of the three points, Bayern were far too passive and conceded a 75th-minute penalty. They had a lucky escape when Alfred Finnbogason sent his spot kick onto the post. The Bavarians are on 39 points, four ahead of RB Leipzig, winners 1-0 over Union Berlin, and seven ahead of third-placed Bayer Leverkusen. Leipzig's Emil Forsberg drilled in a second-half winner after a neat one-two with Dani Olmo to break the deadlock in the 70th minute. At the other end of the table, Schalke remain rock

bottom after conceding a dramatic stoppage-time winner in the 2-1 loss to fellow strugglers Cologne. Schalke's Matthew Hoppe cancelled out Rafael Czichos's opener to level for the hosts but Jan Thielmann struck at the death to inflict defeat. Cologne, however, remain in the relegation zone after Fabian Klos, an own goal from Marc-Oliver Kempf and Ritsu Doan gave Arminia Bielefeld a thumping 3-0 win over Stuttgart. Kevin Schlotterbeck's second-half own goal secured Eintracht Frankfurt a 2-2 draw at Freiburg. Roland Sallai and Nils Petersen had turned the contest in the home side's favour following Amin Younes's early opener. In La Liga, Villarreal missed the chance to go third after Paco Alcácer missed a stoppage-time penalty in the 2-2 draw with Granada. Alcácer's failure from 12 yards, following the dismissal of Yan Eteki, prevented the hosts moving above his former club Barcelona. Veteran striker Roberto Soldado and Chelsea loanee Kenedy earned Granada a point by scoring either side of Rubén Peña's goal and Moi Gómez's spot-kick. Sergio Canales's double cancelled out Santi Mina's goal to give Real Betis a 2-1 success over Celta Vigo, while Huesca remain bottom after a second-half strike from Mauro Arambarri condemned them to a 1-0 defeat at Getafe. In Serie A, Luis Muriel's fine equaliser earned Atalanta a 1-1 draw at Udinese, stretching his side's unbeaten run to nine league games. Udinese took the lead after 23 seconds with Kevin Lasagna finding Roberto Pereyra who stabbed the ball home to score his side's fastest Serie A goal since November 2014. The hosts almost held out until halftime, but Muriel's strike - his 11th Serie A goal of the season on his sixth start - levelled things up in the 44th minute. In France, Lens moved to within a point of sixth-placed Marseille courtesy of Simon Banza's second-half goal securing a 1-0 win at the Stade Velodrome. Saturday's game at Nîmes with Lorient has been postponed because of a Covid-19 outbreak in the visiting side.

## Clock ticking for Frank Lampard as Chelsea identify possible replacements



London, January 21: Frank Lampard is running out of time to save his job after Chelsea's defeat by Leicester prompted the board to start identifying possible replacements for their manager. Chelsea have grown alarmed after five defeats in eight Premier League games and Lampard finds himself on increasingly thin ice. The 42-year-old is under no illusions about his precarious situation. He does not have long to convince the hierarchy, who have started to consider succession plans, that he can turn the situation around. The disappointing display against Leicester did little to suggest that Lampard, who has 18 months left on his deal, is capable of bringing the best out of his squad after spending more than £200m last summer. Chelsea lie five points below fourth-placed Liverpool, who host Burnley on Thursday, and the owner, Roman Abramovich, could act if he senses that Champions League qualification is slipping away. Chelsea, who host Luton in the fourth round of the FA Cup on Sunday, have been alerted to Thomas Tuchel's potential interest in taking the job if it becomes vacant. The German led Paris Saint-Germain to the Champions League final last season but is out of work after being sacked last month. There is a doubt over Tuchel because of his struggle to deal with PSG's internal politics. Yet there is a feeling that a coach with experience of the Bundesliga could revive Chelsea's struggling German stars, Timo Werner and Kai Havertz. In that context Ralf Rangnick, regarded as one of the most innovative figures in German football, could arrive on a short-term basis given that Julian Nagelsmann, the RB Leipzig manager, is unlikely to be available until the summer. Chelsea could choose to wait until the end of the season even if they decide to remove Lampard, as they did with Maurizio Sarri and Antonio Conte. There is no guarantee that Chelsea will go down the German route if Lampard departs. Max Allegri remains available following his departure from Juventus 18 months ago and the Italian has a wealth of experience. Ralph Hasenhüttl, who managed Werner at Leipzig, has also been mentioned after impressing at Southampton. Lampard is clinging on for now and is line to face pivotal home games against Wolves and Burnley before visiting Tottenham on 4 February. There are doubts over his team's tactics and lack of identity. Chelsea were awful against Leicester and it is understood that the mood in the dressing room was low after the game. Lampard faces a fight to restore the squad's confidence.

