



The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

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World is warming up to China for trade. But India is ...

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Neil Lennon furious at Dubai criticism: 'You're all wanting blood,...

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Himanta Biswa took part in a mega bicycle rally

Guwahati, January 19 : North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) convenor and Assam health, finance, education minister Dr. Himanta Biswa took part in a mega bicycle rally in Lakhimpur district on Tuesday. Dr. Sarma joined thousands of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers in the bicycle rally from Dhalpur to Narayanpur via Simaluguri, Rangati at Bihupuria. Have a look at the warmth showered upon us during our #BicycleRally from Dhalpur to Narayanpur via Simaluguri, Rangati at Bihupuria today.

The statue of Veerangana Sati Sadhani

Guwahati, January 19 : The statue of Veerangana Sati Sadhani at Lakhimpur in Assam was unveiled on Tuesday by Assam Health Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma. People in hundreds gathered to attend the inauguration ceremony. "Situating at the Soraimuriya bypass in Lakhimpur this statue will keep shining always and people will feel proud remembering the great Veerangana Sati Sadhani of the Chutia dynasty," said a local resident. Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma Tweeted, Sati Sadhani was the last queen of the Chutia dynasty. She was the daughter of the Chutia King Dharmadhwajpal also known as Dhirnarayan. Born in Sadiya, she was married to Nityapal or Nital. It is to be mentioned that every year in Assam, 21 April is celebrated as Sati Sadhani Divas to honor the sacrifices made by the Chutia Queen.

Rs. 4 lakh each to 1,279 former NDFB cadres

Guwahati, January 19 : Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal handed over financial grant of Rs. 4 lakh each to 1,279 former National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) cadres at a function at Gauhati Medical College and Hospital auditorium on Tuesday. The NDFB cadres laid down their arms for signing the historic Bodo Peace Accord in 2020. Speaking on the occasion, CM Sonowal lauded the former militants for joining the mainstream for the peace and progress of the State.

Assamese film 'Porichoy' bagged 13th Jaipur International Film Festival Award 2021

Guwahati, January 19 : For the first time in the history of Assamese film industry, 'Porichoy', an Assamese movie directed by Rajiv Borthakur and produced by Riniki



CM visits Jerenga pathar in Sivasagar, reviews preparation for PM's meeting



Guwahati, January 19 : In view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Jerenga Pathar in Sivasagar district on 23rd January to take part in land patta distribution to local landless families, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today

visited the meeting venue to take stock of the preparations. The Chief Minister while reviewing progress of activities taken in connection with the meeting also held discussion with the district administration and senior officials of the government departments. The Chief Minister directed the officials to work with coordination to ensure success of the meeting. He also asked them to take steps so that people visiting the venue do not have to face any difficulty. Further in view of COVID-

19 pandemic, the Chief Minister urged the health department to take appropriate preventive measures. Sonowal also instructed the department to conduct RTPCR test of the beneficiaries who would formally receive the land patta documents from the Prime Minister. He also took stock of the steps taken by PHE, PWD, APDCL, Transport etc. departments and directed them to complete all necessary activities expeditiously. MoS for Revenue and Disaster Management (i/c) Jogen Mohan, MP Dilip Saikia, Rajyasabha MP Kamakhya Prasad Tasa, MLA Kushal Dowari, ADGP (Law & Order) GP Singh and senior officials of the district administration were present during the visit of the Chief Minister.

Political parties in Assam want the Legislative Assembly Elections before the Bohag Bihu

Guwahati, January 19 : Political parties in Assam want the Legislative Assembly Elections to be over before the Bohag Bihu celebrations. Joining an interaction with a high-level team of Election Commission of India led by Chief Election Commissioner Sunil Arora at hotel Radisson Blu in Guwahati, the parties made the EC team aware of their decision. The Election Commission is on a three days visit to Assam and is meeting members of all the political parties. The EC team met

delegates from Congress, AIUDF, BJP and discussed poll related issues. The Election Commissioner will meet the Deputy Commissioner and DGP in the evening. "We want the election to be completed before Bihu in two phases. We will provide suggestions on polling booths and how the election should be managed. We want



an increase in the number of polling stations so that people can

vote comfortably maintaining the COVID protocol," said AGP leader Kamala Kalita. The BJP too wants the elections to take place before the Bohag Bihu. Bohag or Rongali Bihu begins on April 13. "For Brahmaputra Valley it would be better if we have the election before the Bihu. We can celebrate the Bihu after the election is over. We have requested to get voter cards to the around five lakh voters who are newly included," said BJP's Swapnail Contd...Page 6

Bharat Biotech makes big announcement, reveals who should avoid COVID-19 vaccine



New Delhi, January 19 : Covaxin is a vaccine with approval for restricted use in emergency situations that may prevent COVID-19. The Central Licensing Authority has granted permission for the sale or distribution of the antidote for restricted use in emergency situations in the public interest as an abundant pre-

caution, in clinical trial mode, the Bharat Biotech's factsheet said. The Covaxin maker says pregnant or breastfeeding women, besides people with high fever or bleeding disorders, should not take the antidote. Hyderabad: Bharat Biotech's factsheet on coronavirus vaccine Covaxin has advised pregnant or breastfeeding women, besides people

with high fever or bleeding disorders, not to take the antidote. The vaccine maker in the factsheet on Covaxin, posted in its website, said the clinical efficacy of the vaccine is yet to be established and is being studied in Phase 3 clinical trial and hence it is important to appreciate that receiving the vaccine does not mean other precautions related to COVID-19 need not be followed. "You should not get Bharat Biotech's COVID-19 vaccine Covaxin if you have any history of allergies. Have a high fever. Have a bleeding disorder or are a blood thinner. Immune compromised or are medicine that affects your immune system. Are pregnant. Are breastfeeding. Have received another COVID-19 vaccine. Any other serious health-related issues, as determined by the vaccinator/ Contd...Page 6

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's birthday to be celebrated as 'Parakram Diwas' every year: Govt

Kolkata, January 19 : In a significant development, the Narendra Modi-led NDA government at the Centre has decided to celebrate the birthday of iconic freedom fighter Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose as 'Parakram Diwas' every year on January 23. The announcement was made by the Union Ministry of Culture, which said, "To honour and remember Netaji's indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation. The GoI

has decided to dedicate his birthday (January 23) every year as 'Parakram Diwas'. Government of India has decided to celebrate the birthday of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, on 23rd January, as 'Parakram Diwas' every year. Ministry of Culture pic.twitter.com/Cg0P8gijFt "The people of India fondly remember Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's unparalleled contribution to this great nation in his 125th birth anniversary. The Government of India has decided to celebrate the 125th birth anniversary Contd...Page 6



No 'serious or severe' adverse effect post COVID-19 vaccination so far: Health Ministry

New Delhi, January 19 : No 'serious or severe' adverse effect post COVID-19 vaccination has been reported so far, the govt has said. A total of 3,81,305 beneficiaries have so far been vaccinated for COVID-19 and 580 adverse events following immunisation were reported in the country till now, the health ministry said. New Delhi: There

has been "no case of serious or severe" adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) till date, the Health and Family Welfare Ministry has said dispelling fears and attempting to build confidence among the public regarding the pan-India exercise. The comments from the Ministry came on the third day of the

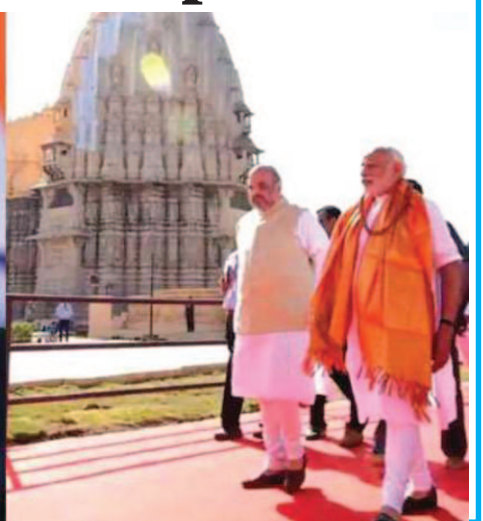
COVID-19 vaccination drive on Monday. The comments came following media reports about two men - one each in Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka - dying hours after they received the COVID-19 jabs. In a press conference, Additional Secretary in the Health Ministry Manohar Agnani said the man from Contd...Page 6

PM Modi Appointed Chairman Of Somnath Temple Trust

Ahmedabad, January 19 : Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on Monday appointed the new chairman of the trust which manages the world famous Somnath Temple at Prabhas Patan town in Gujarat's Gir-Somnath district, becoming the second PM to hold the post. PM Modi, one of the trustees of the Shree Somnath Trust, was elected to the top post unanimously, an office-bearer of the shrine man-

agement body said. After former PM Morarji Desai, Narendra Modi is the second Prime Minister who has been appointed the chairman of the temple trust. As per trust records, PM Modi has become the eighth chairman of the trust. The post of the Somnath Trust's chairman fell vacant after the death of the incumbent, former Gujarat Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel, in October last year. Patel had served as the chairman for

16 years (2004-2020). "Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is one of the trustees of the Somnath Temple trust, was appointed the new chairman during a virtual meeting of trustees held today," said Trustee-Secretary PK Laheri. "The post was lying vacant since the death of Keshubhai," Mr Laheri told reporters here after the online meeting on Monday evening. Other trustees include BJP leader LK Advani, Union Home Minister Contd...Page 6



Weeklong Loan Mela Held to Support Urban Street Vendors under DAY-NULM



Aalo, Jan 18 : A week long Mela is being organised by the Department of Urban Development and Housing from 14th to 20th January and huge turn up of womenfolk was seen at the office premises of Urban Development and Housing premises in the last six days for registration of names. . The programme is being organised under the PM Street Vendors of Deendayal Antodya

Yojana National Urban Livelihood Mission is being organised at Aalo Town Club to disburse loan to 2098 registered urban vendors, The Executive Engineer UD and Housing Aalo Division, Er Hali Welly have appealed all urban vendors to avail the opportunity coming in their way and make judicious use of loan availed by them for various trades.

Luit Parar Kavaya released

SIPAJHAR, Jan 19 : Luit Parar Kavaya, an anthology of poetry written by poets of the Garukhuti area in Darrang district has released at a meeting held under the auspices of Garukhuti branch of Assam Sahitya Sabha in collaboration with Garukhuti Higher Secondary School. The poetry book was released by Sailendra Kumar Rajbansi, president of Darrang Zila Sahitya Sabha. Releasing the book he called upon the members of the sahitya Sabha to be active to make involve the both students and younger generations with Assam Sahitya Sabha. Addressing the meeting as appointed speaker Dr Prasanna kumar Nath, associate professor, Sipajhar college stressed on the need of awareness for proper and correct use of language. Paban Kumar kalita, Subject

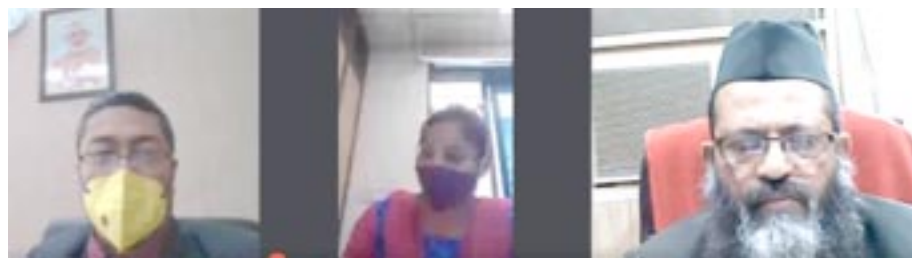
teacher, Sipajhar Higher Secondary and Multipurpose School and Dr Arup Kumar Nath, Assistant Professor, Central University, Tezpur also spoke on the occasion as distinguished guest. Dr Nikhil Ranjan Nath, Upendra Kumar Nath and Dharma Kanta Nath were attended the meeting as guest of honor. Hansadhar Nath, president, Garukhuti branch of Assam Sahitya Sabha was presided over the meeting. The meritorious students of the locality who have passed HSLC and HSSLC examination last with brilliant results were offered felicitation in the meeting. The prizes of drawing competition organized among the students were also distributed in the meeting. Gargi JK Sivam and Anindita Nath presented Jyoti sanget in the meeting.

Assam forms panel to identify 'collaborators' of illegal migrants

GUWAHATI, Jan 19 : The Assam government has constituted a five-member committee for initiating immediate and proactive steps to identify the intermediaries, facilitators and collaborators of illegal migrants from across the international border into the state and initiate legal action to bring them to justice, officials said here on Wednesday. The Special Director-General of Police (Border) Mukesh Agrawal confirmed the setting up of the panel on Tuesday following a discussion with the state Chief Secretary Jishnu Barua on January 11. Agrawal, a senior IPS officer, in his notification, said : "The committee has been constituted to take immediate and proactive steps to identify the intermediaries, facilitators, collaborators facilitating the infiltrations of illegal migrants from across the international border into Assam and initiate legal action to bring them to justice." According to a senior official of the Border Wing under the Home Department, the panel headed by IPS officer Subhrajyoti Borah, the commandant of the 7th Assam Police Battalion based in western Assam's Kokrajhar district, would strengthen the existing mechanism of dealing with illegal migrations, which is always a key issue in Assam. Agrawal's notification, available with IANS, said that the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Border), the Superintendents of Police (Border) of all districts, Superintendent of Railway Police (Border) and other concerned officials would take legal action in their respective jurisdictions on the recommendation of the five-member team. It said : "They would also render necessary assistance to the committee in performing its task including utilisation of border staff of the districts as and when required by the committee." The Deputy Inspector of Police (Ranges) would supervise the progress of the work of the committee and follow-up action being taken in their respective ranges. "The Guwahati-based Commissioner

of Police and the Inspector General of Police for the Bodoland Territorial Region would also oversee the progress of the work of the panel. The constitution of the panel has assumed significance ahead of the Assam Assembly elections as the issue of illegal infiltrations, or "illegal migrants from Bangladesh" have always been a major poll issue for most political parties in the north-eastern state. Assam will likely go to polls in April-May along with West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Meanwhile, to strengthen the security related infrastructures along the state borders, the Assam government has recently sanctioned Rs 100 crore and decided to further tighten the vigil along the frontiers. An official said that in line with the MOITRI scheme for the modernisation of police stations, Assam government is all set to launch a scheme for the infrastructural development of the Border Outposts (BOPs). He said that in the first phase of the scheme, 50 BOPs would be upgraded and an amount to the tune of around Rs 100 crore has been earmarked for the purpose. Subsequently, other BOPs of the state would be covered under the scheme. "The sealing of the India-Bangladesh border is the topmost priority for making Assam free from illegal migrants from across the international border and for this purpose the border is being fenced by physical and non-physical barriers," the official said. The 263km India-Bangladesh international border along Assam is being guarded by the Border Security Force (BSF) while the 267 km Indo-Bhutan international border is manned by the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). A second line of defence is being provided by the Assam Police. Besides, Assam shares 2616.1 km inter-state borders with six northeastern states, excluding Sikkim. The Assam Police Border Organisation was set up in 1962 as a unit of the State police's Special Branch.

