

The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

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NEWS

IN BRIEF

AASU stage protest against VC

Dibrugarh, January 28 :

The Dibrugarh University unit of All Assam Students Union (AASU) is protesting in front of the Vice Chancellor's office at Dibrugarh University campus alleging rampant financial irregularities today. The protesters are demanding the Assam Governor-cum-Chancellor of the University to institute a high level probe into the alleged grave financial irregularities and misuse of public funds in Dibrugarh University. The students body has accused Prof Ranjit Tamuli, the Vice-Chancellor of gross financial irregularities and mismanagement of public funds by misusing his position and power. Yesterday, a protest rally was taken out by the Teachers' Association of Dibrugarh University (DUTA) demanding high level enquiry and action against the persons involved.

Delivery Executives Stage Protest

Guwahati, January 28 :

The Swiggy delivery executives have staged a protest in front of its Guwahati office situated at Ulubari. The executives demanded that the service tax of Rs. 30 in each order taken earlier should be reduced to Rs. 15. The executives staged the protest against the new policies by the company. Notably, 1500 executives are currently engaged with the company in Guwahati.

Restrictions On Flights

Guwahati, January 28 :

The Civil Aviation Ministry in an order said that the temporary restriction imposed on flights originating from the UK to India has been extended till February 14. The ministry in a letter to the British Airways and Virgin Atlantic Airlines said that the restrictions on flights will remain intact till February 14. However, the restrictions do not imply a ban on flights between the two countries but rather seek to limit the number of flights permitted to operate, the ministry said. As per the restrictions in place, a total of 30 flights will be allowed every week.

Rajdeep Sardesai Reportedly Quits India Today After Taken off Air



New Delhi, January 28 :

In a first in the Indian broadcast news industry, national news channel in English, India Today has taken its consulting editor Rajdeep Sardesai off air for two weeks alongside deduction of a month's salary for posting a misinformed tweet stating a farmer was killed during the tractor rally held in the national capital on Republic Day. However, reports have

CM Sonowal attends Krishak Swahid Diwas at Patharughat



Guwahati, January 28 : Attending the Krishak Swahid Diwas programme at Patharughat in Darrang district, Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Thursday offered floral tributes to farmer martyrs of the historic Patharughat uprising. In the Patharughat peasant uprising, more than a hundred peasants fell to the

bullets of the British on January 28, 1894. The farmers came out in large number to protest against the increase in land revenue levied by the colonial administration. Attending the Krishak Swahid Diwas, CM Sonowal recalled the sacrifice and valour of the farmers in fighting against the colonial rulers. On the occasion, the chief minister felicitated progressive farmers of the state for their contribution to the agricultural sector. "As part of the program, the CM also inaugurated a state-of-the-art Integrated Training and Skill Development Centre at Patharughat and interacted with participants of the three day farmers training program," the chief minister officer

stated. Twenty five years before the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre, more than a hundred peasants fell to the bullets of the British on January 28, 1894 in Assam. The unarmed peasants were protesting against the increase in land revenue levied by the colonial administration, when the military opened fire. Today a "martyrs column" stands where the incident took place — Patharughat, a small village in Assam's Darrang district, 60km north-east of Guwahati. After the British annexation of Assam in 1826, surveys of the vast lands of the state began. On the basis of such surveys, the British began to impose land taxes, much to the resentment of the farmers. In 1893, the British government decided to increase agricultural land tax reportedly by 70-80 per cent. "Up until then the peasants would pay taxes in kind or provide a service in lieu of cash," said Patharughat-based Kamalakanta Deka, a professor of Assamese at

Patharughat Higher Secondary School. "Across Assam, peasants began protesting the move by organising Raji Mels, or peaceful peoples' conventions." According to Guwahati-based author Anup Kumar Dutta, who has written a book — Pothorughat — on the incident, despite these gatherings being democratic, the British perceived them as "breeding grounds for sedition". "So whenever there was a Raji Mel, the British used to come down on it with a heavy hand to disperse them," he said. That Contd...Page 6

No Cash Transactions in Toll Gates from February 15

Guwahati, January 28 : Transactions will be carried only through FasTag and double fine will be imposed on the people who will not have a FasTag. Cash transactions in toll gates will be stopped from February 15, 2021; this was informed by the Field

through FasTag and double fine will be imposed on the people who will not have a FasTag. Alok Kumar also stated that a fine of up to Rs. 1 Lakh will be imposed on the staff and workers if they misbehave with the public. FASTags becomes mandatory for all vehicles with effect from January 1, 2021, in M and N categories of motor vehicles sold before December 1, 2017, the ministry of road transport and Highways clarified on Thursday adding that only a single hybrid lane will be functional at tolls for accepting

for carrying goods, which may also carry people in addition to goods. "It is clarified that this Central Motor Vehicle Rule stands in force as it is," said the ministry in an official statement on Thursday. However, at hybrid lanes of fee plazas on National Highways, fee payment can be made through FASTag as well as in cash mode till February 15, 2021. Moreover, in FASTag lanes of fee plazas, payment of fees will continue to be through FASTag only. "The Ministry has clarified that it is committed to implementation of 100% E-tolling at fee plazas from 1st January, 2021 onwards, mandated under CMV Rules, as amended," it said in the statement. Electronic toll collection through FASTags has crossed Rs 80 crore a day with Contd...Page 6