## Raw talent plus IPL cash point to an era of Indian dominance on cricket's world stage



London, January 21: The ground has moved after India's win in Brisbane, lifted, shifted and settled again, so the game's landscape looks a little different today. The premise of the World Test Championship seems a little redundant all of a sudden, because it's addressing a question that has just been settled. New Zealand are still top of the official rankings, for now, and since they swept India aside 2-0 at home last February, they deserve the chance to try and beat them again in the final in England later this year. But whether they (or Australia, or England) qualify for that match or not, the future belongs to India, just as surely as the recent past did to Australia and, before them, West Indies. In years ahead, this Test may look like a watershed, like India's victory in the 1983 World Cup final, which sparked a boom in one-day cricket, and their victory in the first World T20 final, which led to the creation of the Indian Premier League. Take the long view, and the recent history of cricket is the story of India's rise. Pretty much everything

else is just a subplot. It is not just that India beat Australia at the Gabba, where they hadn't lost since the 1980s, or that they won the series after being bowled out for 36 in the opening game at Adelaide, but that they did it all when their captain was home on paternity leave, when one of their all-rounders and two of their best fast bowlers were absent while recovering from injuries, when another of their best batsmen was missing with a damaged wrist, a third and fourth had both injured their hamstrings, another of their fast bowlers broke an arm, another suffered a calf injury, another a side strain, their best spinner came down with back spasms, and his understudy broke his thumb. Only two of the squad managed to play in all four Tests of the series, while a cast of 18 filled the spaces around them. The bowling attack they sent out for that final match was cobbled together from the net bowlers they brought on tour to keep their batsmen in trim. Two of the five, Thangarasu Natarajan and Washington Sundar, were making their debuts, the other

three (Mohammed Siraj, Shardul Thakur, and Navdeep Saini) had played four Test matches and taken 11 wickets between them. It was the most inexperienced Test match bowling unit they had put out since 1933. No one else in world cricket has anything like such strength in depth. Right now, India have enough about them that even at such a low ebb, they were good enough to beat Australia at their best. The Indian Premier League has made the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) a financial powerhouse. After this, it is hard to imagine how they will start a series as underdogs again, wherever they play. It's not just that, as Justin Langer said after the match, "there's 1.5 billion Indians" to pick from. They have always had the numbers. But now they have the system to winnow and hone the best players from the largest talent pool on the planet. In the last decade, for instance, India have developed a formidable 'A' team programme, led by the head coach Rahul Dravid. They've played 33 first class games in the last five years, which is more than twice as many as either Australia A or the England Lions have managed. And it is paying off. Siraj had taken 70 first-class wickets for India A in the last three years, Saini 34, Thakur, 23. And, driving it all, of course, is the IPL, the best, wealthiest, and most competitive cricket league in the world, with all the attendant resources of the eight competing teams. You may have missed this in all the excitement, but midway through the series the Indo-

Asian News Service broke a story about the BCCI's latest financial earnings, which date from 2018-19. They were up by about 17% on the year before. Which means that right now, the board is worth around £1.5bn. Around a third of that is down to the IPL, which brings in more on its own than either the ECB or Cricket Australia's entire annual turnover. And that was before the pandemic. The BCCI is not going to be immune to the impact, but the IPL means it is a whole lot better protected than anyone else. The next two richest boards, the ECB and Cricket Australia, have both said they expect major shortfalls, the ECB has just cut 62 jobs due to an expected £200m deficit, and Cricket Australia has axed 40 jobs, and said it could lose around £70m. The BCCI has made some cuts itself. And it is also embroiled in a few legal shemozzles that could have an impact, not least a tax wrangle with the Indian government. But at the same time, according to the early reports, the 2020 edition of the IPL was the most lucrative yet. And it is only going to get bigger. Two more teams will be added from 2022, and the organisers will try to extend the season by a fortnight. We spent a lot of the last decade talking about the "big three" of India, England and Australia. It feels increasingly like that's going to become an outdated way of framing the game. There is India, and then everyone else. In Australia one of the papers called this the Indian summer, it may just mark the start of the Indian century, too.