Tea Market and products have tremendous potential to be Game Changer for Trade and Commerce, opine experts



Guwahati, Jan 19 : Tea Industry of North Eastern region has competitive advantage for market-driven growth with the Tea Market and products have tremendous potential to be Game Changer for Trade and Commerce, experts opined in a Webinar organised by Press Information Bureau, Guwahati on the topic 'Tea and Allied Sector as potential impetus to entrepreneurial and for Socio-Economic Development' here today. Experts from Industry fraternity along with academicians deliberated and discussed about the market potential of tea products and its awareness from socio-economic, academic and policy perspective. Prof (Dr.) ZR Azad, Aligarh Muslim

University, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh said that Tea has to be perceived not just as an aromatic beverage, but also as a one which adds to the efficacy of market which could be potentially leveraged for socio-economic and marketability potential for growth and development of country. He said that Assam has huge potential in Tea Industry, be it in Tezpur, Dibrugarh, Shivasagar district, Cachar district of Assam. He said that Tea Industry is climate and market driven and hence, it has potential which is affected by environment of the region. He said being labour intensive industry, it has effect on employment and supply of labour is vital factor for growth of the industry.

Dr. Azad said that in Assam culture also the tea has a pivotal role. He said that in villages and town also the consumption of tea results in huge market for tea and its allied sector products, which opens vistas of opportunities for the Tea Industry. Dr. Azad said that Tea Market and products have tremendous potential to be Game Changer for Trade and Commerce and help develop the economy of the region. He said that awareness and training on tea and its utilisation could help develop the industry. Aminul Haque Jwadder, Exhibition Assistant, Regional Outreach Bureau, Guwahati provided a perspective of common people and said that tea sector is not only helping in employment, but also in economic growth and development of the region, be it tea-tourism, tea and allied sector development, markets for plantation and forest minor produce, eco-friendly and bio-diversity driven market development. He said that market development, market planning and assessment with

COVID-19 vaccination held across North East

healthcare workers received their first shot at NEIGRIHMS from East Khasi Hills District and they would receive their second shot on the 28th day. "According to the scientists the immunity against COVID-19 would develop in 45 days and before that those immunized would have to take care," Sangma said. In the second phase of the vaccination drive, frontline workers would get their COVID-19 vaccine shot. After that citizens over 50 years and with co-morbidity would get their vaccine shots. The Chief Minister further informed that the first phase of vaccination for 16,000 health workers may take three to four weeks' time. Principal Secretary Health and Family Welfare, P. Sampath Kumar said more than 800 healthcare workers were vaccinated in nine districts. Clarifying as to why two districts out of the total 11 in the State were left out in the first phase of vaccination, the chief minister said by Sunday the vaccina-

tion will be rolled out in those districts too. As of Saturday, vaccination drive was conducted in ten different locations in nine districts the State. Assam: Assam joined the nation in launching the COVID-19 vaccination drive on Saturday, with a medical officer in Golaghat district becoming the first person in the state to receive the jab. Dr. Milan Kumar Laskar, the sub-divisional medical officer of Bokakhat, was administered the shot at 11.07 am at a public health centre, right after Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation on the occasion. Later, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launched the state-wide drive at Assam Medical College Hospital (AMCH) in Dibrugarh, and Minister for Health and Family Welfare Himanta Biswa Sarma at Gauhati Medical College Hospital (GMCH) here. At GMCH, retired vice chancellor of Sankardeva University of Health Sciences, Dr Umesh Chandra Sarma, was the first person to receive the shot, followed by 11 other prominent doctors, including its principal Dr Achyut Baishya and superintendent Dr Abhijeet Sharma. Similarly, in AMCH, its principal Dr Sanjiv Kakoti was administered the first dose. The chief minister, after launching the drive, said that it was a "moment of pride for the entire nation and a major step towards realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', made possible only due to his able leadership". An estimated 6,500 of the 1.9 lakh registered health workers, designated as COVID warriors, will be adminis-



tered the vaccine on the first day at 65 centres, set up in seven medical college hospitals and 24 district and sub-divisional medical establishments. During the second phase, one lakh frontline workers including security forces will be inoculated. Mizoram: A health worker was the first person to get the COVID-19 vaccine in Mizoram on Saturday as the Northeastern state joined the rest of the country in launching the vaccination programme, officials said. Lalthlamuani, a grade-IV worker at the Aizawl Civil Hospital, was the first person to get the vaccine in the state, they said. Among the recipients were 10 senior doctors, including Lalhmuchhuaka, the superintendent of the Aizawl Civil Hospital. Total 314 people received the vaccine on Saturday though 500 people were supposed to get it, officials said. The turnout was less as the beneficiaries received the SMS alert, informing them about the

vaccination programme, late, an official said. The main programme to launch the vaccination drive was held at the Aizawl Civil Hospital. Health Minister R Lalthlangliana and Health Secretary H Lalengmawia were present. The health minister claimed that Mizoram is one of the best performing states not only in India but the entire world in tackling the pandemic. A total of 18,500 doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield vaccine were brought to Aizawl by an air from Pune on Thursday. Apart from the Aizawl Civil Hospital, the first rollout of the vaccine happened at the Zoram Medical College (ZMC), the Sub-District Hospital at Kulikawn, and Urban Public Health Centre at ITI Veng, all of which are in Aizawl, besides the civil hospital in Lunglei town in the southern part of the state. The vaccination drive will be held in all the districts across the state from next week and about 8,000 healthcare workers are to be vaccinated in the first phase, said Dr Eric Zomawia, the director of the National Health Mission (NHM) in Mizoram. Arunachal Pradesh: The COVID-19 vaccination drive is underway in Arunachal Pradesh on Saturday with a government hospital doctor receiving the first shot, a senior health official said here. Chief Minister Pema Khandu inaugurated the state-wide launch of the COVID-19 inoculation exercise at the K D S District Hospital in Tawang earlier in the day. Dr Deka, an associate professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Tomo Riba Institute of Health and Medical Sciences (TRIHM) in Naharlagun near here

was the first person in the state to receive the vaccine, State Surveillance Officer Dr Lobsang Jampa said. When the vaccination began, Home Minister Bamang Felix was present at TRIHMS. A list of 23,505 healthcare professionals, including 3,867 vaccinators and 483 health workers from Indo-Tibetan Border Police, has been uploaded on CoWin, a digital platform for monitoring the inoculation exercise, he said. Around 28,000 frontline workers also registered their names at the portal. Agartala: The first phase of COVID-19 vaccination started in Tripura with immunisation drive at 17 session sites set up across eight districts of the state. A total of 1,399 health workers will receive the first dose shots of the Covidshield vaccine here on Saturday. The first vaccine shot was administered on 30-year-old Dr Mridul Das in Gandhigram Primary Health Centre (PHC) in West Tripura district around 11:15 am which was followed by Dr Ankur Roy, dental surgeon from the same hospital. Tripura received 56,500 doses in the first tranche which will be used to vaccinate 55 percent of the total health workers out of 45,432 in the state. A total of 100 health staff, including the doctors, staff nurse, office staff, RBSK team, Lab technician, MPW staff, 26 ASHA and 44 Anganwadi workers will get the vaccine at Gandhigram PHC. Another, Dr Ankur Roy, a dental surgeon who was the second receiver of vaccine shot, said the vaccine passed various levels. Among the frontline workers in Tripura, ASHA, and Anganwadi workers led the fight from the front visiting the house identifying symptomatic patients. Rinku Sutradhar, an Anganwadi worker, received the dose of the vaccine in Gandhigram PHC on Saturday. Meanwhile, West District Chief Medical Officer, Dr Debasish Das, said that three session sites, including Gandhigram PHC, East Bhubanban PHC and Tripura Medical College were selected for vaccination on the first day. Sikkim: Sikkim joined the rest of the nation in launching the COVID-19 vaccination programme today. Chief Minister PS Tamang and Health Minister Dr MK Sharma were present at STNM hospital near Gangtok during the launch. The vaccination drive simultaneously also began at District hospital, Gyalasingh, West Sikkim. AIR correspondent reports, on the first day, 140 health care workers have been registered for inoculation at the two COVID-19 vaccination centres in Sikkim. Speaking after the launch, chief minister PS Tamang said that the vaccination programme is a great example of Atmanirbhar Bharat envisioned by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as both the vaccines are manufactured in India. Speaking to AIR News, Sikkim health minister Dr MK Sharma hoped that the vaccines bring an end to the hardships faced by all due to the pandemic. Sikkim has received 12,500 doses of Covishield vaccine in the first consignment for Phase I. The vaccination drive will subsequently cover primary health centres.

Tripura Cong chief attacked; party calls for 12-hr shutdown

Agartala, Jan 19 : Tripura's opposition Congress has called a 12 hour shutdown on Monday to protest against the alleged attack on state party President Pijush Biswas by the "BJP goons". The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) condemned the attack but urged Congress to call off its agitation. Congress' Tripura Vice President Tapas Dey said that BJP workers, accompanied by "notorious goons", attacked Biswas in Bishalgarh in Sepehijala district late Saturday evening. While the state party chief narrowly escaped, several party workers were injured. "The attack was done by a large number of BJP workers and the goons in presence of police. To protest the BJP attack on the state party chief, we have called a state-wide 12-hour shutdown on Monday," Dey, accompanied by state General Secretaries Harekrishna Bhowmik, Baptu Chakraborty and Tejen Das, told the media. The Congress leaders said that FIR was lodged on Saturday night immediately after the attack, but police yet to take any step to arrest the attackers. Biswas, a veteran lawyer, later told the media that the "BJP goons" unleashed the attack to murder him and badly damaged his car with iron rods and lathis. "The BJP led government in Tripura is not only an undemocratic government, it is also running a barbaric governance. People should go on all out protest against the BJP government," he said. BJP's state chief spokesman Subrata Chakraborty demanded an impartial inquiry to reveal the truth. "We urge the police to take appropriate legal action against the attackers. The probe would reveal whether it is an attack or outcome of the Congress' internal feud. The Congress also must withdraw the strike call as it would hinder the peace and progress undertaken by the BJP government," he said.

Why India must not forget to collect and crunch data on every vaccine shot given



New Delhi, January 19 : The immunisation drive against the coronavirus that began on 16 January is a mammoth exercise in terms of resources, social mobilisation, communication, logistics and most importantly, data management. While it is visible that governments are thoroughly preparing on most fronts, there is an urgent need to acknowledge and sufficiently stress on the importance of having a robust data management system in place. This must involve designing data systems that enable useful analysis for evidence-based decision making in the future. The chaos and difficulties of data management during the containment of Covid-19 have been visible over the past year. Since it's the government that is primarily driving the vaccination exercise, the responsibility of the system design that collects, manages and analyses data for insights shall fall on the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare as well. However, ensuring that this system is utilised with accurate, clean and authentic data shall be the responsibility of the states. The proposed data system should not be built in silo, without appropriate linkages to the massive data repositories built on Covid-19 infections. Backward and forward linkages of all data captured previously, and new data expected to be captured with the rollout, especially on beneficiaries, need to be thought through and put in. For example, months from now, if the administrators and medical professionals need insights into the effects and efficacy of the vaccine on beneficiaries who had been infected previously versus beneficiaries who had never been infected, or on beneficiaries with certain comorbidities versus none, the system should be able to pull out this analysis and throw conclusions based on vaccination data from across the states. If beneficiaries get infected with Covid-19 months after the vaccine administration, the system should also be able to trace the vaccine and dosage administered, along with other details. This is especially critical since the vaccines have, so far, received only emergency use authorisation, and a lot more research on the immunisation data may help decisions on continued usage and conventional approval for commercial use of these as well as other vaccines. With strict timelines under which the governments are operating, the first versions of data systems cannot be expected to be comprehensive and have all provisions of linkages. However, unless a dialogue on the subject pushes for continuous improvement of the platforms, we

are bound to land in a situation where minimal to nil insights are gained from possibly the largest vaccination drive in the world. Ideally, the mock drills before actual vaccination should also include focused drills of data entry so that the states and local administrators can plan for sufficient number of trained data entry operators, as required, for accurate and authentic tabulation. Learning from the Covid-19 experience, the skills and number of data entry operators form as crucial a part of data management as the data platform itself. Covid-19 data management saw multiple instances of duplication (such as parallel Covid-19 test reports prepared by the labs for the central portal by ICMR and for districts/state administration to inform the beneficiaries or Covid-19 death reports by hospitals for the state administration and their own records separately), absence of linkages for data integration and analysis, and manual recordkeeping even though digital platforms were made available due to lack of sufficiency of skills and number of operators. A key aspect worth highlighting is the need to ensure security of this data collected and privacy of its beneficiaries.