Director of National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) Alok Kumar on Thursday. The field director while speaking to the media also stated that transactions will be carried only

cash till February 15. Category 'M' stands for a motor vehicle with at least four wheels used for carrying passengers. Category 'N' stands for a motor vehicle with at least four wheels used

Congress Announces Mission 101 plus in Assam

Guwahati, January 28 : After forging alliance with Badruddin Ajmal's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF), the Congress party has announced its Mission 101 plus for forthcoming Assam assembly elections. "The Congress party and its partners in the grand alliance

will get 101 plus," said Jitendra Singh, All India Congress Committee (AICC) general secretary in-charge of Assam at Laharighat in Morigaon district on Thursday. Earlier, though the grand old party aimed at Mission 80, now it has shifted its focus on getting more than 101 seats following the grand alliance with AIUDF and a few left parties. "We had talked about Mission 80 when we were alone. But, after the grand alliance, we are also targeting 100 plus," said

Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president Ripun Bora. Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has already announced its Mission 100 plus and has launched its campaign vociferously. On the other hand, Luringjyoti Gogoi, president of recently-floated Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) has expressed his confidence over forming government by his party. "I am 100 per cent sure. No one can stop us," Gogoi remarked. The Opposition Congress in Assam

formally declared a "Grand Alliance" with five parties to contest against the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in the state in the Assembly elections. The announcement was made during an event in Guwahati in the presence of Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, who was named the senior observer of the All India Congress Committee for the Assam polls. All India United Democratic Front, the Communist Party of India, the Communist Party Contd...Page 6

AASU Stages Protest Over Petrol Price Hike



Guwahati, January 28 : All Assam Students' Union (AASU) on Thursday staged a protest against the hike in the price of petrol, diesel near Judge's Field,

Guwahati. Protesting against the price hike, the students' body also demanded the withdrawal of tax on fuel which has been issued during the Contd...Page 6

Biden admin reaches out : US NSA speaks to Ajit Doval, Defence Secy dials Rajnath Singh



New Delhi, January 28 : According to MEA, "NSA Sullivan stated that the US was looking forward to working together on the bilateral agenda and the common global challenges." A week after US President Joe Biden was sworn in, two top US officials,

Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, spoke to their Indian counterparts, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and NSA Ajit Doval, in separate phone conversations Wednesday. On the Doval-Sullivan call, the Ministry of External Affairs issued a statement where they flagged issues of "scourge of terrorism", "maritime security", "cyber security" and "peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond". All these issues have an oblique reference to China and Pakistan — from India's perspective. The US Defence Secretary's call to Singh is significant since Austin has taken charge just two days ago, and has spoken to key allies of the US so far — Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, NATO and the Contd...Page 6

Raising awareness on women's rights conveyed by SAKHI



Diphu, January 28 : Awareness programme on raising awareness on women's rights and several schemes launched by the government was held at Nihanglangso, Matipung, Diphu today. The awareness programme was jointly organised by SAKHI - One Stop Centre, Rongkhelan and Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK). In the programme, Isha Terangpi, Centre Administrator, Sakhi, Rongkhelan explained about the legal rights to the women affected by violence in several spaces and the facilities to be provided to them. She

explained that, "SAKHI-One Stop Centre is intended to support those women affected by violence, in private and public spaces, within the family, community and at the workplace. It will facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counselling support under one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women irrespective of caste, class, religion, region, sexual orientation or marital status including girls below 18 years of age. Sakhi

will run 24*7 and one may dial a toll free number 181 in terms of seeking help and counselling." Romali Teronpi, Women Welfare Officer, MSK, explained about the several schemes launched by the government which are intended to extend financially to the women. She informed that schemes like Orunodoi, Widow Pension, Arundhati Gold Scheme etc. are meant for women. So, one can avail it by visiting MSK, she said. In the programme, Nihanglangso Village Headman was also attended.

74th Cannes Film Festival postponed to July



New York, January 28 : The Cannes Film Festival, canceled altogether last year by the pandemic, is postponing this year's edition from May to July in hopes of having an in-person festival. Cannes organizers announced on Wednesday that this year's festival will now take place July 6-17, about two months after its typical period. The French Riviera festival, which had run for nearly 75 years with few interruptions, is currently hoping the coronavirus recedes enough by summertime. Cannes last year first looked at a postponement of its 73rd festival to June or July before ultimately canceling altogether. The festival still went ahead with a selection announcement to celebrate the films it had planned to include in its prestigious lineup. This year, organizers are intent

on having a festival, one way or another. No details were announced Wednesday on what shape a 2021 edition might take. If Cannes were to go forward with attendees in theatres in July, it would be the first major film festival to do so since the Venice Film Festival mounted a festival in September, with masked moviegoers and social distancing on red carpets. On Thursday, the premier independent film festival, Sundance, launches with virtual screenings and drive-in events scattered around the U.S. The Berlin Film Festival, scheduled for March in Germany, is planning a virtual event. During the pandemic, Cannes' central hub, the Palais des Festivals, has been used for hospital beds and, more recently, as a vaccination center.

ADC Launches Covit-19 Vaccine at Kamba



Aalo, Jan 28 : In its intensifying effort to take Covid-19 awareness to the rural areas, the ADC Kamba Shri Rujum Rakshap launched the covid-19 vaccine at Kamba

PHC premises today. 100 Health Care workers will be vaccinated on the day of launching and 85 others will be vaccinated by 31st August. Shri Raksap exhorted the doctors to give adequate coverage of two doses of vaccine to all with proper health tips to do away aired wave of apprehension about the vaccine. The vaccine is quite safe and essential for all in this pandemic time, he said. A team of doctor comprising Dr. Tomar Kamki, DFWO, Dr Jume Padu Nodal Officer Covid-19 Awareness campaign, Dr. Kengam Ninu Medical Officer Kama and other medical staffs attended the vaccination camp to advise on do and don'ts. Dr Kengam Ninu, MO kamba took the first dose of vaccine to encourage other Health workers.