## Aston Villa rue luck as Gundogan and Silva help Man City to sixth straight win

**London, January 21** : This was a breathless affair for which an abacus was needed to keep count of the endless chances. Manchester City created most of these in a blur of activity close to Emiliano Martínez's goal and when Aston Villa were finally breached on 79 minutes it was deserved. Tyrone Mings dallied, Rodri mugged him, the effervescent Bernardo Silva received the ball, swerved away from a clutch of defenders, then fired in a memorable strike. This brought jubilation for City and

onside. Smith remained indignant. "Are we just going to leave players behind the line then?" he said. "It's farcical. He was 10 yards offside and come back and tackled our player, it's a pathetic law and a pathetic decision." I said to the fourth official David Coote: "Did you get juggling balls for Christmas?" I don't think any other manager would get sent off for that." Yet with Ilkay Gundogan adding a late penalty after Matthew Cash handled, at the final whistle the bottom line was that

with the penalty: "Matty Cash is a yard away from the handball, he can't jump without his arms up. He didn't even look at it - it flabbergasts me. It was a poor performance from the officials and that's cost us." An all-day downpour made the surface slick and from kick-off Kevin De Bruyne soon had the visitors careering about their penalty area. First was a dipping free-kick Jack Grealish headed out for a corner. The Belgian hit this in from the right, Rodri headed to Silva, his shot was saved well by Martínez, and Mings flung himself into a melee of players to clear. City's recent upsurge in form has returned the familiar sight of their opponent being under siege. So it was that Villa were bombarded - Phil Foden next dribbled mesmerically, gliding beyond two defenders before being stopped. Villa's sole attack at that point was a breakaway in which Ross Barkley failed to find Grealish in space and, now, came disruption for City as Kyle Walker was forced

opposite flank had the latter's cross this time cleared by Matt Targett. Then a 20-yard pot-shot from Rodri was blocked - inadvertently - by Sterling as the ball headed for goal. As the interval neared Villa looked to have stymied City's percussive flow only for a final warning. A corner taken by Bertrand Traoré became a De Bruyne breakaway in which Foden was fed and saw his drive blocked by Cash. This drew groans from the City substitutes: for the spurned opportunity and all those that had come before. Guardiola had Gabriel Jesus on the bench yet despite the lack of killer touch he remained there as the second half began. When Sterling and Foden each zipped in crosses a dedicated No 9 would surely have been there to turn home. Instead with a floating player in the position - one of Sterling or De Bruyne - Villa escaped once more. City did the same when a Traoré counter took him past the last man, De Bruyne, before shooting at Ederson, but their rocket burst of chances continued. This time a Cancelo dummy preceded a shot crashed on to the bar and, at last, Jesus entered. This was enforced by a De Bruyne injury but the question was whether it might actually prove a blessing. A first answer was no, as the Brazilian failed to take aim when slid in by Foden. But next came Silva's strike and when Cash handballed, Gundogan made sure. After the match, Guardiola added that he was unsure if De Bruyne and Walker's injuries were serious.



anger for Villa as the visitors complained Rodri had come from an offside position. Dean Smith's ire was enough to have him sent off by Jonathan Moss, the referee unimpressed by the manager's vociferous complaints. Moss's interpretation was correct as once Mings touched the ball Rodri was

City had moved on to 38 points, as their fine form continued. A content Guardiola said: "When we lost v Tottenham [2-0, in November] we were 12th but the most important thing is the fact we are back to playing [where] we have to play - to be contenders." Smith, though, was equally unhappy

off with what appeared to be a dead leg, Oleksandr Zinchenko replacing him. There was no break to the home side's rhythm, though. Foden fed Gundogan along the left, he pulled back to De Bruyne and a fierce effort hit Mings. Next a Raheem Sterling-João Cancelo one-two along the

## Australia appear vulnerable but we have heard this Ashes tale before

**Melbourn, January 21** : It is probably hackery to roll out Lady Bracknell's most famous line in another reworked form, but great lines are great because they are universal. In this context: "To lose one home series to India, Mr Paine, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness." Two years ago Australians were, by and large, willing to accept being beaten 2-1 by a visiting India. The cir-

smarter, spinning better, and batting with more toughness and application, is quite the mental adjustment. Or to shift our quotes to the contemporary, take sportswriter Daniel Cherny: "There is nothing like a Test series loss at home to invoke the inner national selector in every single person you know." Quite so, and most positions are being questioned. Tim Paine as captain, Justin Langer as coach, Warner's durabil-

out in both innings for single figures: Australia lost all of them, and one was in this series at Melbourne. But that match aside, the problem was not really the batting, it was being unable to bowl India out. Twice Australia had the deck stacked in their favour: on a final day pitch with a deep bank of runs and a first-choice quintet. There is an inevitability to these days. A ball will eventu-



cumstances were special. Australia's Test team was dizzy after the Cape Town sandpaper circus, Steve Smith and David Warner were comfortably the two best batsmen in the country and were missing on suspension, and India brought a once-in-a-generation assembly of fast-bowling quality to take advantage of their absence. But losing again two years later, with Smith playing all four Tests and Warner two, with Australia's next generation of batting having made strides in the interim, and with India's five pace weapons reduced by injury to three, then two, then one, then none as the series went on, will be greeted differently. Australians are not used to this sort of thing. For the longest time there was a set method to these tours. India would bring spinners and medium-pace swingers who would get belted about. Australia would turn out forests of fast bowlers against largely diminutive Indian batsmen who did not handle the pace and bounce of local pitches. This would be inverted when Australia toured India and got tied in knots, but those games were not on free-to-air television in every living room all summer long. So to change this up to a situation in which an Indian team can play Australia's game and win, bowling faster and