'People have been terrorised into silence. But you can't buy peace through threats'-Mehbooba

Srinagar, January 19 : Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister and Peoples Democratic Party chief Mehbooba Mufti has said overturning the Narendra Modi government's move to scrap Article 370 and divide the erstwhile state into two union territories will be a political battle, rather than a legal one in the

people remain angry and hurt. This is why, Mufti explained, her party's politics as well as her own would be focused on struggling "for the peaceful and dignified resolution of the J&K issue". Responding to a question about having been the last CM of J&K as a state, as things stand, Mufti said: "Our special status went



Supreme Court. In a written interview to ThePrint, Mehbooba Mufti also alleged that since Article 370 was scrapped on 5 August 2019, people had been "terrorised into silence", and now there is a need for all parties in J&K to remain united. "The Supreme Court had dealt with this case earlier too, and given a decision in favour of continuation of Article 370. But unfortunately, this time, more than a year has passed and there has been no hearing on this case. I personally feel it is going to be a political rather than a legal fight," she said. "The situation is quite scary, people have been terrorised into silence. There's surface calm enforced through draconian measures. But you can't buy peace through threats, so this will not work. We have to stay united. Mehbooba Mufti, PDP, National Conference, People's Conference and other parties can do nothing alone. Things are changing every day, so we too have to strategise accordingly," Mufti insisted. The former CM also said the Government of India will not only have to restore special status, but will have to do much more to address the "bigger issue" of J&K. Mufti said no one in Kashmir had accepted the Modi government's decision, and

beyond me being the last CM. It is about our unique identity as a single Muslim majority state, our diversity and our culture that is at stake. This we have to change. "The PDP is now part of the People's Alliance for Gupkar Declaration (PAGD), a conglomeration of regional and national parties demanding the restoration of Article 370. "Any party or alliance alone cannot change things; it has to be a collective effort," she said. "No one here has accepted GOI (Government of India's) 5 August 2019 decision; people are angry and hurt. Something which has been taken illegally and unconstitutionally can't be normalised by accepting it. It may take time and a lot of hard work, but it will have to be restored." Asked what it was like to be in alliance with political rivals, the PDP chief said: "We have been political rivals and may continue to be so. But for the larger cause, we have to rise above our party interests and unite to fight for what has been taken away from us. Mufti has also announced she will not contest elections until Article 370 is restored. When asked about her political future if the Centre refuses to budge, she said: "First, I don't believe that it (restoration) will never happen. GOI has to resolve the larger



shows the U.S. Capitol building in Washington, D.C., the United States. The entire U.S. Capitol complex was on lockdown Monday morning after a fire was reported several blocks away

It's 2021 and the Indian bureaucracy remains the greatest impediment to progress

New Delhi, January 19 : Barack Obama's comments on Rahul Gandhi in his recently released book made headlines. But there's another indictment that should be a cause for discussion in India. Obama writes of the country's bureaucracy as an impediment in its progress: "Despite its genuine economic progress, though, India remained a chaotic and impoverished place: largely divided by religion and caste, captive to the whims of corrupt local officials and power brokers, hamstrung by a parochial bureaucracy that was resistant to change." This assessment of governance in India is shared by others who get to take a peek into our system. A foreign diplomat recently told me he was hassled to see how difficult it was to sell his car in Delhi. Another foreign diplomat told me about the paperwork harassment at the airport due to Covid: "I had to fill forms affirming that I had filled forms, which affirmed that I had an RT-PCR a negative test." Nobody, not even a strongman leader like Narendra Modi, is able to make the Indian bureaucracy reform its ways - reduce the number of needless steps in their perfect SOPs, and make people's lives easier. The bureaucracy seems to exist to make people's lives tougher, because each cog in the wheel is only trying to be faithful to its own desk. Nobody looks at the larger picture and there is little accountability. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) was supposed to make indirect taxation easier and simpler. That is what it has done in many countries. Why wouldn't it achieve the same result in India? Enter Indian bureaucracy. The complaint about GST, especially in its initial roll-out, was that it was too complex. Only the Indian bureaucracy can complicate a measure meant to ease something. The worst of the Indian bureaucracy was brought out in the pandemic. Covid vaccination has begun but across India, swimming pools are still not allowed to function under the orders of the Ministry of Home Affairs. You can take a dip in the Ganga along with millions of people at the Kumbh but you can't swim in a pool. Nobody told the MHA that Covid is not a waterborne disease. Gyms are open - enclosed spaces that are more likely to spread Covid than an open air pool. The excuse for pools has been overcrowding. In which case, how about allowing pools to at least open in the winters in north India? And if overcrowding is an issue, have our bureaucrats considered visiting a market lately? The ban on swimming pools has hurt the careers of professional swimmers. Even when the MHA allowed pools to be used only for athletes, not all states opened them. The high-handed pen-wielding bureaucrats make these decisions in their silos hurting the lives, livelihoods and health of millions of people. The Indian bureaucracy fought an infectious disease with red tape, as The Economist memorably put it. The confusion in Delhi NCR traffic movement was a good example, with one state opening its borders and the other closing, showing total lack of coordination. Then there have been these night curfews, forcing people to do their socialising in the crowded day time, further increasing the possibility of the spread of the virus. In many cities, the traffic police was fining people for not wearing a mask even while driving solo in a closed car. It took the intervention of the courts to stop this bizarre harassment of citizens to relieve them of their money. There was an app, Aarogya Setu, like similar apps abroad, was supposed to alert users if they had come near anyone who was later found infected with Covid. Nobody was ever alerted.

China, WHO acted 'too slowly to contain COVID-19', says independent panel

Beijing, Jan 19 : China, WHO acted 'too slowly to contain COVID-19', an independent panel has said. Geneva: An independent panel has slammed China and the World Health Organisation (WHO) for "early shortcomings" in the initial response to the coronavirus pandemic. The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, established by WHO in May 2020, is co-chaired by former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark and former Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. In a report released on January 18, the panel called for an overhaul of global health alert and response systems, saying the current system is "not fit for purpose." "The Panel also describes additional early shortcomings at each step of the global and national response to COVID-19 which have contributed to the pandemic. These include a failure to measure preparedness in a way that predicted actual performance, and a failure of countries to prepare, despite years of warnings of the inevitability of a health threat with pandemic potential," the report read. China was also slammed by the panel for "lost opportunities to apply basic public health measures at the earliest opportunity." "What is clear to the Panel is that public health measures could have been applied more forcefully by local and national health authorities in China in January," the report said as quoted by CNN. This comes after UK's former Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Ian Duncan Smith labelled Beijing as despicable for covering up vital information pertaining to COVID-19.



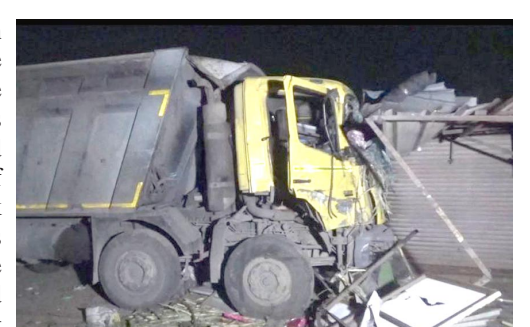
Ride-hailing driver volunteer Fan Yuejia (R) accompanies a returning passenger out of Shijiazhuang Railway Station for a free ride service amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Shijiazhuang,

15 dead, 6 injured after truck runs over labourers sleeping on footpath in Gujarat's Surat

SURAT, January 19 : In a tragic incident, at least 15 people were killed and 6 others were seriously injured after a truck ran over them in Gujarat's Surat in the wee hours of Tuesday. According to the reports, the tragic incident took place in Kosamba in the Surat district. Confirming the development, the police said, "At least 13 people died after they were run over by a truck in Kosamba, Surat. Gujarat: 13 people died after they were run over by a truck in Kosamba, Surat. All the deceased were labourers hailing from Banswada district in Rajasthan, the police said. During the time of the incident, the labourers were sleeping on a footpath. "A truck collided with

a tractor loaded with sugarcane after which the driver of the truck lost control of the vehicle and drove it over the pavement where the labourers were sleeping," CM Jadeja, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Kamrej Division, Surat said. Two more deaths were confirmed later. Six people, who suffered injuries in the accident, have been hospitalised, the police said. According to the police, the death toll is likely to go up. A large number of policemen and local officials have reached the accident spot and are carrying out the rescue work. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed condolences over the accident in which 15 people died in Gujarat's Surat and also announced

ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of the deceased from the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF). "The loss of lives due to a truck accident in Surat is tragic. My thoughts are with the bereaved families. Praying that the injured recover at the earliest: PM," the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) tweeted. "Ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each from PMNRF would be given to the next of kin of those who have lost their lives due to the accident in Surat. Rs 50,000 each would be given to those injured," PMO said in



another tweet. Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani also announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 Lakh each to the next of kin of those who lost their lives in the accident in Surat. Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot also condoled the deaths and wished speedy recovery of injured.

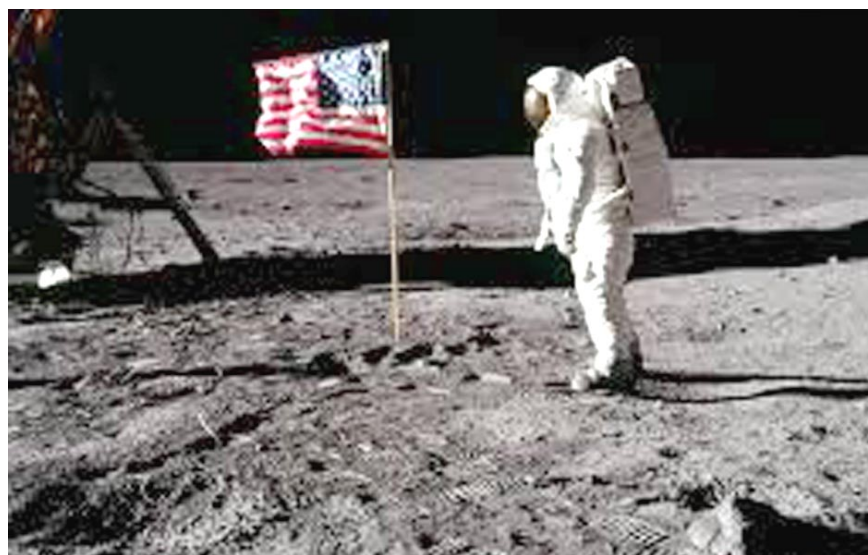
THE ASSAM RISING

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The issue of Arnab

Arnab Goswami's WhatsApp chats allegedly with former BARC CEO Partho Dasgupta raises an issue to opposition. But outrage is strictly the opposition's territory. If we are expected to outrage on their behalf, then India might as well be a single political party pseudo-democracy. Where are the acerbic questions from the opposition? And where's the holier-than-thou television media, whose anchors were reading out to their viewers leaked chat messages from the phones of Rhea Chakrabarty, Deepika Padukone, Sushant Singh Rajput and others? Of course, now running programmes on Arnab's leaked WhatsApp chats but the coverage seems nothing more than a 'payback' for Arnab Goswami's smug reference to AS (widely alleged to be Home Minister Amit Shah) calling Navika Kumar 'Kachra' (garbage). With the latest revelations from the alleged WhatsApp chats of Arnab Goswami, which the Mumbai Police submitted in court along with its supplementary chargesheet in the TRP scam case, two possibilities emerge. Either the opposition in India is very shady itself, with too many skeletons in politicians' closets. Or, in the prophetic words of Swaraj India president Yogendra Yadav, who said "Congress must die", the Congress has died. The 'prime' national opposition party is evidently resting in peace - or resting in pieces - and that's why we don't hear any outrage from anyone with decision-making powers in the party (read the Gandhis). Of course, others in the party like Prithviraj Chavan, P. Chidambaram and Manish Tewari are speaking about "ArnabGate" but then again, how much weight do they carry within the party? In spite of the incriminating evidence against Arnab Goswami that has been exposed in these chats - for example, allegedly having prior information about the Balakot airstrikes - hardly anyone from the opposition parties has so much as even spoken about Arnab Goswami or questioned how he seemingly had military intelligence. This is in stark contrast to the BJP when it was in opposition during the audio leaks of telephone conversations between former corporate lobbyist Niira Radia, politicians and journalists in 2009. The BJP ensured that in every political rally and throughout its campaign in the run-up to 2014 Lok Sabha election, the alleged 2G scam was mentioned. It was the media conversation around the 2G scam allegations as well as the opposition's continuous pressure that led to the arrests of DMK chief Karunanidhi's daughter Kanimozhi and former telecom minister A. Raja in 2011. And Arnab Goswami was at the heart of raising the heat on that story back then. All the accused were acquitted in 2017. Since then, Arnab Goswami has obsessively hounded the Gandhis in his shows on Republic TV and Republic Bharat. He has left nothing to civility in insulting Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Robert Vadra and Priyanka Gandhi. And now, at his most vulnerable, exposed time, he is being allowed by the opposition to lie low, stay quiet and avoid questions on the incriminating chats. While the Gandhis are choosing to take the high road and not 'attack' Arnab Goswami, the latter is not reciprocating the courtesy. A press release issued by the Republic Media Network - in response to a statement put out by Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Arnab's leaked chats - said the company was urging the Congress party "to stop working in tandem with the Government of Pakistan, consciously or unconsciously". Obviously, Arnab is under the false impression that he represents the whole of India, which is why anyone pointing out his irresponsible chatter on military intelligence is, according to him, 'anti-India'. This delusion requires an eyeroll that lasts for an eternity. In a parallel world, today's Gandhis could be passed off as 'Mahatma' for being so non-vengeful. But it's 2021. There's a Ram Mandir being constructed and one of India's top actors is asking people to donate money for it. We've gone through a pandemic and are rolling out vaccines that have not gone through all phases of clinical trials and we've almost had a war with China. Time to be a Mahatma has long gone. Michelle Obama's 'go high' doesn't quite win elections in Modi's India. But the Congress's Buddha-like silence seems habitual. It is no surprise that the Congress ecosystem is riddled with lethargy. Its leaders always seem to miss striking the iron while it's hot. When the farmer protests began to heat up, the Congress leadership was nowhere in news - and certainly not on the streets. It is only at their own time and leisure that they choose to show up - like Priyanka and Rahul did last week outside Delhi Lieutenant Governor Anil Bajjal's official residence, "fighting" for the repeal of farm bills. Where were they for the last 50 days when farmers from various parts of the country were trying to reach Delhi to join other protesters but were stopped by the police at the borders? Those who did come out, such as party leaders in Haryana, received no attention or support. The obvious problem with the Congress is its dependence on the Gandhis to do anything and everything. Many in the Congress work to just move up the ladder within the party organisation and therefore remain politically irrelevant, while those who actually want to be politically relevant are made irrelevant within the party.

Apollo landers and Neil Armstrong's footprint on the moon now protected by US law



It's hard to care about bootprints sunk in soil 238,900 miles away as humanity suffers the combined burden of an unforgiving virus and a political unease. But how humans treat those bootprints and the historic lunar landing sites upon which they are found will speak volumes about who we humans are and who we seek to become. On Dec. 31, the One Small Step to Protect Human Heritage in Space Act became law. As far as laws go, it's pretty benign. It requires companies that are working with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on lunar missions to agree to be bound by otherwise unenforceable guidelines intended to protect American landing sites on the Moon. That's a pretty small pool of affected entities. However, it is also the first law enacted by any nation that recognizes the existence of human heritage in outer space. That's important because it reaffirms our human commitment to protecting our history - as we do on Earth with sites like the Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu, which is protected through instruments like the World Heritage Convention - while also acknowledging that the human species is expanding into space. I am a lawyer who focuses

on space issues that seek to ensure the peaceful and sustainable exploration and use of space. I believe that people can achieve world peace through space. To do so, we must recognize landing sites on the Moon and other celestial bodies as the universal human achievements they are, built on the research and dreams of scientists and engineers spanning centuries on this globe. I believe that the One Small Step Act, enacted in a divisive political environment, demonstrates that space and preservation truly are nonpartisan, even unifying principles. It is only a matter of decades, perhaps just years, before we see a continuous human presence on the Moon. While it would be nice to think that a human community on the Moon would be a collaborative, multinational utopia - albeit located in what Buzz Aldrin famously described as a "magnificent desolation" - the fact is people are once again racing one another to reach our lunar neighbor. The U.S. Artemis project, which includes a goal of sending the first woman to the Moon in 2024, is the most ambitious mission. Russia has reinvested its Luna program, setting the stage to put cosmonauts on the Moon in the 2030s.