Hojai District Administration Celebrated National Voters' Day

Hojai, January 28 : Hojai District Administration celebrated National Voter Day at district headquarter Sankardevnagar in Hojai with a day long program on Monday, a Press Release Stated here. As per the release, On this occasion, a meeting was held at DC's Conference Hall, which was presided by Deputy Commissioner Dr. Sadnek Singh, IAS in the presence of Additional Deputy Commissioner Jayanta Kumar Bora, Gauri Shankar Das, Election Officer Jangmir Rongharpi, Assistant Voter Registration Officer and booth level officers. At the very outset of the meeting, the commissioner recited an oath. The best booth level



officers were awarded in the meeting and the new voters were felicitated. Also, various competitions like quiz, dance and art were specially organised for apprising people about the significance of National Voters' Day.

Eminent writer, poet, researcher Nripen Roy passes away



Barpeta, Jan 28: Prominent writer, poet, researcher Nripen Roy (57) breathes his last in the morning at 4:50 in the village of Bishnupur in Barpeta as he was suffering from a complex disease for a long time. News of his sudden demise has sent shock waves through the state. Munindra Sharma, District Deputy Commissioner, Barpeta, Barpeta MLA Gunindra Nath Das and many organisations paid their last respects to the deceased. It is worth mentioning that Nripen Roy, a native of Patasarkushi, had been living in Bishnupur village in Barpeta for some years, born in Nalbari on June 26, 1961, started his primary education in Nalbari and passed the HSLC from Patasarkuchi Vidyapeeth. He got graduation from Arya Vidyapeeth College and holds a Bachelor's Degree in Anthropology from the University of Guwahati. He joined the Barpeta District Museum in 1990 as a head. In the midst of his busy schedule, Nripen Roy was always busy with writing fairs. He also published a number of books, edited many books, discussions and memoirs. He also wrote a number of poems and essays. In 1975, Nripen Roy, who won the Rangman Bata in recognition of his work as the best essayist in the Assamese mystery literature competition, became one of the leading leaders of the Assam movement. Once a time, he was the Vice President of AASU of Guwahati University. Along with these He was closely associated with Assam Satra Mahasabha, Greenland, Barpeta Sahitya Sabha and various social organizations. The entire state is in mourning over the death of Nripen Roy. He left in this world the only wife Pahi Roy of his family and many relatives.

PPMYM State President Mohit Nahata to be conferred with Best Provincial Ward by AIMYM

Hojai, January 28: All India Marwari Yuva Manch has announced the name of Mr. Mohit Nahata, State President, Purvottar Pradesh Marwari Yuva Manch for the best 'Provincial President' Award for the session 2019-20 during an online meeting on Wednesday evening, a Press Release by PPMYM stated here on Thursday. In the Statement, Nahata has expressed his happiness over this achievement. On the other hand, The President of the Kokrajhar branch, Mr. Vineet Jain stated that for the first time, our branch

member Mohit Nahata represented the Northeast from Kokrajhar and because of which our branch has been acknowledged in all over Nation. On behalf of the branch, we wish him bright future and hope that taking everyone together he will work for the betterment of the society and make PPMYM proud. On the other, Senior Journalist and General Secretary of Marwari Sammelan, Hojai Unit Mr. Ramesh Mundra through an statement here on Thursday congratulated PPMYM State President Mohit Nahata over his



achievement. He said it is a good news for the entire branches of MYM in Northeast that for the enormous social works carried by PPMYM during last one

year, it's State President is going to be conferred with such an prestigious award. We wish him all success for the future endeavours.

Goodbye, Donald Trump. You changed America. You also changed me



I have long extracted glamour out of being a citizen of both the US and the UK, supposing that double passports indicate a certain sophistication. That internationalism also seemed like a safety belt on the world's highway, and I trusted that if one of my countries went to hell in a handbasket, I could retreat to the other one. Recent years have not been kind to that presumption. The only thing that has made Boris Johnson's premiership look remotely palatable has been living under Donald Trump, and as Trump's reign of horror draws to its unseemly close, I reckon with the sad fact that he has changed not only America, but also me. I am angrier, more confused, more frightened and more cynical than four years ago, and suppose that the audacity of my prior hope, like some lost ethical virginity, can never be won back. It's easy and dull to catalogue the president's particular lies and transgressions. What is both harder and more important is to assess a cumulative effect that he has lacked the perspicacity to discern himself. In seeking to undermine stories in the main-