ity, Mitchell Starc's reliability, Matthew Wade's desirability, Nathan Lyon's incisiveness. Joe Burns got discarded, Will Pucovski got hurt, Travis Head got sidelined, Marnus Labuschagne got cocky, Marcus Harris got lucky, Cameron Green got no wickets. The only players likely to get an unqualified pass will be Smith, Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood. Which is not to say that these rumblings should be met with action. Sporting audiences often have a problem grasping the basic conceit of the contest: that if someone wins then someone has to lose. The records of the best cricketers show more bad days than good. For Australia right now, there are no wicketkeepers in first-class cricket piling up runs, no good captaincy candidates beyond Cummins who has a fast-bowling workload, no domestic spinners indicating a readiness to step up. There are more options with batting, and obvious problems. The openers beyond Warner have been poor, aside from one glance of Pucovski who has apparently been cursed by a witch at birth. Wade deserved his recall but has not made good on it across two home summers. Too much relies on Smith, who showed this summer that he cannot do it every single time. There have only been five Tests in which Smith has been

ally misbehave or a mistake will be made, and a batsman will fall. Except this time, India harnessed inevitability to their own ends. This is the concern for Australia: add Sydney and Brisbane to the final day at Headingley in 2019, and you have three matches in the last dozen where Australia could not beat a team batting last chasing over 300. This from the same attacks that bowled out England for 67 in Leeds and India for 36 in Adelaide. Before the current series there was a popular line of broadcast chatter about whether Starc, Cummins, Hazlewood and Lyon formed Australia's best attack of all time. It is hard to imagine earlier iterations letting opponents off that particular hook. As is always the way, these results will be framed in terms of what they mean for the Ashes later this year. England can see that teams willing to counterattack the Australians can unsettle them. Australia will know that there are still gaps in the team to fill and problems, may they be tactical or mental, to address. Right now, those look like vulnerabilities that England could exploit. But then, like Lady Bracknell's best, I am pretty sure we have heard that one before.

## Wales hope to have Premiership players for the whole of Six Nations

**London, January 21** : Wales asked Premiership Rugby to release the six England-based players named on Wednesday in their Six Nations squad for the duration of the tournament to reduce the risk of Covid-19 bursting their bubble, but they will have to hand them back for the tournament's two fallow weeks. Three of the six - Dan Biggar, Tomas Francis and Taulupe Faletau - are expected to be regulars in Wales's match-day squad while the others - Callum Sheedy, Will Rowlands and Louis Rees-Zammit - are likely to play a part in some if not all of the matches. Under Premiership Rugby rules, all non-England players are expected to return to their clubs during an international period if they are not selected in a match-day 23 and in the two fallow weeks of the Six Nations. Wales sought a dispensation to reduce the risk of any of their players testing

positive for the virus, but they will only hold on to the Premiership six during the week of a match. After announcing his squad for the Six Nations, the Wales head coach Wayne Pivac said discussions were being held with Premiership Rugby and that he hoped for a decision before the end of the week, adding: "With Covid, you would like to think that common sense will come into play: moving in and out of bubbles is when the transmission rate takes off." "We do not want to have players coming and going with the new variant transmitting very quickly. This tournament is so important for communities because it gives them something to look forward to and we want to make sure our squad is intact and that the show goes on." "England will stick with a 28-strong squad throughout the Six Nations amid concerns from the French government over whether the tournament should proceed

because of the variant that has increased transmission rates in Britain and Ireland, but Premiership Rugby said players from other countries involved in the Six Nations would have to return

and row has not played since suffering a knee injury at the end of the Autumn Nations Cup campaign, while the 33-year old flanker Dan Lydiate has been recalled more than two years

the Pro14 and has a lot of experience. He is back to his best and while we used the autumn to look at young players, we are here to win the Six Nations and have picked the squad ac-



to their clubs in the two fallow weeks when Premiership matches will be played. Pivac has named Alun Wyn Jones as his captain even though the sec-

after he won the last of his 64 caps. "Alun Wyn is flying in training and is on track for our first game against Ireland," said Pivac. "Dan is the form blindside flanker in

cordingly. "Pivac named 36 players in his squad but there was no room for James Botham, Shane Lewis-Hughes or Iona Lloyd.





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