However, in a race once reserved for superpowers, there are now multiple nations and multiple private companies with a stake. India is planning to send a rover to the Moon this year. China, which in December implemented the first successful lunar return mission since 1976, has announced multiple lunar landings in the coming years, with Chinese media reporting plans for a crewed mission to the Moon within the decade. South Korea and Japan are also building lunar landers and probes. Such private companies as Astrobotics, Masten Space Systems and Intuitive Machines are working to support NASA missions. Other companies, such as ispace, Blue Moon and SpaceX, while also supporting NASA missions, are preparing to offer private missions, including for tourism. How are all these different entities going to work around one another? Space is not lawless. The 1967 Outer Space Treaty, now ratified by 110 nations, including all of the current spacefaring countries, offers guiding principles supporting the concept of space as the province of all humankind. The treaty explicitly indicates that all countries and, by implication, their nationals have the freedom to explore and free access to all areas of the Moon. That's right. Everyone has the freedom to roam wherever they want - over Neil Armstrong's footprint, close to sensitive scientific experiments or right up to a mining operation. There is no concept of property on the Moon. The only restriction on this freedom is the remonstrance, found in Article IX of the treaty, that all activities on the Moon must be carried out with "due regard to the corresponding interests of" all others and the requirement that you consult with others if you might cause "harmful interference." What does that mean? From a legal standpoint, no one knows. It can reasonably be argued that interfering with an experiment or a lunar mining

operation would be harmful, cause quantifiable damage and thus violate the treaty. But what about a derelict spacecraft, like the Eagle, the Apollo 11 lunar lander? Do we really want to rely on "due regard" to prevent the intentional or inadvertent destruction of this inspiring piece of history? This object memorializes the work of the hundreds of thousands of individuals who worked to put a human on the Moon, the astronauts and cosmonauts who gave their lives in this quest to reach the stars, and the quiet heroes, like Katherine Johnson, who fueled the math that made it so. The lunar landing sites - from Luna 2, the first human-made object to impact the Moon, to each of the crewed Apollo missions, to Chang-e 4, which deployed the first rover on the far side of the Moon - in particular bear witness to humanity's greatest technological achievement thus far. They symbolize all we have accomplished as a species, and hold such promise for the future. The One Small Step Act is true to its name. It's a small step. It applies only to companies that are working with NASA; it pertains only to U.S. lunar landing sites; it implements outdated and untested recommendations to protect historic lunar sites implemented by NASA in 2011. However, it offers significant breakthroughs. It is the first legislation from any nation to recognize an off-Earth site as having "outstanding universal value" to humanity, language taken from the unanimously ratified World Heritage Convention. The act also encourages the development of best practices to protect human heritage in space by evolving the concepts of due regard and harmful interference - an evolution that will also guide how nations and companies work around one another. As small a step as it may be, recognizing and protecting historic sites is the first step to developing a peaceful, sustainable and successful lunar governance model.

World is warming up to China for trade. But India is left with just a handful of minilaterals

Despite repeated warnings from the US, the European Union's recent Comprehensive Agreement on Investment with China raised eyebrows across the world. And even Donald Trump's parting shot was to revive the trade pact with the Beijing administration. Australia also signed a 15-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership with China in November. In a slowing economy, all three have revived some level of trade relationship with China. But as countries scramble to find new partners and new trade pacts in the wake of Covid, India is looking at a future where there is no China because of border tensions, and instead has lined up a few minilaterals whose outcomes are unknown. It seems that China is able to impose itself as a critical business partner even at a time when countries have been grouping up against its increasing belligerence under the Xi Jinping administration. India has been a rare exception in maintaining a consistent stance against China in terms of trade, blocking Chinese investment in April last year and walking out of the RCEP in November 2019. This stance has been bolstered by the Ladakh standoff. What it means is that while leading countries that are part



of the large-scale and complex global value chains and supply networks have begun to find ways to do business with China, India will be the only country to be left out of all such trade and economic blocs or groupings. Just as the world was busy wrapping up the tumultuous year of 2020, Europe silently went ahead and signed the Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) with Beijing, throwing caution to the wind while making it clear to the world that pragmatic Europeans, business comes

NAYANIMA BASU

before geopolitics. The CAI seeks to replace 26 existing bilateral investment treaties between EU member states and China, and establish a uniform legal framework for EU-China investment ties. This comes close to the incoming Joe Biden administration's clear indication that it will make America re-enter the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), now known as the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), which was originally backed by the Barack Obama administration before

the Trump administration withdrew from it in 2017. But just before his exit from the White House, Trump signed a trade pact with China after being engaged in a trade war during much of his tenure. While it certainly won't be easy for the Biden administration to complete the CPTPP deal, once done, it will make the US party to a humongous trade pact, which is pegged to be the world's largest free trade deal. The CPTPP, which was signed between 11 countries creating a free trade area in 2018 after the US' exit, may soon have Europe joining it. The UK, post Brexit, is also planning to be part of the grouping. Last month, Australian High Commissioner to India Barry O'Farrell told ThePrint in an interview that Canberra has joined the RCEP despite its differences with China because it supports open markets and encourages expanded trade and investment. "We also recognise trade and investment will be key to rebuilding our economies post Covid, and ensuring future sustained economic development," O'Farrell said. In April 2020, shortly before the ongoing tensions in Ladakh first cropped up, the Narendra Modi government took several steps to restrict foreign investments from China. New Delhi completely shut the door for Chinese investors or for any preferential trading arrangement with Beijing. Earlier this month, outgoing US Ambassador to India Kenneth Juster, in his farewell speech, sharply highlighted rising trade barriers in India, saying that during his tenure, he experienced most "frustration and friction" in the US-India bilateral trade. He also made it clear that in order to become a credible manufacturing hub and to become an alternative to China, New Delhi has to undertake some serious measures. "As US and other companies find it increasingly difficult to operate in China or seek to diversify away from Chinese-led supply chains, India has a strategic opportunity to become an alternative destination for manufacturing in the Indo-Pacific... To fully seize the opportunity, the Indian government may well need to take further action," he said. India's top three trading partners - the US, EU and China - slammed New Delhi during a trade policy review at the World Trade Organization (WTO) held from 6-8 January in Geneva. The US, in its feedback to the WTO on India's trade policy, said that if New Delhi continues to raise its tariff structure, it will "not facilitate India's further integration into global supply chains." And so, India is now trying to become part of the post-Covid supply chain network by joining certain small groupings in the form of 'minilaterals' under the Indo-Pacific strategic initiative.

Reforms to transform India are part of Budget and Beyond

Reforms are not one-off event but always work in progress, aimed at improving the quality of governance. In the sequence of Reform, Perform, Transform and Reform, the last word Transform is most critical because it clearly sets the objective. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had this task cut out for his government right from his first day in office. The target was and is - Transform while Reform and Perform are the means towards it. The Union Budget is one of the most important means of setting specific milestones and reaching there. Again, Within a set of specific milestones, the ones that relate to the overall public good must be reached fast. Government has a huge annual budget of about Rs 30 lakh crore to spend and must choose the expenditure heads diligently, but the choice spells out its policy direction. In his 2014-15 Budget speech, the then Finance Minister late Arun Jaitley had said so: In the first Budget of this NDA government that I am presenting before the august House, my aim is to lay down a broad policy indicator of the direction in which we wish to take this country. In so much din around us, we would have lost messaging of several key reforms embarked upon by the Modi Government between presentation of its first Budget by Jaitley on July 10, 2014 and the one to be unveiled by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on February 1, 2021. There have been a slew of transforma-

tional and life-changing reforms in the last six and half years, but the work is still in progress and must be so. After all, aspirations of 135 crore Indians cannot be met without Reform, Performing and Transforming; on a continuous basis. Right from its first Budget when hike in foreign direct investment cap in Defence manufacturing from 26 per cent to 49 per cent along with a similar dispensation in the insurance sector was announced, the NDA Government has been only accelerating the reforms. FDI in Defence sector has now been opened through automatic route up to 74 per cent and even beyond wherever it could result in access to modern technology. While disinvestment road map for the current financial year is not going as per the roadmap, delayed by Covid 19 outbreak, what stands out in the policy dispensation is the decision to go

in for outright strategic sale of blue chip PSUs like BPCL, CONCOR and SCI. Such strategic sale could be taken up only during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in firms like Maruti Udyog and BALCO among others. A decision of far-reaching reforms is the approval given by the Modi Cabinet for monetisation of non-core assets. Importantly, the PSU banks which have now been merged into 12 also fall into the non-core areas. In fact, at a time when the fiscal situation is under stress given the

commitments required for healthcare, including the Covid vaccine rollout and Rs 29.87 lakh crore Aatmanirbhar Bharat package, there is a strong case for the quick sale of non-core government assets, including real estate in major metros. The Aatmanirbhar Bharat package, announced in three tranches, as per official estimates, equalled 15 per cent of GDP and it combined measures like job support, easy financing of MSMEs, food relief and a helping hand to the stressed sector. The impact has started showing in terms of a sharper economic recovery; but all this had a huge financial commitment and resources for the same must now be raised

through innovative and bold measures. Market conditions are perfectly favourable; the bias against PSU stocks in the secondary market is now giving way to optimism on account of their attractive valuations. Time to go for the kill. Setting a disinvestment target of Rs 3 lakh crore and raking up the funds from abundant liquidity should be eminently achievable. Foreign flows are gushing into our financial markets as India figures quite high in the pecking order of the Emerging Markets (EMs). Buoyed by prospects of V-shaped recovery in the FY 2022, the Sensex is in the kissing range of the psychologically important 50,000 mark. As the largest recipient among the EMs, India received USD 23 billion in the calendar year of 2020 in

equities alone and the gush continues in the new year. Investors, brushing aside the high valuations, remain bullish on the Indian companies on their top line and bottom line prospects. The great India Story is prominently flashing on stock indices. If you happen to be amongst those who consider the equity market speculative, there is another data that explains how global investors want to go long on the India Story. As much as USD 30 billion FDI (foreign direct investment) was pumped into greenfield and brownfield projects in the first six months of the financial year 2020-21. Even on a most conservative estimate, the FDI inflows for the full FY 2021 would easily cross USD 50 billion. Given the geo-political factors at play and the fact the incoming Joe Biden Presidency would not go soft on China, India is being considered as a serious alternative for the global manufacturing giants. As the Prime Minister had recently advised India Inc, we must remain vigilant and become nimble to respond to the fast moving global geo-political scenario. With China, the major manufacturing hub, being in the eye of the storm the job becomes even compelling. After slashing corporate taxes to 22 per cent for existing companies and 15 per cent for new investment, India ranks amongst tax jurisdictions with the lowest rates in the world. It should be projected and promoted as the key pillar of the government's Make in India programme.

NEGTA 38th Garments Fair concluded with grand success in Guwahati

Guwahati, January 19 : India's one of the leading and biggest garments association of NE region "North Eastern Garment Traders Association" (NEGTA) 38th Garments Fair-Buyers and sellers meet conclude with good response in Guwahati on Sunday. Earlier two days long Garments Fair was inaugurated on Saturday by the members of the association. Speaking on the occasion President of NEGTA Mr. Shekhar Agarwal said Garment Fair has been organized twice in a year, but amid of COVID19 pandemic we have to cancel our Autumn winter 2020 Fair which was scheduled last year in the month of June 2020. After a gap of one year we are organizing the 38th Garments Fair this time with all COVID19 protocols issued by the government. He further said this is our 38th edition. Leading readymade garments brands from all over the country participated and exhibited their spring summer range of collection though this fair by keeping in mind for upcoming Rongali Bihu and Hot summer collection. We have

organized the fair in six different hotels of Guwahati. NEGTA venues were at Hotel Rajmahal and Hotel Atithi, whereas our associated venues were Hotel Vishwaratna,



Hotel Dynasty, Hotel Nandan and Ambience Banquet as a partner site. NEGTA General Secretary Varun Roongta said this time more

than 65 exhibitors and traders from various states participated with more than 300 brands of National and International level for women, men, children's clothing along with

footwear and accessories. In our Garments Fair more than 400 retailers and wholesale traders from all over Assam and Northeastern region will visit. Traders will place their orders according to their requirements for the upcoming summer season. We have also organized Buyers and sellers meets through this Garments Fair. Treasurer Rajkumar Chaudhary said according to the demands and requirements of businessmen we are trying to provide products in various ranges. NEGTA PRO Mr. Rajeev Ajitsaria said apart from business our organization is doing various social work as a CSR activity from time to time. During COVID19 pandemic our association came forward to help the needy people of society where a large number of families benefited. After a gap of one year due to covid we get huge responses from traders of North-east. He further said our active members Sailesh Goenka, Ajay Baradia, Dinesh Pareek, Chandan Sethia, Chandan Pareek, Anil Kocher, Sanjay Agarwal along with our all executives members also put their whole hearted effort to make this event a great success.

itel brings another innovation in Premium Affordable segment- Launches Vision 1 PRO with Bigger HD+ Waterdrop Display and Premium looks