Andrew Solomon

stream media case by case, he convinced many Americans that truth itself was conditional. During his first week in office, his senior counsellor Kellyanne Conway talked about "alternative facts". Americans have always been divided about troubling events, but until Trump, there was at least broad agreement about what those events were. Arguing with Trump's supporters, one is presented with narratives that bear as much relationship to what happened as creationism does to the theory of evolution. I never bought into Ronald Reagan's "shining city on a hill" idea of the US; even at its finest, America remained a deeply flawed, prejudiced, unequal society built on the blood of Native Americans and slaves. But flawed, too, were all the others, and the United States offered a message of hope to beleaguered places where the oppression was worse. While the CIA was orchestrating the assassinations of fairly elected leaders deemed undesirable in the Middle East and Central America, the rhetoric of human rights rang loud across the populace and the political spectrum. We had defeated fascism and stood up to communism, Maoist or Stalinist. We sent aid to countries aligned with our commercial and strategic interests, but at least the glowing tinge of generosity sweetened our cultural imperialism. We entangled ourselves in fruitless wars for misbegotten reasons, but also stood by

our allies in tough times. Wealth was unevenly distributed, but we emblematised, for a short while, unprecedented social mobility. We also briefly stood at the acme of invention: technical, medical, artistic, even social. How we were badly lacking, but it seemed good enough to rationalise our talk about moral leadership. Over the past year, research took me deep into the American hinterlands. In Trump country, I found that ordinary ethics - decency, honesty, generosity, love for one's fellow human beings, tolerance - were not merely undervalued but effectively desecrated by people who thought such ideals corroded strength and that strength was what mattered. I patiently laid out the argument that abandoning basic standards in fact weakened the country, but I might as well have told the bully who tortured me when I was eight years old that I knew a philosophy within which his assertions of dominance constituted evidence of narcissistic inadequacy. That bully would have punched me in the mouth before I finished my sentence, and so, metaphorically, did the Trumpists. America is a cruel, racist society. The Black Lives Matter protests bridled at the prejudice that occasioned the Trump presidency, the white working class's desperate last stand to sustain their vanishing supremacist birthright; that, at least, has been the narrative in the liberal press. I don't believe it was a last stand, any more than I think the "patriots" who invaded the US Capitol on 6 January were fringe actors whose depravity will be extirpated by arresting those whose faces can be identified from security videos. The civil war brewing in the US bears alarming similarities to the one that split the nation in 1861. Demographics are shifting, and for the first time people of colour, including Latinx people, make up the majority of

Americans under the age of 16. But white people were a minority in South Africa during apartheid, and Anglo rulers were a relatively minuscule faction during the Raj: the notion that population statistics will vanquish these mobs is wishful thinking. I always knew there was no shining city, but there's not even much of a hill any more. One has despaired at Trump's ineptitude, though complaining of the unskillfulness of an autocrat is like grousing about small portions of inedible food. Now, the humiliated dragon thrashes about while Biden preaches good-hearted competence. After four years of malevolence, this is a welcome shift, but it will not on its own save the riven country, its broken courts, its legislators sheltering for safety in the Capitol but refusing to wear masks or pass through metal detectors.



Sister Archangela, Superintendent, Snehalaya Centre, Dr. Saumen Bharatiya, President, Byatikram MASDO, Dipankar Bhuyan, Jabin Akhtar and many others. The national flag was unfurled by Shri Sankha Subhra Devbarman along with the other guests and children singing the national anthem and saluting the flag. Some activities were carried out like song and dance performances, blind fold etc. All the respected guests shared their inspirational speech explaining the history, national integration, importance of education, students role in the nation development etc. Snehalaya has 5 different centers in Guwahati and they have done a marvelous work by taking the children from the streets and making them to stand on their own feet. We really appreciate and grateful for the multi-skilled and dedicated team members who have been committed for this noble cause. In the end of the program, foods and others gift hampers were distributed among the children and also contributed few essential items to the centre.

72nd Republic Day celebration at Snehalaya- a Center for Child Rights

Guwahati Jan 28 : On the joyous occasion of the 72nd Republic Day 2021, Indiatourism North East in association with Byatikram MASDO celebrated the day with fun and frolic with the Children of Ila, Snehalaya, a Center for Child Rights at Betkuchi, Near Balaji Temple, Guwahati. Snehalaya is committed to work for the noble cause that is taking care of poorest of the poor children who really need of love, care and protection. To celebrate the spirit of the Republic Day, the entire team celebrated the day among the children and inspired them to win laurels for our nation along with cultural program. The program was attended by Shri Sankha Subhra Devbarman, Regional Director, India Tourism North East, Kanaklata Devbarman, Educationist, Dr. Mainu Devi, Professor & Singer, Dr. Karabi Bezbaruah, Astrologer and vastu expert,

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

No. B/GLP/RHAC/60/2020-21/92-95

Sealed tender affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paise) in prescribed form are hereby invited from the valid registered contractors under Rabha Hasao Autonomous Council for the following works which will be received up to 3.00 PM on 06.02.2021 and will be opened at 3.30 PM in the same place and date by the undersigned or officers authorized to open in presence of intending tenderer or their authorized agent who wish to be present. In the event of closure of office on the date due to some reason, the next working day of the office will be the date of receiving and opening the tender.

Schedule of works				(Rs. in Lakhs)		
Sl. No.	Name of works	Location	No.	Estimated costs	Time of completion from the issue of work order	Earnest Money
1	Renovation, Maintenance and beautification of Baghmara Children Park	Fafal, Dudhnoi	1 No.	Rs.30.00.000	90 Days	2% for general 1% for SC/ST/OBC

Detailed of NIT particulars may be seen in the office of the undersigned on all working days till 06.02.2021. Tender paper may be obtained on payment of Rs. 600/- (Rupees Six Hundred only) in the form of Bank Draft pledged to the Divisional Forest Officer, Goalpara S.F. Division, Goalpara UP to 2.00 PM on 06.02.2021. Tender paper must be filled up addressing to all points/ terms specified with the tender form otherwise tender will be treated cancelled.

Sd/-
Divisional Forest Officer
Goalpara S.F. Division
Janasanyog/C/10841/20

What is the 'nuke ban treaty' & why India, other nuclear powers haven't signed it

New Delhi, January 28 : The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), or Nuke ban treaty, came into force on 22 January 2021. It is a legally binding instrument aimed at total elimination of nuclear weapons, under the aegis of the United Nations. The treaty, due to its very provisions, did not find much support from the P-5 countries of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) despite being party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). This is since it prevents countries from participating in any nuclear weapons-related activities, including development, testing, possession, stockpile, use, or threat of use of nuclear weapons. India had refused to be a party to the talks, which concluded in New York on 7 July 2017, when the treaty was being negotiated at the UN. Earlier in March that year, New Delhi had abstained on this resolution and provided a detailed 'Explanation of Vote'. Further, India expressed its position on the issue of its non-participation in these negotiations at a Plenary of the Conference on Disarmament, also held in March 2017. However, it was due to Honduras that the treaty finally came into effect as it completed the required 50 ratifications in October 2020. ThePrint reads through the provisions and explains why nuclear-weapon countries, including India, didn't sign the treaty. The treaty, which has a 24-para preamble, lists numerous prohibitions on the use of nuclear weapons, including undertakings to not develop, test, produce, acquire, possess, stockpile, use or threaten to use nuclear weapons. It also prohibits the deployment of nuclear weapons on national territory. TPNW makes it obligatory for states to "suppress" any of the prohibited activities in its territory, compensate and provide necessary assistance to persons affected by nuclear testing in any way, and also take remedial action to undo environmental damage in areas under its jurisdiction which have been affected by the use or testing of nuclear weapons. The provisions of the treaty aren't binding on non-signatories. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) spearheaded the efforts for the signing of a nuke ban treaty and was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace in 2017. The ICAN website claims that the treaty fills a "significant gap" in international law. While the NPT seeks to prevent countries from manufacturing nuclear weapons, it doesn't address the use or possession of such weapons by all parties. "The nuclear weapon ban treaty is based on the rules and principles of international humanitarian law, which stipulate that the right of parties to an armed conflict to choose methods and means of warfare is not unlimited, that weapons must be capable of distinguishing between civilians and combatants, and that weapons causing superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering are prohibited," the ICAN website states. The United Nations General Assembly in 2017 decided to hold a conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to end the use of nuclear weapons. TPNW was first negotiated in March 2017 and adopted in July 2017 with support

from 122 countries - it had one vote against (The Netherlands) and one abstention (Singapore). It was opened for signatures by the UN Secretary-General in September 2017. In its explanation of vote on the abstention, India said it wasn't convinced that the resolution could address the longstanding expectation for a comprehensive instrument on nuclear disarmament. India also maintained that the Geneva-based conference of disarmament is the single multilateral negotiation forum. India says it is under no obligation to the provisions of the treaty since it never supported it. According to



New Delhi, India did not intend to "be bound by any of the obligations that may arise from it. India believes that this Treaty in no way constitutes or contributes to the development of any customary international law". India also said that while New Delhi is committed to a nuclear-weapon-free world and supports an internationally verifiable withdrawal of global nuclear weapons, "it doesn't think the current treaty takes into account the verification process". Currently, India possesses approximately 150 nuclear weapons that it can launch from missiles and aircraft. It spent approximately \$2.3 billion in building and maintaining its nuclear weapons. In the past too, India has refrained from signing nuclear disarmament treaties such as the NPT and Comprehensive Nuclear Ban Treaty (CTBT), primarily because it feels they are discriminatory - while non-nuclear states aren't allowed to have nuclear weapons, nuclear-weapon states have no obligation to give them up. Also, the NPT only recognises a country as a nuclear power if tests were conducted

before 1967. India isn't ready to sign the treaty as a non-nuclear weapons state. After the 1974 Pokhran nuclear test, India was denied nuclear technology by the West, with sanctions led by the US. This isolation and domestic support for possessing nuclear power led India to aim for complete independence in the nuclear fuel cycle, which entails all processes in generating nuclear energy - exploration, mining, fuel fabrication heavy water production, fuel reprocessing and waste management. In 1992, the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), a multilateral export control regime,



decided, as a matter of policy, to stop all nuclear commerce with countries that have not ratified all NPT safeguards. This basically made India an outcast, boosting the country's confidence in self-reliance and reiterating the philosophy of expanding nuclear powers on its own with certain safeguards. In September 2008, the NSG exempted India though it hadn't ratified the NPT. While India wants to be part of the NSG, its unwillingness to sign the NPT has drawn opposition from several countries, but mainly from China, which has repeatedly blocked India's attempts at joining the group. In 2006, India signed a civil nuclear deal with the US, which was the first implicit recognition of India as a nuclear power. The core of this agreement was the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. In 2017, India joined the Wassenaar Arrangement, to build up a strong case for its entry into the NSG. Like the NSG, Wassenaar is a group of elite countries that subscribe to arms export control. The agreement ensures greater transparency in the exchange of conventional arms, dual-use goods, and technologies. All UNSC members are part of the