New Delhi, January, 19 : After witnessing massive success and acceptance with Vision 1 - its first HD+ Waterdrop display smartphone in Feb 2020, itel - India's best budget smartphone brand today announced the launch of, yet another innovative and next gen smartphone christened "Vision 1 PRO" with bigger screen 6.52inchHD+ Waterdrop display bundled with trendy features like Triple AI Camera, multi-functional fingerprint sensor and face unlock for its discerning customers in India. Priced at INR 6599, Vision 1 PRO equipped with 16.56 cm (6.52 inch) HD+ IPS Waterdrop Incell Display with 20:9 aspect ratio, 4000mAh Li-Polymer battery and 2GB RAM + 32GB ROM for customers. Commenting on the launch, Mr. Arjeeet Talapatra, CEO, TRANSSION India said, "Our previous offering Vision 1 with its communication 'Naye India Ka Naya Vision' received an overwhelming response from consumers and aligned with providing innovative features backed with affordability, we have launched Vision 1 PRO with key communication message of 'India Badhega Aage Naye Vision Ke Saath' - which accords with our Vision 1 PRO smartphone in a newer, power packed and bigger avatar. We are highly optimistic that Vision 1 PRO will set new benchmarks in the sub 7K budget segment as it comes equipped with superior and trendy features, packed at an affordable price of INR 6599/-." "The new world order has reinstated the significance of digitalization and

have made the role of a smartphone more profound to continue our daily life. The newly launched Vision 1 PRO is aligned with the brand's new vision- 'itel hai. Life Sahi Hai' which emphasizes on enjoying a better life with itel's range of products and services. The launch of Vision 1 PRO is designed, to elevate the experience of our consumers who are looking for a high-performance smartphone with an immersive viewing experience. After establishing leadership in the sub 6K category, itel is eyeing to bring smartphones with a premium look and new-age features to be the brand of choice in the sub 7K segment," he added. Experience a Brighter and Bigger Screen with Stronger Battery Fulfilling the aspirations of the millennials of tier 3 and below markets, itel Vision 1 PRO comes loaded with premium features that will provide a magical experience to the consumers. The new smartphone is clad in 6.52-inch HD+ Waterdrop with incell technology and 2.5D curved fully laminated display topped with 450 nits brighter screen for higher transmittance that provides an extra glow to the outdoor viewing experience. It is further adorned, with 20:9 aspect ratio and 1600*720 pixels resolution for immersive and brighter video viewing. Featured with sleek 8.5mm design, Vision 1 PRO is powered by a massive 4000mAh non-removable battery to provide the user with 800 hours standby, 24 hours average usage, 35 hours of playing music, 7 hours of playing video and 6 hours of gaming. The smartphone comes equipped with AI Triple camera with 8MP Primary and flashlight adding to the premium look and feel. The camera configuration is perfect for shooting wider landscapes, having crystal clear mood of the surroundings, and enhancing the photographic experience of the user. It comes equipped with AI beauty mode, Portrait mode, Pano mode, promote, low light mode and HDR mode that helps in smart recognition, automatic adjustments of the camera effects capturing sharper objects with greater details. The front 5MP selfie camera with AI Beauty Mode for ensuring bright and clear selfie, even in low light areas.

Dolby Introduces First Ever Recognition Program For Music Mix Engineers In India

India, January 19 : Today, Dolby Laboratories, Inc. (NYSE: DLB), a leader in immersive audio and video entertainment experiences, announced the launch of one of a kind recognition and rewards program for Music Mix Engineers in India - 'Dolby Atmos Music Mix Engineers Honour Club'. Through this annual program, Dolby will recognize the work of music mix engineers and their contribution to the industry, encouraging them to create more music in Dolby Atmos for an immersive experience for fans. The Music Mix Engineers from India who have mixed music in Dolby Atmos are eligible to apply for the recognition program. Music mix engineers can register on - <https://www.dolby.com/en-in/mme> that also list the program's terms & conditions. Depending on the number of songs mixed in Dolby Atmos, eligible entries will be reviewed by Dolby and rewarded under five milestones - Platinum (500 tracks), Gold (250 tracks), Century (100 tracks), Silver (50 tracks) & Certificate (10 tracks). Music mixing is a creative process and a perfect blend of art and science. It is aspirational for people learning music to become music mix engineers and Dolby is creating that platform for upcoming music



mix engineers to train and enhance their talent. Dolby Atmos Music Mix Engineers Honour Club, list will be announced periodically on Dolby.com. To know more, log on to <https://www.dolby.com/en-in/mme> Commenting on the program, Pankaj Kedia, Managing Director, Emerging Markets, Dolby Laboratories said "At Dolby, we celebrate the hard work that Music Mix Engineers put into creating music. In order to thank those who have mixed the most tracks in the immersive sound of Dolby Atmos, we are excited to announce an annual rewards program - Dolby Atmos Music Honour Club".

What is Dolby Atmos Music Imagine if there were a way to connect with music at its fullest capacity and creative potential - not the way most people hear music today, but a version that pulls you into a song to reveal what was lost with traditional recordings. Dolby Atmos does just that. Whether it's a complex harmony of instruments placed around a listener, a legendary guitar solo that fills a room, a massive bass drop that washes over you, or the subtle breath a singer takes, Dolby Atmos gives music more space and the freedom to unleash every detail and emotion as the artist intended

TVS Jupiter gets a new entry-level variant: Price, features and how much you can save

Mumbai, Jan 19 : TVS Motor Company has launched a new variant of its best-selling scooter - Jupiter. The new trim has been named SMW (Sheet Metal White) and the same is now the entry-level variant in the Jupiter line-up. The new SWM variant has been launched for a price of Rs 63,497. With the inclusion of the new model, TVS Jupiter range now has a total of five variants. TVS Jupiter standard variant is now on sale at the dealerships for a price of Rs 65,497. On the other hand, the TVS Jupiter ZX is now priced at Rs 68,247 while the Jupiter ZX Disc is now being retailed at Rs 72,347. Last but definitely not the least, the TVS Jupiter Classic is currently on sale at the showrooms across India for a price of Rs 72,472. All prices mentioned are ex-showroom, Delhi. Powering the TVS Jupiter range is a 110 cc single-cylinder, fuel-injected engine that is good for producing respective power and torque outputs of 7.4 hp and 8.4 Nm. Prime features on the TVS Jupiter range include an all-LED headlamp and tail lamp, USB charger upfront, exterior fuel fill and a massive 21-litre under-seat storage.

O.P. Jindal Global University Launches 7 New Academic Programmes for Admissions 2021

Guwahati, January 19 : India's first ranked private university and an 'Institute of Eminence (IoE)', O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) announces 7 New Academic Programmes for Admissions 2021 along with the launch of its 10th School: Jindal School of Psychology & Counselling (JSPC). The new programmes offered by the ten schools of JGU are as follows:

1. BA (Hons.) in Psychology, 2. BA (Hons.) in Finance & Entrepreneurship, 3. BFA (Hons.) Bachelor of Fine Arts, 4. BBA (Hons.) in Business Analytics, 5. BBA (Hons.) in Family Business, 6. BBA (Hons.) in Financial Markets, 7. India's first PG Diploma in Data Journalism. Additionally, the B.Design programme offered by the Jindal School of Arts & Architecture (JSAA) will have two new curriculum paths. First, is on "Urban Planning", and second is on "Community Planning", adding to their existing specialisation in "Interior Design". Professor (Dr.) C. Raj Kumar, the Founding Vice Chancellor of O.P. Jindal Global University said, "JGU is at the forefront of academic innovation, internationalisation, and research excellence with a view to providing a transformative education for our students. This has enabled us to overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19 to the world of higher education. As an 'Institution of Eminence' dedicated to the study of social sciences, liberal arts and humanities, it is important for us to make a strong and substantive impact on the economy, polity and society. The Jindal Institute of Behavioural Sciences (IIBS) that was established in 2014 has created a rich body of research and capacity building in behavioural sciences. We are building on that experience to develop a world class institution, the Jindal School of Psychology & Counselling (JSPC). Similarly, our faculty members at the Jindal Global Business School, Jindal School of Liberal Arts & Humanities, Jindal School of Journalism & Communication and the Jindal School of Banking & Finance have a deep and rich experience in areas of Fine Arts, Entrepreneurship, Data Journalism, Business

Analytics, Financial Markets and Business Studies. We aim to leverage these experiences to provide a unique educational opportunity to our students in a range of UG and PG programmes that are being offered in the new academic year 2021-22." Details of the New Programmes for 2021 Admissions



1. BA (Hons.) in Psychology, 2. BA (Hons.) in Finance and Entrepreneurship, 3. BFA (Hons.) Bachelor of Fine Arts, 4. BBA (Hons.) in Business Analytics, 5. BBA (Hons.) in Family Business, 6. BBA (Hons.) in Financial Markets, 7. India's first PG Diploma in Data Journalism. Additionally, the B.Design programme offered by the Jindal School of Arts & Architecture (JSAA) will have two new curriculum paths. First, is on "Urban Planning", and second is on "Community Planning", adding to their existing specialisation in "Interior Design". Professor (Dr.) C. Raj Kumar, the Founding Vice Chancellor of O.P. Jindal Global University said, "JGU is at the forefront of academic innovation, internationalisation, and research excellence with a view to providing a transformative education for our students. This has enabled us to overcome the challenges posed by COVID-19 to the world of higher education. As an 'Institution of Eminence' dedicated to the study of social sciences, liberal arts and humanities, it is important for us to make a strong and substantive impact on the economy, polity and society. The Jindal Institute of Behavioural Sciences (IIBS) that was established in 2014 has created a rich body of research and capacity building in behavioural sciences. We are building on that experience to develop a world class institution, the Jindal School of Psychology & Counselling (JSPC). Similarly, our faculty members at the Jindal Global Business School, Jindal School of Liberal Arts & Humanities, Jindal School of Journalism & Communication and the Jindal School of Banking & Finance have a deep and rich experience in areas of Fine Arts, Entrepreneurship, Data Journalism, Business

Analytics, Financial Markets and Business Studies. We aim to leverage these experiences to provide a unique educational opportunity to our students in a range of UG and PG programmes that are being offered in the new academic year 2021-22." Details of the New Programmes for 2021 Admissions

3. BFA (Hons.) in Bachelor of Fine Arts

The Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) programme as it is positioned within the Jindal School of Liberal Arts and Humanities (JSLH), enables students to study visual art and also to learn within a broad range of liberal arts courses that brings into perspective social, cul-



tural, and economic elements. BFA brings students into the local and international communities and encourages community engagement. Students will work alongside recognized artists who have mastered forms of visual arts including: painting, sculpture, printmaking, pottery and more. Our BFA students receive personal guidance from their instructors and also enjoy the freedom to work independently in the studio.

4. BBA (Hons.) in Business Analytics

This Specialised BBA is ideal for students keen to pursue careers that leverage Analytics strengths in a variety of functions and industries. Graduates from this program are expected to be professionals capable of ascertaining business problems that require application of Data Analytics, identifying appropriate data sources, analysing large volumes of data using appropriate tools and techniques, and drawing relevant business insights from data analysis.

5. BBA (Hons.) in Family Business

This programme is designed specifically for students who pursue a career in their family business and

Consumers In India To Be Among The First To Own Galaxy S21 Series, Globally



Guwahati, Jan 19 : Samsung, India's most trusted smartphone brand, has opened pre-booking for Galaxy S21 Series, its latest flagship smartphone. Galaxy S21 Ultra comes with most advanced pro-grade camera system and Samsung's brightest, most intelligent display. With Galaxy S21 Ultra, you can experience S Pen in the Galaxy S series for the first time. Galaxy S21 Ultra has a quad rear camera that features an upgraded 108MP pro sensor and 100x Space Zoom which is powered by Samsung's first-ever Dual-tele lens system. Galaxy S21 Ultra's 5000 mAh battery can reach a 50% charge in just 30 minutes. Galaxy S21 is designed for those who want a light design and compact 6.2-inch display. Galaxy S21+ sports an expanded 6.7-inch display and a larger battery, perfect for gamers and binge-watchers. Galaxy S21 Series' improved 8K Snap lets you grab crystal clear images from your 8K video footage. The Director's View feature lets you see, switch, and select the best shot to tell your best story. You can also capture video with the front and rear cameras at once for real-time reactions with Vlogger View. Paired with the new Galaxy Buds Pro, you can capture both ambient sounds and your voice at the same time using multiple mic recording. With the power of AI, the popular Single Take feature allows you to capture a variety of still and video formats with one tap. The new Zoom Lock feature on S21 minimizes shaky hands and captures clearer images at 30x zoom on Gal-

axy S21 and Galaxy S21+, by leveraging AI to keep your focal point in the center of the frame. All the three devices are hyper fast 5G ready and are powered with Samsung's own Exynos 2100 chipset. The Galaxy S21 Series will be available in six stunning colours: Phantom Black, Phantom Silver, Phantom Violet, Phantom White, Phantom Grey and Phantom Pink. Consumers can pre-book Galaxy S21 Series across Samsung's Exclusive Stores and retail stores and on Samsung.com and leading online portals. All pre-booked consumers will get Galaxy Smart Tag free and Samsung E-Shop voucher of up to INR 10000. As a special offer, all pre-booked consumers can get Galaxy Watch Active 2 or a combo of Galaxy Buds+ and Travel Adapter with a device of their choice. In addition to this, consumers can also avail HDFC Bank cashback of up to INR 10000 or have an option to avail Upgrade Bonus of up to INR 5000. Pre-booked consumers will start getting deliveries on January 25, while Galaxy S21 Series goes on sale in India on January 29. Galaxy S21 Series price in India Galaxy S21 (8+128GB): INR 69999 (Phantom Violet, White, Pink, Grey) Galaxy S21 (8+256GB): INR 73999 (Phantom Violet, White, Grey) Galaxy S21+ (8+128GB): INR 81999 (Phantom Violet, Silver, Black) Galaxy S21+ (8+256GB): INR 85999 (Phantom Violet, Silver, Black) Galaxy S21 Ultra (12+256GB): INR 105999 (Phantom Black, Silver) Galaxy S21 Ultra (16+512GB): INR 116999 (Phantom Black)

aims to impart relevant conceptual knowledge and practical skills for professional success in family businesses. This programme will equip students for the challenges in professionalization and transformation of family businesses, with a range of electives tailored for family business topics including experiential learning projects and international immersions.

6. BBA (Hons.) in Financial Markets

With global and industry focus, this program will make students proficient in using software tools, processes and best practices of financial markets. They will have understanding of various financial data sources and of various tools and techniques to analyze financial data and draw meaningful inferences. They will also be able to understand and participate in policy debates related to innovation in products and services offered by markets and institutions.

7. India's First PG Diploma in Data Journalism

The Jindal School of Journalism & Communication (JSJC), and the Jindal School of Banking & Finance (JSBF) have collaborated to offer India's first PG Diploma in Data Journalism. This is the latest example of how knowledge and best practices freely transcend disciplinary and professional boundaries. This program combines the JSBF's tech-forward and data-intensive approach with JSJC's spirit of investigation and inquiry.

Professor Arjya B. Majumdar, Dean, Office of Admissions and Outreach, JGU said, "A 21st century Atmanirbhar Bharat has begun to have conversations around issues such as mental health, entrepreneurship and new age careers in fine arts. As a university dedicated to the study of social sciences, arts and humanities, JGU needs to be part of this conversation. These new programmes being offered at JGU will complement our existing repertoire of programmes in law, business, social sciences, politics, international relations, liberal arts, architecture, communication, commerce and environment studies.