agreement except China. Prior to this, India acceded to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in 2016 while in 2018, it was admitted to the Australia Group. Apart from the US, India has also signed a number of civil nuclear agreements with countries such as France, Russia and Japan, among others, even as it aims to increase its nuclear power generation capacity by over three times in 10 years. As of January 2020, the installed nuclear power capacity in India is 6,780 megawatt (MW), which is about 1.84 per cent of the total installed capacity of 3,68,690 MW. This is the current nuclear power capacity. Other nuclear-armed countries do not support the TPNW either, which raises questions about its effectiveness. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) countries, which in 2016 expressed commitment to nuclear deterrence, haven't signed the treaty either. The United States, France, and the United Kingdom in 2018 led a group of 40 nations in protest against the UN talks when the treaty was being discussed. The talks were supported by more than 120 countries, and were led by Austria, Brazil, Ireland, Mexico, South Africa and Sweden. Countries believe the nuke ban treaty undermines the importance of the non-proliferation treaty. Gustavo Zlauvinen, president-designate of the 2020 Review Conference for the NPT has raised questions about the effectiveness of the TPNW, saying that it cannot challenge the "legitimacy of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty". The US, though, said it believes in the NPT and reduced its nuclear weapons by 85 per cent since. In a letter to the signatory countries of the treaty, it said the five permanent members of the UNSC - also recognised as nuclear-weapon states by NPT - stand united on their opposition to the potential repercussions of the treaty, which they termed a strategic miscalculation. One major contention was the possession of nuclear weapons with North Korea, and the US argued that while disarmament could be possible in the future, it wasn't possible at the time the treaty was being discussed. The letter went on to add that it "turns back the clock on verification and disarmament, and is dangerous" to the NPT.



A woman pays her respects to the victims of the Holocaust at the Ghetto Heroes Monument in Warsaw, Poland,

16 names cleared by SC collegium for HC judge posts stuck with govt, 6 of them since 2019

New Delhi, January 28 : The central government is yet to clear 16 names that were approved by the Supreme Court collegium for appointment to four high courts, with the oldest recommendations going back to July 2019, ThePrint has learnt. The central government is also yet to process 103 proposals that were sent to the Union Ministry of Law & Justice by various high courts to be forwarded to the top court collegium for its approval, deepening the vacancy crisis in the higher judiciary. The collegium is a three-member high-powered panel led by the Chief Justice of India (CJI). The government can notify the nominees as judges only when the Supreme Court collegium clears them for appointment. According to Supreme Court sources, these files have been pending with the government for more than a year. Currently, there are 668 working judges in the 24 high courts, against a sanctioned strength of 1,079. This translates to a vacancy of 38 per cent in high courts. With regard to the 16 names finalised by the apex court collegium, sources told ThePrint that the government has not returned them with any objections or views, as is required under the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) that governs judicial appointments. Union Ministry of Law and Justice by mail for a comment, but hadn't received a response by the time of publishing this report. On Wednesday, a Supreme Court bench led by CJI S.A. Bobde voiced its concern over delay on the government's part in acting on the apex court collegium's decisions for judicial appointments. Hearing a petition on vacancies in high courts, the bench - also comprising Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul and Justice Surya Kant - took critical note of the long time the government takes to respond to proposals sent by high courts as well. It has asked the Union Ministry of Law and Justice to apprise it on how long it would take to finalise the appointments after the government receives a file from the

top court. "If you don't give comments for five months on collegium recommendations, it is a matter of great concern," Justice Kaul said. The court also sought to know the status of the more than 100 names sent by the high courts to the central government as recommendations for judicial appointments. Under the MoP, recommendations for judicial appointments to high courts are first sent to the central government by individual high court collegiums for Intelligence Bureau (IB) inputs. The government then forwards the files, along with the IB inputs, to the Supreme Court collegium. If the apex court collegium clears the names, the files return to the central government that then either notifies the appointments or sends them back with objections or its views. At this stage, the apex court collegium can seek additional inputs on the government's opinion. Accordingly, it can either reject or reiterate the proposal. If the collegium reiterates its decision, brushing aside government objections, then, under the MoP, the government is bound to notify the appointments. However, the MoP does not specify a timeframe for the central government to act on a collegium decision. Speaking to ThePrint, an officer in the Supreme Court registry said the government "is simply sitting over the names, which the CJI-headed collegium cleared after receiving Intelligence Bureau inputs". "As per the current MoP, if the government has reservations with a name, then it should express it in writing, while sending the file back to the collegium for reconsideration. In all these cases, there has been no such move," the officer added, referring to the 16 recommendations cleared by the Supreme Court collegium. The oldest apex court collegium recommendation lying with the government was sent on 25 July 2019, and pertains to five lawyers cleared for appointment to the Calcutta High Court.

Four men eat 30 kgs of oranges in 30 mins to avoid paying extra baggage fee, what happened

New Delhi, January 28 : Air travel is expensive and paying for extra luggage is more costlier, which is why it is not a surprise when people come up with hilarious ways avoid paying the extra money. In a similar situation which took place in Southwest China's Yunnan Province, four Chinese men ended up eating 30 kilos of oranges at one go. The travelers had bought a box of oranges weighing 30 kilograms during a business trip. The airlines was going to charge them an extra 50 yuan per kilo which comes to 300 yuan (Rs 3,384), since they found

the amount "more than they could afford" they decided to eat the whole thing, leaving the internet in splits. As per a report by Global Times, a man, surnamed Wang, and his colleagues bought a 30 kilo box of oranges and as they prepared to board the plane they were informed that they would be charged 10 yuan for each kilogram as shipping fees. So avoid this baggage fee the four of them ended up eating all of the fruit. "We just stood there and ate the whole thing up. It took about 20-30 minutes," Wang was quoted as



saying. However, the unusual diet of Vitamin C caused a reaction and

they suffered from mouth ulcers. The story went viral on social

media platforms in China while some laughed at the anecdote others wondered if the four of them could have simply not carried them as cabin luggage.



Visitors shout out their new year wishes besides a wish wall in the ancient Maotang Village in Yuhang District of Hangzhou

Big win for 'Ram Mandir': UP's Ram Temple tableau on Rajpath bags first prize

NEW DELHI, January 28 : In a big win for those associated with the Ayodhya Ram Temple movement, the Uttar Pradesh government's tableau depicting the ancient cultural heritage of the holy town of Ayodhya and a replica of a Ram temple displayed during Republic Day Parade 2021 at the majestic Rajpath has bagged the first prize. When the Ram temple tableau was displayed during the Republic Day Parade, hundreds of spectators were seen welcoming it with the folded hands. While many shouted 'Jai Sri Ram' some others clapped as the tableau passed through them. The grand bedecked tableau of Uttar

Pradesh, which depicted sage Maharishi Valmiki composing the epic Ramayana seated in front of the proposed Ram temple model on the rear side, caught the attention of the whole country during the parade. Now, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will give the first prize for this tableau to the Uttar Pradesh government on Thursday. Uttar Pradesh Information Director Shishir (IAS) took to Twitter to inform that the Ram Temple tableau has got the first award and congratulated those who conceptualized it. "Uttar Pradesh's grand tableau has got the distinction of getting a first prize in

this year's Republic Day, heartfelt congratulations to the entire team! Special thanks to lyricist Virendra Vats. The Defense Minister will present the award in Delhi on Thursday," he tweeted. For the first time, a glimpse of 'Deepotsav' and various stories from Ramayana epic was depicted in the tableau of Uttar Pradesh in the Republic Day Parade on Rajpath on Tuesday. UP government's tableau depicted the cultural heritage of the ancient holy town of Ayodhya, a replica of a Ram temple, a glimpse of 'Deepotsav' and various stories from Ramayana epic in the Republic Day Parade on Rajpath.

CANOPY FINANCE LIMITED
Reg Office: M/s Prezents, Maniram Dewan
Road, Bamunimaidan, Opp. Anuradha
Cinema, Guwahati-781021
Corp Office: Shop No. 10, Shiv Dham CHS
Ltd, Satya Nagar, Malpani Complex, Borivali
(West), Mumbai- 400092
Email: info@canopyfinance.org,
Website: canopyfinance.org
CIN No. L65910AS1981PLC017921

NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that pursuant to
Regulation 29 of the Securities and Exchange
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meeting of the Board of Directors of **CANOPY**
FINANCE LIMITED will be held at the Corporate
Office of the Company on **Friday, 5th February,**
2021 at 2.00 p.m. to approve the Unaudited
Financial Results for the 3rd quarter and nine
months ended as on 31st December, 2020. The
said information is also available on
Company's website at www.canopyfinance.org
and on the website of stock exchange
www.bseindia.com and www.cse-india.com.
By Order of the Board
Sd/-
Lalit Kumar Tapadia
(Managing Director)
DIN: 08117881

Place: Guwahati
Dated- 28.01.2021

THE ASSAM RISING

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US-China relation and humanity

The episode involved Zheng Shuang, one of China's most popular actresses. Last Monday, her ex-boyfriend said on social media that she had abandoned him with two surrogate children in the U.S. Chinese media soon dug up birth certificates for the kids that named Zheng as a parent. Then someone leaked conversations - recorded after the couple had split, but before the kids were born - in which Zheng and her parents allegedly discussed what to do with the now-unwanted children. Options they considered included abandonment, adoption and abortion. Zheng says that she didn't break Chinese law by paying mothers overseas to have her children. But that's done little to protect her from the fury unleashed by the incident. Hashtags associated with the scandal were used more than a billion times in the space of a few days. Zheng lost numerous product endorsements - including with Prada, which a week earlier had anointed her a brand ambassador - and faced pointed criticism from state media and government officials. The reaction was so fierce that it transcended the usual celebrity outrage cycle - and reignited decades-long national debates about shrinking families, rising inequality and the extra-legal privileges that China's wealthy all too often enjoy. Although the past half-century of economic reform has brought unprecedented affluence to China, it has also proved socially disruptive in many respects. No entity has felt the change more acutely than the traditional Chinese family. Between the 1950s and the mid-aughts, the size of the average household declined from more than five members to just over three. Delayed marriage and child-bearing, the growing economic independence of women, and the country's population-control policies all played a part. Yet even as these changes have accelerated, China has retained a strong streak of social conservatism and a reverence for traditional family roles. The resulting tensions can be stark. For example, the term "leftover women" has become a popular way of referring to unmarried women in their late 20s and 30s. Single motherhood is still socially (and in some places legally) stigmatized. Likewise, it's not uncommon for men to avoid relationships with educated and successful women out of fear that they may want to delay childbirth. These tensions often intersect with class divides. Although assisted-reproduction facilities are widely available in China, they're of limited value in a country in which infertility rates are rising and parents are having children later and later in life. Surrogacy might provide another option, but it's hardly accessible: One 2017 report in state media found that the fees associated with hiring a woman to carry a surrogate pregnancy start at about \$100,000, and can run more than double that. It's not just the fees that make surrogacy inaccessible. China officially bars medical providers from offering the service. Local governments, though, are often willing to tolerate what amounts to a gray-market business, comprising hundreds of agencies, helping wealthy families have children. Meanwhile, for truly well-heeled prospective parents who can afford to further reduce the legal risks, surrogacy abroad - especially in the U.S. - beckons. For many Chinese, these expensive quasi-legal reproductive options are a reminder that the law doesn't apply equally. Worse, most surrogates (in China at least) are women who don't enjoy the rosy economic prospects of those who hire them and generally lack legal rights if anything goes wrong. In a country where the richest 20% have average disposable incomes roughly 10 times greater than the poorest 20%, those facts are a combustible mix - and help explain why Zheng's scandal exploded last week. These tensions aren't going away. Inequality will continue to drive frustration at the manner in which China is administered; traditionalist views of the Chinese family will continue to weigh against economic and reproductive freedom. And the collateral damage will be Chinese women who want to start families on their own terms, or prospective parents who want access to low-cost surrogacy without having to hide. China's government is unlikely to defuse or solve these issues any time soon. But if left unaddressed, they're likely to be the source of more scandals - and far worse tensions - in the years to come.