Contd. From Page 1

Congress- AIUDF alliance

in Assam in 2021. Baghel arrived in Guwahati on Monday to review poll preparedness in the state. Baghel along with AICC General Secretary Mukul Wasnik and Secretary Shakeel Ahmad Khan started reviewing the poll preparedness with the state party leaders. The AICC leaders also sat in a meeting at Hotel Palacio to discuss the election related issues. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Baghel said that the Congress will form the government in 2021. While asked about the alliance with AIUDF, Baghel said that no discussion has been made in this regard and that the decision on the alliance will be taken by the high command. Taking a jibe at Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, APCC President Ripun Bora said, "If we will say everything what has been discussed with the AICC observer, Himanta will say that we have given a goal. The BJP will only fight between the two goalkeepers." He further stated that all the leaders who joined BJP are from Congress and if Himanta said that there are agents in Congress from BJP then we also have agent in BJP. Meanwhile, AICC General Secretary in-charge of Assam, Jitendra Singh urged all the opposition parties in the state to stand united against BJP.

Political parties in Assam want

Barua. "We want the elections to take place before the Bihu. There should not be any hindrance in the Bihu celebrations. We have also informed that it would be better if the elections take place in three phases," said BJP leader Jayanta Malla Baruah. The All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) has also echoed the same. "We too feel that it would be better if the elections take place before the Bihu. Upper Assam normally soaks into the Bihu festivity more. So, it would be better if the elections take place before the Bihu," said AIUDF general secretary Aminul Islam. He also voiced in favour of conducting the elections in two or more phases.

Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's

year of Netaji beginning from January 2021 in a befitting manner at the national and international level," the Ministry said. "Now, in order to honour and remember Netaji's indomitable spirit and selfless service to the nation, Government of India has decided to celebrate his birthday on the day of January every year as 'PARAKRAM DIWAS' to inspire people of this country, especially the youth, to act with fortitude in the face of adversity as Netaji did, and to infuse in them a spirit of patriotic fervour," the government stated in its release. In the recent past, the Government of India has taken several steps towards preserving and conserving the precious heritage of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. A museum has been set up on Netaji at Red Fort, New Delhi, which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on 23.01.2019. A permanent exhibition and a Light and Sound show on 'Netaji' has been planned to be set up at Kolkata in the historic Victoria Memorial building. In view of the announcement, it is also expected that Prime Minister Narendra Modi may visit West Bengal on January 23 to attend Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary celebrations at the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata. The PM is also likely to visit the National Library located in Belvedere Estate, Alipore, according to the sources. Interestingly, West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee has announced to hold a 'padyatra' on the occasion of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Jayanti.

No 'serious or severe' adverse

Moradabad in Uttar Pradesh died due to cardiopulmonary disease. The death "is not related to vaccination as per the post-mortem report", he said. The health worker who was vaccinated on January 16 and died the next evening. Agnani further said that the cause of death of another man from Bellary in Karnataka is anterior wall infarction with cardiopulmonary failure. The post-mortem of the man, who was vaccinated on January 16 and died on Monday, is scheduled to be conducted at Vijayanagar Institute of Medical Sciences in Bellary. "No case of serious/severe AEFI attributable to vaccination till date," Agnani added. A total of 3,81,305 beneficiaries have so far been vaccinated for COVID-19 and 580 adverse events following immunisation were reported in the country till now, the Union health ministry said on Monday. Agnani said 1,48,266 beneficiaries were vaccinated across 25 states and Union territories till 5 pm on Monday. He said a cumulative 580 adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) and seven cases of hospitalisation have so far been reported in the country since the nationwide COVID-19 inoculation drive began on January 16.

Bharat Biotech makes big

Officer supervising vaccination," the factsheet said. The fact sheet also asked people to inform the vaccinator or a supervising official about their medical condition before taking the vaccine. Bharat Biotech said in an ongoing clinical trial Covaxin has been shown to generate immunity following two doses given four weeks apart. Covaxin is a vaccine with approval for restricted use in emergency situations that may prevent COVID-19. The Central Licensing Authority has granted permission for the sale or distribution of the antidote for restricted use in emergency situations in the public interest as an abundant precaution, in clinical trial mode, the fact sheet said. Covaxin is a highly purified and inactivated two-dose SARS-CoV-2 vaccine, manufactured in a Vero cell manufacturing platform with an excellent safety track record of more than 300 million doses, the company had said. Covaxin is India's totally indigenous COVID-19 vaccine developed in collaboration with the Indian Council of Medical Research and National Institute of Virology. The inactivated vaccine is developed and manufactured in Bharat Biotech's BSL-3 (Bio-Safety Level 3) biocontainment facility, one of its kind in the world.

Assamese film 'Porichoy bagged

the JIFF. Porichoy has bagged awards in three categories—Best Women Film, Yellow Rose (For upcoming Filmworld Premier) and Special Jury Mention. "Heartfelt thanks to Jaipur International Film Festival for selecting our movie 'Porichoy' for the prestigious three categories. In fact, it is a great news and an honour for us in such a time of crisis that an Assamese movie has made its mark in an international film festival like Jaipur," said Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, producer of the film. The five-day digital edition of the 13th Jaipur International Film Festival (JIFF) concluded on Tuesday. Thousands of people from India and abroad watched 266 movies from 44 countries that were screened online at JIFF-2021.

PM Modi Appointed Chairman

Amit Shah, Gujarat-based scholar JD Parmar and businessman Harshvardhan Neotia. "While Mr Shah proposed the name of PM Modi as chairman, I seconded it and the other trustees then unanimously elected the PM as the new chairman. "The trustees would hold another meeting to discuss future plans," Mr Laheri added. As per the records, Desai had served as the chairman between 1967 and 1995.

Final electoral roll of Hailakandi published; 4,97,450 electorates, 711 polling stations

Hailakandi, Jan 19 : The final electoral roll for the three Legislative Assembly constituencies of Hailakandi election district has been published here on Monday. As per the information revealed by the District Election Office, the total electorates of the three LACs comprising 6 Hailakandi, 7 Katlicherra and 8 Algapur is 4,97,450 with 2,59,558 being male and 2,37,898 female. There has been an increase of 11,279 voters compared to the draft electoral roll published on November 18 last year. The gender ratio for 1,000 male is 917 female. The total voters for 6 Hailakandi LAC is 1,60,462 with 232 polling stations while for 7 Katlicherra LAC it is 1,76,800 voters with 252 polling stations. As regards 8 Algapur LAC, the total electorates is 1,60,194 with 227 polling stations. There are altogether 711 polling stations consisting of 656 main and 55 auxiliary polling stations. 55 new polling stations have been set up.

BJP holds Booth convention at Bhella



Barpeta, Jan 19: The BJP's Barpeta Block Mandal is holding a booth convention today at the historic Balachar of Bhella in Barpeta. Hemant Deuri, a state member of the BJP, was present at the meeting, which was chaired by Zulfikar Ojha, vice-president of the Barpeta Bloc mandal. Hemant Deuri is overwhelmed by the rise of the BJP among Bhella voters, who have been neglected by the Congress government. Deuri said that the people of Bhella would fully cooperate with the success of BJP's Mission 100. The enthusiasm of the party workers who attended the booth meeting proved him. It is to be noted that since independence, the Congress has been accused of grossly neglecting the development of the Gorias community in the greater Bhella area. The Bhella area, which includes Chenga and Barpeta constituencies, has been plagued by various problems since it got more than two MLAs. As a result, people have been forced to look for alternative political parties and leaders. State Minority Front member Dhani Ali, Barpeta Assembly in-charge Sanjay Majumdar, Amjad Hussain, Chairman, Booth No. 5, Bhella, Hairul Islam, President, Booth No. 4, Atowar Rahman, General Secretary, Minority Morcha, Gomafulbari Mandal were present on the occasion.

Joint Mock Drill On Flood Rescue And Relief Conducted In Cachar (Assam) By Ndrf Guwahati



Guwahati, January 19 : under the direction of Shri Satya Narayan Pradhan, IPS, Director General, National Disaster Response Force, 1st Bn, NDRF Guwahati organized a district level joint mock drill on flood rescue and evacuation in Sonai river, a tributary of Barak river, in Chekarcham, Cachar Assam. Assam is one of the most flood prone states in India. The state faces acute flooding in the flood plains of the river Brahmaputra and Barak basins and other smaller river sub-basins. An extremely dynamic monsoon regime combined with unique physiographic setting of the basins has been considered as the single most important cause for frequent occurrence of flood in the state. This Flood Mock drill taken two days-long preparedness which include table top exercise, community awareness cum preparedness and scenario based practical exercise with stakeholders. Mock exercises are of paramount importance for emergency preparedness and the aim of such mock exercises will be to bring together all the stakeholders in the State/ District concerned and ensure seamless co-ordination during the conduct of rescue and relief operations. Intensive training and mock drills develop the confidence to react in the event of a disaster. On this occasion Sh. R S Gill Commandant 1st Bn NDRF said that "Disaster management is the key to sustainable development in North East India. Community is a very important element in disaster management, if we dream of a disaster resistant India for a stable and secure society, the community has to be sensitized and aware to deal with the basics of disaster management. The National Disaster Response Force is on its mission with the objective Apada Seva Saidava Sarvatra". Shri Sanjeev Kumar Sinha, Assistant Commandant, led NDRF team and a number of government agencies including SDRF, Distt authorities, Local volunteers, Aapda Mitra, Health department, Veterinary department, PHE, Water resource department, Neepco Tuirial Hydroelectric project, Forest department total 719 personnel participated in this exercise.

Mega Vanya Resham Krishi Mela at Gogamukh

Gogamukh, Jan 19 : Central Muga Eri Research & Training Institute (CMER&TI), Central Silk Board, Ministry of Textiles, Govt of India, Lahdoigarh organized a Mega Vanya Resham Krishi Mela at Gogamukh, Dhemaji (Assam) on 19-01-2021. The occasion was graced by Dr. Ranaj Pegu, Hon'ble MLA, Dhemaji LAC; Sh. Sunil Pegu, Hon'ble Chairman, MAC Dhemaji; Shri Paramananda Chayengia, Hon'ble Chief Executive Councilor Missing Autonomous Council; Shri Dilip Rabha, Assistant Director Sericulture, Dhemaji and Dr. Jalaja S. Kumar. Director, CMER&TI, Lahdoigarh, Jorhat. More than 500 Eri and Muga farmers attended the mela during which an exhibition was also organized by CMER&TI to showcase latest technologies developed by the Institute for enhanced Eri and Muga culture. In her welcome address, Dr. Jalaja S. Kumar, Director CMER&TI spoke about overall activities and recent technologies developed by the Institute in Eri and Muga sector. She stressed upon better adoption of technologies and urged the farmers to establish plantations of improved varieties of Eri and Muga host plants to reap better returns. Chief Guest Dr. Ranaj Pegu, MLA Dhemaji urged the stakeholder to utilize the technologies developed by CMER&TI, CSB for enhanced production and productivity of Muga and Eri culture. He emphasized on byproduct utilization for sustainable development. He also thanked the Institute for organizing vanya reshom krishimela in this region. Sh. Sunil Pegu, Hon'ble Chairman, MAC Dhemaji emphasized on the significance of sericulture for economic up-liftment of poor farmers and its importance in Assamese culture. Shri Paramananda Chayengia, Hon'ble CEC MAC requested the farmers to go for large scale rearing for getting maximum economic benefits. Shri Dilip Rabha, Assistant Director Sericulture, Dhemaji spoke about different sericulture schemes being implemented by Govt, of Assam in coordination with Central Silk Board. In her address, Director CMER&TI appreciated the role of Dr. D. Mech, Scientist-D for spreading technological awareness among the farmers in the region. On this occasion lead farmers in Eri and Muga culture were awarded and the farmers shared their experience by acknowledging the impact of recent technologies on their success in both pre and post cocoon sectors. The farmers emphasized that young generation needs to be trained in muga and eri culture for its sustainability. This was followed by technical presentations by senior scientists Dr. D. Mech and Dr. Mahananda Chutia. The meeting ended with vote of thanks by Shri Jadumani Hazarika, Sr. Field Assistant CMER&TI.

Sootea MLA conferred with 'Sootea Ratna' title

Biswanath Chariali, Jan 19: Padma Hazarika; the MLA of Sootea LAC was conferred with 'Sootea Ratna' title in a public meeting organized by Sootea Nagarik Sabha on Tuesday at Sootea. The meeting was held at Chatia HS School field chaired by Bhaba Saikia; the president of Sootea Nagarik Sabha. A multi-cultural procession was taken out with pomp and gaiety. The meeting began with lighting up of ceremonial lamps by Prabin Hazarika; former minister of the government of Assam. Alakananda Bhuyan had performed a borgeet which was followed by an inaugural speech by Dr. Anjan Ojha; the principal of Chaiduwar College. During his inaugural speech, Dr. Ojha recalled the childhood days of Padma Hazarika and briefed about his journey as an artist, a student leader, an organizer, an entrepreneur and as a political figure in short. Dr. Ojha didn't forget to mention about the ancestral history of Sootea MLA and about the significance of the greater Sootea area. The meeting was also attended by Dr. Ashok Bora, head of the department of Geography; Gauhati University, Pramod Borthakur, MLA Biswanath, Prabin Hazarika, former MLA Biswanath, Dipak Handique; former deputy commissioner of Charaideo, Moti Kumar Newar; chief executive officer of Kanyaka Bahumukhi Krishi Pam along with others. The Sootea Ratna title was conferred upon Padma Hazarika in a religious atmosphere. The title carries a turban embroidered with silver, a memento, a citation paper, a seleng, a gamocha. All the proceedings of the meeting were carried out by Udai Sankar Saikia.

Amulya Manna photography award confers on noted photographer Nalini Kanta Boruah at Nagaon

NAGAON, January 19: Noted photographer and artist Nalini Kanta Boruah has been conferred with Amulya Manna Photography Award here at a function. The award distribution function was organized at Nagaon Kishakays Bhavan in the town by Amulya Manna memorial trust in association with Photography Institute of Assam. The award is comprising of 'Gamusha', 'Cheleng', a memento, appraisal letter and Rs 20,000 in cash. Receiving the award, the noted photographer of the state said he was at the threshold of 90, he was yet to click the best photograph. I have never forgotten Amulya Manna in my life and his son has made film on the life of Aideo Handique. But the government is far behind to recognize it or has not received any response from the same, Boruah reiterated. Vice chancellor of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva Viswavidyalaya, Dr Hitesh Deka, Dr Sarat Borkatoki, principal, Nowgong College, senior journalist Dr Abu Hanifa, noted Assamese short story teller Sibananda Kakoti, social activist Mukut Ch Bhuyan and many other dignitaries graced the occasion. Journalist Sailen Saikia anchored the function while Arup Manna, Amulya Manna's son and noted film maker and director of the state coated it with vote of thanks.

Cradle installed at civil hospital for abandoned babies

Hailakandi, Jan.19 : Cradle has been installed at the SK Roy Civil Hospital for abandoned newborns here on Tuesday. The District Child Protection Office (DCPO) has put in place cradle so that parents could leave their newborns safely while keeping their anonymity. The DCPO also plans to expand the scheme in other government-run health centres in the district such as Block Public Health Centres, Ujjwala Homes and Child Care Institutions. Seven cradles have been received from the State Adoption Resource Agency under the Social Welfare Department. Each cradle is accompanied by a mosquito net, fire-proof mattress and a blanket. The objective of the scheme is to save the deserted babies, who are mostly left at spots far from human activities. Launching the scheme, SDO (Sadar) cum Incharge District Social Welfare Officer, Jyotirmoy Daimary said it would provide a new leash of life to the babies who are abandoned by their parents under trying circumstances. "Though we do not want to see newborns being abandoned, circumstances force some to do so and in this situation the scheme will give a new leash of life to them," he quipped. Speaking on the occasion, Incharge, District Child Protection Officer, Gulzar Ahmed Laskar said, "Installing cradles is to ensure babies are not abandoned in dustbins, bushes, and fields where they are exposed to fatal infections and die. The cradles are a remedy to save these lives." Superintendent of SK Roy Civil Hospital, Dr.Sudip Chakraborty, while lauding the initiative, hoped that the cradle scheme would help save precious lives of abandoned newborns. District Information and Public Relations Officer, Sabir Nishat said the cradle initiative would provide a congenial atmosphere for the unwanted babies to grow up in a healthy way under the tender love and care of health functionaries. Appreciating the laudable initiative, Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Nilotpol Deb said the scheme would pave the way for abandoned babies to get the much-needed love and care. The cradle for abandoned babies has been conceptualised in accordance with ICPS guidelines 2018 of the Ministry of Women and Child Development within the Juvenile Justice framework. 19 districts of Assam, including the three districts of Barak Valley have been allotted 131 numbers of cradles for abandoned babies. "The ANM and GNM staff have been directed to make periodic rounds of the cradle. If a newborn is spotted, it would be rushed to the neonatal care unit and given medical check-up. Once the medical attention phase is over, the baby will be handed over to the Specialised Adoption Agency in accordance to the provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015", said Child Protection Officer, Laskar. The scheme will also help bridge the gap between the number of children available for adoption and the burgeoning list of adoptive parents. "The idea behind is to encourage parents to come and surrender their unwanted babies in the cradles so that they don't abandon them. It is a humane and yet anonymous way to give up your child," added Laskar.

Final electoral roll of seven constituencies in Nagaon district published

NAGAON, January 19: The final electoral roll of seven assembly constituencies of Nagaon district including Raha, Dhing, Batadroba, Rupahihat, Nagaon Sadar, Barhampur and Samaguri was made public on Monday evening by Deputy Commissioner as well as the district election officer, Nagaon Kavitha Padmanabhan.

As per a press release issued District Information and Public Relations office, a total of 1900 polling stations in those seven assembly constituencies have been ensured. Among these, there are a total of 1520 main stations while 380 are ensured as auxiliary polling stations in those seven constituencies.

Besides, the names of 13,03913 voters in those seven constituencies have been enrolled in the final electoral roll, out of which 665096 male and 638767 female are ensured while 50 transgender in the seven constituencies are enrolled in the final roll.

As per the press release, in Raha constituency, male voters 107693 and female 102537, in Dhing - male 117583 and female 109721, in Batadroba, male 81291 and female 77182, in Rupahihat, male 100608 and female 96592, in Nagaon Sadar, male 89530 and female 90596 voters are ensured while in Barhampur and Samaguri constituencies, the names of 87176 and 81415 male voters and 85774 and 76367 female voters have been enrolled respectively in the final electoral roll.

Lionel Messi's red mist shows player lauded as deity is only human after all

London, January 19 : Exactly 90 seconds before the act of violence that will earn Lionel Messi his first red card for Barcelona, he's standing just inside the halfway line, waiting to receive a pass.He's seen a gap. The sort of gap Messi has seen thousands of times before.And most of the time we know what happens: a little burst of speed, and in an instant he's 15 yards further up the field, the ball still magically glued to his feet. But here, the gap closes around him. Iker Muniain wins the ball with a slide tackle. And as Athletic Bilbao move it unhurriedly up the field, Messi's arms drop sadly to his sides.Moments later, Messi feels the crunching shoulder of Asier Villalibre smack the side of his head as he plays a pass. Messi sprints towards the area.Villalibre impedes his path. And so Messi swings an arm at the back of his head: the act of a desperate man, a hopeless man. The sheer illogic of it seems to drain Messi entirely. He leans over to see if Villalibre is OK. He accepts his red card without complaint. As he leaves the field, he hands the captain's armband to Jordi Alba.The first thing to say about Messi's first red card in 753 Barcelona first-team games is that it probably shouldn't have been. After all, this is hardly the first time Messi has lost his temper on the pitch. Nor should this be entirely surprising. Messi has been getting kicked, clipped, blocked, barged, tugged, tripped and tag teamed ever since he learned to dribble a football. Indeed, Messi has played a large part of his career against a backdrop of people specifically trying to make him angry.Most of the time, Messi anger is quite amusing. There are the numerous tiffs with Sergio Ramos and Pepe

from clasicos past, a duelling-stags clash with João Félix at last year's Supercopa, the time he chided a third tier defender in a pre-season friendly with the words: "Do you want to stop kicking me, asshole?" The time he celebrated a last-minute penalty against Valencia by running over to their fans and screaming: "La concha de sus madres! Hijos de puta!" Such grace! Such elegance! And yet even in this context there was



something singular and shocking about the haymaker Messi threw on Sunday night.Confrontation, handbags, the heat of battle: these are the common and established tropes of footballing anger. But Messi isn't trying to win the ball. He isn't reacting to a studs-up tackle or challenging a refereeing decision or defending a teammate's honour. In a sense, this isn't a footballing act at all. It's pure human malice, a volcano of rage and vindictiveness that has probably been accumulating for years.Perhaps the closest parallel is Zinedine Zidane's headbutt in the 2006 World Cup final: an act triggered by Marco Materazzi's insult but fuelled by a toxic brew of circumstances: the state of the

game, the size of the occasion, the gilt-edged chance that he had put straight at Gigi Buffon just a few minutes earlier. And above all, that sense of desolation and loss, of a curtain coming down, of a game that could no longer be bent to his will.From a young age, Messi never encountered a problem that he couldn't solve with his feet. Control the ball and everything else - the defenders, the goalkeeper, the game, the power - simply falls

into line. But now, although his skill with a ball remains peerless, it no longer holds the world in its orbit. Barcelona, the club he loved, has fallen into decay. His friends have left or been sold. His transfer request was turned down in the summer.And so, as Muniain wins the ball, Messi surveys the scene. He sees Trincao to one side of him. Martin Braithwaite ahead of him. He can't win the trophies he craves, he can't keep the players he likes or sign the players he wants. He can't control his own future. His hamstring hurts, he's been fouled all night, Atlético Madrid are seven points ahead in La Liga, and now another piece of silverware is slipping away. At this point, he feels a shoulder smack the side of his

face. And he snaps."I can understand what Messi did," his manager, Ronald Koeman, said afterwards. "It's normal to react when they keep trying to foul you." But if Koeman was trying to stick up for his player, to uphold his impeccable aura, then in a strange way it had the opposite effect. For the power of Messi has always rested on the fact that you couldn't understand what he was doing. That he wasn't normal. That the usual rules of cause and effect didn't apply.This is the flimsy basis upon which an entire sporting belief system has been built: Messi as deity, Messi as light, Messi as saviour and transcendence. All fun. All fine. All essentially fulfilling the fundamentally human need for sport to make us feel something, to build us a world, to show us power. Or as the Catalan writer Jordi Puntí puts it: "An alternative world lives in our imagination, and Messi nourishes it."But the problem with creating human deities is how you deal with the waning of their power, the dimming of their light - how you process the cruelty and suffering that occur under their command. Perhaps you explain it away as the act of a vengeful and angry God, and carry on with your day. Or perhaps, by contrast, you conclude that he simply doesn't exist.

Young Cricketer drew blood, Tail wags for Inia to draw 3rd Test and Win Border-Gavaskar Trophy



Aalo, Jan 19 : The young Indian Cricketers drew blood and Indian tails wagged to draw the 3rd test match which comfortably went in Australia's way initially and win the 4th test match in which too Australia had an edge. The pair of S. Gill and Rishab Pant did all the damages to foil Australia's chances of winning or drawing the final test match piling 188 runs between them facing formidable bowling attack of Australia and winning the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in a scintillating manner. The inexperienced young bowling side donning the Indian colour in the absence of experienced bowlers due to injuries did wonderfully well to put mighty Australian batting side to take them on back foot. Mohammad Siraj, S. Tkakur and Washington sundar bowled out their hearts.

The lower order batting partnerships by Washington Sunder, S. Thakur, Ravichandran, Pant and others saved the third test for India and in the final test veteran Hiteswar Pujara stood like a rock, withstanding many injuries paving way for the likes of Gill and Pant to demolish the Australian bowling attack on other side. No one imagine that Indian young India cricketers will show such a resilience after being demolished by Australia in the first Test bowling out an experienced Indian team led by Captain Virat Kohli for a paltry score of 36 all out, the lowest ever score by India in an inning. The young Indian Cricketers have miles to go in all formats of cricket and test match too should be blended with attacking and defensive batsmen and bowlers to win matches for India.

Royal Ascot may need to embrace change in troubled times



London, January 19 : There might be a crusty traditionalist or two who will see the permanent addition of a seventh race to the Royal Ascot daily card as a sign of the end times for the Turf. The fact that all five of the races that will now become fixtures on the schedule are handicaps could also prompt a few complaints that the bookmakers will be the biggest supporters of the move. The point on which everyone should focus above all, however, is that racing is now two months away from an entire year with 99.5% of its meetings behind closed doors, with no more than 2,500 spectators per day at any of the handful of racecourses where paying punters actually made it past the door. The revenue loss for the sport runs to hundreds of millions of pounds already, and the hole will keep getting bigger until full crowds return, hopefully no later than early autumn. Even then, it will be years before racing finally clambers back out into the daylight, and the new races should more than pull their weight in terms of their contribution to the Betting Levy. On the first four days of the meeting at least, anyone who does not

want to acknowledge the extra race can simply switch off the TV or make a quick getaway from the track. The first six races from Tuesday to Friday will be just as they were in 2018 and, bar one tiny tweak on Wednesday, in 2019 as well. The traditional first-race time of 2.30 is also expected to be retained. This, in fact, is possibly where Ascot could be seen as lacking a little ambition, not least if you take the view that staging three of the meeting's eight Group Ones among the first four races on Tuesday, but only one for the biggest crowd of the week on Saturday, is unnecessarily lopsided. The St James's Place Stakes, the feature race on day one, moved to the final day last year to give as much time as possible between the delayed 2,000 Guineas in early June and Ascot's Group One over the same trip two weeks later. It seemed like a more balanced programme, to this observer at least, but the feeling at Ascot seems to be that the extra races are enough change for now. "I think if you changed the Tuesday radically, it would be very, very unpopular with the Tuesday regulars," Nick Smith, Ascot's director of racing and public affairs, said

on Monday. "The great irony of Royal Ascot, of course, is that the best day is the quietest day, and moving Group One races to a day that already sells out wouldn't gain an extra customer but would potentially harm the model for the opening day."It really is very popular, especially with the Royal Enclosure members, to start with a bang and we like the statement of starting with a Group One [the Queen Anne Stakes]. When Tepin [the 2016 winner] came over from the States, they found it bizarre in the extreme. But they didn't worry too much afterwards, obviously."It will, of course, be 2022 before the new-look Royal meeting can play out in front of a proper crowd and the track does not expect to find out for some time how many spectators will be there this year. "Everything changes so quickly," Smith said. "The messaging today seems to be extremely upbeat, then in a week's time, it will go backwards again."We know [the capacity is] going to be considerably lower than normal, and that there will be almost no temporary facilities built, but what we do put in place is further down the line. The stand is vast, so ultimately we've got enough permanent facilities to deal with whatever realistic crowd we're going to get."Ascot will also be the centre of attention this weekend when Politologue, last season's Champion Chase winner, is expected to start favourite for the Grade One Clarence House Chase. Paul Nicholls's grey was one of 10 five-day declarations on Monday, with the field (and prize fund) unexpectedly boosted by the addition of Waiting Patiently, the runner-up to Frodon in the King George on Boxing Day, via a £5,000 supplementary entry. Politologue heads the ante-post betting at 5-4 with Waiting Patiently at 3-1 and Defi Du Seuil, last year's winner, on 7-2.

Neil Lennon furious at Dubai criticism: 'You're all wanting blood, it's scandalous'



London, January 19 : The Celtic manager, Neil Lennon, has castigated an "absolute barrage of hypocrisy" he believes is attached to criticism of his club's ill-fated training trip to Dubai. Lennon has refused to admit the camp was an error in contrast to the comments made by Celtic's chief executive, Peter Lawwell, last week. Celtic have been subjected to disapproving tone - largely from their own supporters - after heading to Dubai in the immediate aftermath of a 2 January defeat against Rangers. After the centre-back Christopher Jullien tested positive for Covid-19 a further 13 players and three coaches - including Lennon - were placed into isolation. Celtic duly stuttered to home draws against Hibernian and Livingston. "We've been held to a far higher standard than any other club," Lennon said. "Protocols at different clubs are inconsistent. As soon as Celtic are deemed to do something wrong, bang, you're all wanting blood, it's absolutely scandalous. The fallout from this has been way too much."It is not a stag do, it isn't an '18-30' even though it has been portrayed like that. Aston Villa have shut down, Raith Rovers. They haven't travelled anywhere."Celtic have now confirmed that a second player, who was already in isolation, has returned a positive test. A visibly riled Lennon, though, was unrepentant as he returned to work on Monday. The manager appeared to take aim at the Scottish government's close-contacts protocols. "My apology is to the fans because 13 players and three staff had to isolate for

10 days, which is ludicrous," he said. "I'm not apologising for anything else. I'm not apologising for going out there and training for a week. I'm not apologising for the players having a day off."The whole squad is negative bar two players. I think that is remarkable and I think it totally blows out of the water the way the training camp has been portrayed by certain quarters of the media, by certain pundits and by certain government officials as well."Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's first minister, has been among those to publicly raise questions about Celtic's behaviour. Photos emerged of Lennon and his

captain, Scott Brown, sitting by a hotel swimming pool. "We did not abuse any privilege," Lennon said. "We did the right things. We were absolutely, totally professional. We had a little drink in the afternoon on a day off, completely allowed, no law breaking, yet we come back to this barrage of absolute hypocrisy. We've come back, we've been absolutely decimated by these rules. It seems political."Lennon took a thinly veiled swipe at the treatment of Scotland's players as the celebrated qualifying for the European Championship finals, and the shamed MP Margaret Ferrier. "It's not as if they were doing a conga in the dressing room, dancing to Baccara or travelling up and down on a train journey from London to Glasgow with Covid," he said. With Celtic 21 points behind Rangers - Lennon's team do hold three games in hand - there has been widespread speculation about the manager's future. Eddie Howe has been linked with taking charge at Celtic but there has been no indication the former Bournemouth manager would have an interest in moving to Scottish football.

Calls to shorten Australian Open matches rejected as player quarantine likened to 'prison'

Paris, January 19 : Australian Open director, Craig Tiley, has rejected a proposal to shorten the men's tournament matches to best of three sets to offset the disadvantage to players in hard quarantine. Frustration and confusion continues unabated in the build-up to the season's first major, starting on 8 February, with some 72 players and staffers in lockdown in Melbourne following six positive Covid-19 cases among the entourages arriving to Australia on 17 charter flights in recent days. While many players have transformed their hotel rooms into makeshift training centres, the overall sentiment has been one of disquiet and apprehension about potential injury and form ramifications of two weeks with no

court practice. Spain's world No 13 Roberto Bautista Agut was the latest to voice concern on Tuesday, describing quarantine as like being "in a jail". "It's the same, but with wifi," Bautista Agut told Israeli news channel Sport 5. "These people have no idea about tennis and about practice courts, and it's a complete disaster. The control of everything isn't Tennis Australia, it's with the government."The situation has sparked suggestions to consider reducing matches to best of three sets instead of the traditional five. However Tiley, while acknowledging the lockdown meant preparation was "not an even playing field", moved quickly to dismiss any suggestion the match formats would be altered. "We are a grand slam at the end of the day," Tiley told the Nine

Network on Tuesday. "Right now, three out of five sets for the men and two out of three sets for the women is the position we plan on sticking to."In order for us to pull this off, we've had to do it with great partnership with quarantine Victoria, with the Victorian government and that is working really well. The two weeks with the players and 72 of them being in a hard lockdown, we are providing them with all sorts of exercise equipment in their rooms. "They can be creative on how they use the dressers, the beds for exercise, and we have seen on social media some really interesting ideas. And then they are going to come out after 14 days in their room and we will give them some time to prepare and that is why we had that buffer week, in the event that this was going to

happen."Tiley said tournament organisers were considering other avenues to "to try to even it up as much as possible" but did not elaborate on the nature of those prospective measures. The Tennis Australia chief executive also addressed the throng of social media complaints from players detailing their quarantine ordeals. "These are high-performing athletes, and it is hard to keep a high-performing athlete in a room," Tiley said. "This is the contribution that they have to make in order to get the privilege of when they do come out to compete for \$80m in prize money. We will turn the

corner on those few that don't have the right approach to this, but the rest have been really good."Tiley labelled the six Covid cases as a low figure given 1,200 coronavirus tests have been carried out in Melbourne over the past five days. "There was going to be an expectation to have several positive cases," he said. "But now we're in a position where they're in lockdown, designed to protect the community.



Messi sent off as Athletic Bilbao sink Barcelona to win Spanish Super Cup



Barcelona, January 19 : The moment that ultimately won this match, if it could be reduced to just one among so many, was like the last frame of a comic strip. It's 2-2 in extra time in the Super Cup and the team made up entirely of local boys have twice come from behind against the biggest team of all, somehow making it this far thanks to an improbable last-minute equaliser. The ball then falls at the feet of the striker who joined them as a kid and is playing in his 167th consecutive game. From the edge of the area, an implausible position, he hits an unstoppable shot which flies through the air, and rockets into the net. It was, said Athletic Club's Iñaki Williams at the end of an exhausting, exhilarating 120 minutes, "without doubt the best goal of my career" and he could not have placed it better if he had picked the ball up, leaned a ladder against the post, climbed up and put it there by hand. It wouldn't have drawn it better or chosen a better moment for it either. There was still a way to go, nerves to be shed, minutes to be seen out, and plenty of action - Unai Núñez somehow missing from three yards; Ander Capa and Frenkie de Jong crashing into each other; Antoine Griezmann smashing a

volley wide, his moment gone; a red card for Lionel Messi - but Athletic, who had defeated Real Madrid in the semi-final, were on course to beat Barcelona. Barcelona were complicit in their own demise yet make no mistake: this was Athletic's night. Jordi Alba was directly involved in four goals but two of those were Athletic's and defensively Barcelona disintegrated while in attack they created little and in the middle they were never in control. Not on the pitch; not on the bench either. Nor did they react when they needed to, the personality required absent. Their collapse, the impotence that engulfed them, the desperation, was expressed best by the late sending off for Messi for hitting out at Asier Villalibre - his first red card for the club. Messi walked head down, and soon was gone. This may be the least of the trophies that Barcelona chase but it was also the most likely for them to win this season and this was a failure, and a painful one. As for Villalibre, the man whose goal had taken this match to extra time before Williams won it, he finished the night out in the middle of the pitch playing the trumpet in celebration. For Athletic, deserved winners, there was joy, even

if something was missing: this was a trophy raised in an empty stadium by the club that, along with their Basque rivals and scheduled opponents Real Sociedad, refused to play last year's Copa del Rey final without their fans. Still, this remains a huge moment for them and one their supporters will cherish, despite the barge remaining tied up rather than taken down the river in celebration as tradition dictates. For their new manager Marcelino García Toral too: he has been in charge for just three games - against Barcelona, Madrid and Barcelona again - and already he has a winners' medal. When Williams's shot went in, the manager went wild on the touchline here; at the end they all did and rightly so. Twice they had fought back from behind and then, in extra time they had found a goal that Oliver Atom, Hotshot Hamish and Mighty Mouse would have embraced. One that delivered justice. It had been a long night and if it had looked like victory would escape Athletic at times, that would have been cruel. They were, put simply, the better side, led by Williams and in particular Iker Muniain, rising above the rest. They had been from the start. While it may have been a minor detail, the way Ander Capa twice pushed opponents off the ball inside five minutes seemed to say something. And yet this was not just strength and determination: it was control too and Athletic took the game to Barcelona as they had done to Madrid in the semi-final. Athletic had the first shot, Marc Andre ter Stegen turning over Capa's rising effort, while it wasn't until eight minutes before half-time when Messi struck Barcelona's first effort over from 30 yards. And yet then, just after Raúl García had headed

over Oscar de Marcos's cross at the other end, Barcelona scored. Messi's pass took seven players out and found Alba, running into the area on the left. He looked for Messi's arcing run towards him, seeking to cut it back into his path: that old familiar routine. Inigo Martínez and Dani García were alert, so too Yeray, all three diving at Messi's feet. The rebound came to Griezmann to finish. Barcelona had the lead but lost it again in 92 seconds, not one of their players touching the ball again before Athletic equalised. And if Messi's pass then had been good, Williams's was even better now. Beautifully clipped, it floated and dropped behind Alba, where De Marcos ran in and, first time on the bounce, sidefooted past Ter Stegen. Athletic thought they had added to it only for Raúl García's header to be ruled out by VAR for the tightest of off-sides, but they were undeterred, Williams thumping just wide soon after. There was a slowness to Barcelona's play, a lack of conviction and yet they again took the lead when Ousmane Dembélé and Alba suddenly burst into life, accelerating to provide for Griezmann to get his second with 13 minutes to go. It was done, or so it seemed. Fatigue took hold, legs grew heavier. But Athletic weren't finished yet and nor was this story. With Ronald Koeman making changes in an attempt to run down the last few seconds, clinging on to one handle of that trophy, Villalibre appeared and volleyed Muniain's free-kick into the net. He had been on the pitch six minutes and now he had ensured he would be there for many more, the night only just beginning. The Spanish Super Cup final was going into extra time and that final frame.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang double sends Arsenal soaring past Newcastle

London, January 19 : Baby steps but perhaps, in one sense, a significant stride. Arsenal's return to the top half is hardly a cause for unbridled joy but the manner in which they sailed home dangled the promise of better times. Their struggles over the autumn went hand in hand with a damaging drought on the part of their captain, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, but that seemed a distant memory by the time he had scored his second goal of a win with such ultimate ease it felt like something of a novelty. It was the first that really blew away the cobwebs. Aubameyang had seen the ball in more threatening areas during the first half than in some entire games this season, even if end product was lacking and he had shot glaringly against the post from Arsenal's best chance. Newcastle had kept them at bay but were broken five minutes after the interval when, characteristically, a rare attempt to sustain some pressure of their own broke down and Arsenal took their invitation to cut loose. Thomas Partey, imperious throughout his return to the starting lineup after injury, had already sent Aubameyang away down the left with one quick, raking pass. On that occasion, early in the night, the striker had eventually run

Arsenal's third, was tapped into an empty net after Cédric Soares had kept the ball in play by a millimetre and cut it back. After such a torrid run he now has four in his last six games; he cannot do it all on his own but the evening's other defining moment showed that he may no longer need to. Saka and Emile Smith Rowe are the academy darlings who, more than anyone else, have breathed life into Arsenal's winter and they combined thrillingly on the hour to double the lead. Smith Rowe glides and probes but does so with rare energy and speed; this time he made ground of his own in that left-wing area before teeing up Saka for a low first-time finish. Plenty of time has been spent fretting about the dull form of Nicolas Pépé and Willian, but the two youngsters are beginning to consistently lift Arsenal above the mean to a degree of which their more experienced colleagues seem incapable. "Overall the team looked confident, solid, compact and very clear about what we had to do in defence and attack," Arteta said. "I'm very pleased with the clean sheet, the goals, the run and the momentum we are on." Arsenal have now kept five straight clean sheets in all competitions for the first time since 2009.



into traffic. This time he had a clear run at Emil Krafth, a scenario Arsenal had evidently sought to create at the outset, and saw his options increase as the defender backed off. Rather than cut inside he chose to shift the ball on to his left foot, uncorking a rasping drive that offered Karl Darlow little hope and jogged more than a few memories. It felt like a trademark Aubameyang goal, combining high speed with elite execution, and he had not contrived one of such quality since the season's opening day. A while after his 15th minute miss, which saw him jab against the far upright after Darlow's save from Bukayo Saka had given him an open goal, Aubameyang had jumped into Krafth in a vain attempt to win a penalty and a now-familiar frustration appeared at risk of cutting through. This time, he cast it to one side. "That's what he's done throughout his career," Mikel Arteta said. "Mentally you have to be really strong to do that. He's come out of a difficult period. We've missed his goals a lot and I'm really pleased for him." Aubameyang last scored twice in a match when deciding the FA Cup final. His second goal,

It must be noted that they will rarely face less of a threat to their goal. Steve Bruce made eight changes on the back of Newcastle's derelict defeat to Sheffield United, promising "the gloves are off now" and setting up with a far more attacking system than the one that had almost sneaked an FA Cup win here nine days previously. For all his good intentions, perhaps a more dogged outlook would have yielded a similarly tight game against hosts who took time to get going. Newcastle were incoherent in attack and hardly looked resilient further back; caught betwixt and between, what followed was inevitable. "We've been caught twice on the counterattack and it's about getting that balance," Bruce said, while scotching any idea that he cannot arrest an alarming slump in form. "I've been in it a long time and managed to do it before." The pressure Arteta was under a month ago appears, by contrast, to have lifted. Smiles are becoming more widespread, a case in point being his expression when he explained Aubameyang was substituted at 3-0 because of "a stomach issue". This performance should not prove too hard to digest.

Chris Froome reveals quad problem and 'inexplicable pain' hit comeback

London, January 19 : Chris Froome has revealed that a 20% strength deficit in his right quad - which was only discovered after he left Ineos - and an "inexplicable pain" from a surgical screw were factors in his disappointing comeback season. The 35-year-old struggled on his return from a horrific training crash at the Critérium du Dauphiné in 2019, missing selection for the Tour de France last year and finishing 98th at the Vuelta a España. But Froome remains confident he can return to his best with Israel Start-Up Nation after focusing on getting stronger during the winter. "The biggest learnings towards the end of last year were actually from doing some isokinetic testing and figuring out that I was still sitting with about a 20% deficit in quad strength on the right-hand side," Froome said. "Basically, it meant the rehab process wasn't 100% completed. We are doing two-hour sessions, three or four times a

week, and focusing on really building muscle mass and strength on the leg that was injured." Froome said he also felt better after having two screws removed in the off season after feeling a pain deep in his quad "that didn't make sense", adding: "It wasn't coming from the insertion of the muscle. It was this inexplicable pain. I went to have some scans done straight after the Vuelta and

we found that one of the screws was actually piercing through the bone and potentially causing a bit of a grating sensation on the muscle as I was cycling." The seven-times Grand Tour winner has spent the winter continuing his rehabilitation at the Red Bull High Performance Center in Santa Monica, missing the pre-season training camp of his new team which is taking place this week

near Girona. But he insisted he was still on track to become the oldest winner of the Tour since Firmin Lambot in 1922. "In a way I see this as the biggest challenge I've come up against in my in my career. Not only am I coming back from the injury but also I spent two years away from the Tour de France. And I'm up against a lot of new faces who I haven't got experience racing against - guys like Tadej Pogacar, guys like my former teammates, who I haven't got experience racing against. "But age is a state of mind. I feel relatively young in cycling years. I got into the sport a little bit later. The way nutrition has evolved and the sport has evolved, it's certainly possible for athletes to go later and later." You look at a rider like Alejandro Valverde who is 40 and still racing Grand Tours and is still up there competing with the best in the world. It's certainly possible and I'd like to prove that as well."







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