Excise duties & Robin Hood politics- why fuel prices are rising despite low global rates

A Report : Petrol and diesel prices touched an all-time high this week. For instance, in Delhi, the petrol price rose to Rs 85/litre and the diesel price Rs 78/litre. Meanwhile, as ThePrint's Editor-in-Chief Shekhar Gupta noted in episode 668 of Cut The Clutter, prices of crude oil worldwide had fallen to an all time low. "And yet our petrol and diesel prices are going higher and higher and higher and many of you are complaining that the Modi government doesn't seem bothered," he remarked. Revenue from the sales of petrol and diesel is among the highest sources of revenues for both the central and the states governments. "So, you find many opposition parties make noises about fuel prices going up, but beyond that, they don't escalate it too much, because they also benefit because they also keep upping their VAT or value added tax, accordingly," Gupta noted. In fact, fuel along with liquor has been kept out of the purview of the Goods and Services Tax. But while liquor is taxed by the state government, fuel is taxed by the central government in the form of indirect taxes. During the Congress-led UPA government, prices of crude oil had gone up to \$142 per barrel - today, it stands at just \$52 per barrel. Gupta also listed out the price of fuel in other countries. In Qatar, the price of petrol is Rs 27, a third of what is

charged in India. In the US, it is Rs 52 - 60 per cent of what it is in India. China's rate at Rs 75/litre is comparable to India's. In Pakistan, however, the price is Rs 50/litre, in Sri Lanka it's Rs 61/litre, in Nepal it's Rs 68/litre and in Afghanistan it's Rs 37.50/litre. "Now it is not as if India has the most expensive fuel in the world. Look at some other countries - Poland Rs 90, Japan Rs 94, South Korea Rs 96, UK Rs 118, Germany Rs 119, France Rs 126, Syria Rs 150 ... and Hong Kong looks like the most expensive fuel in the world that is equivalent to Rs 173," Gupta said. Explaining what goes behind the pricing structure, he said that crude oil is brought globally at the same price following which, there is refinery costs to render it into different products including petrol. "But then governments tax this fuel. They tax it for revenues, which are very important for the government, and many like those in Europe, tax it - a carbon tax by way of discouraging people from using private vehicles," he said. The carbon tax, however, is a practise seen in richer countries. So how come India has prices that are comparable to these countries, asked Gupta. To answer the question of why India's prices are comparable to those of richer countries, Gupta used the example of China that also has higher prices. The first reason is that China and India im-

port most of their hydrocarbons. "So it is important for them to keep prices on the higher side, so the consumption doesn't go up too much because if it does, their import will go up," said Gupta. Secondly, the Modi government has figured that an easy way for earning more for the exchequer is to keep raising taxes on fuel. The government had in fact managed to raise the total excise collection from Rs 99,000 crore per year to Rs 2.4 lakh crore per year within two years of the UPA government losing power at the Centre. "So, as the price went down, the increased excise ... on your petrol price did not come down," Gupta said and added, "And later when crude prices started going up, the price at which your petrol pump gets the fuel from the refinery also went up - the Modi government did not reduce the excise." "... it is not wrong to say that Modi government has not passed on the benefit of low crude prices to the consumers. If anything, they have further taken money out of the consumers pocket by continuing to raise these excise taxes," Gupta said. Breaking down the excise tax on fuel Gupta said that if you buy a litre of petrol or a litre of diesel, 63 per cent of what you pay on your petrol, i.e. Rs 52.50 and 58% or Rs 42.70 on what you pay for diesel goes towards taxes.



RUHI TEWARI

The Congress Working Committee's decision to elect a new president by June "at any cost" could well be the party's last chance to find its very own Narendra Modi. This, only if the Congress does not go through with the election as a mere sham, particularly for the post of party president - using it as a ruse to merely reaffirm overwhelming support to, and prop up, a Gandhi. I call it the last chance because the rate at which the Congress is sinking could mean all its potential leadership talent abandoning it before the party finally wakes up to the need for a genuine overhaul. For all its claims of commitment to democracy, Congress has, for long, been the most undemocratic party, a fact stated repeatedly by many. Yes, even more undemocratic than the Bharatiya Janata Party - at least in the pre-Modi era - which managed to throw up two leaders confined to one state as its most powerful national duo. When in 1998 then-party chief Sitaram Kesri locked horns with Sonia Gandhi, he was asked to step down by passing a Congress Working Committee (CWC) resolution. Since then, it has been entirely about a quiet submission to the reign of the Gandhis, from Sonia to Rahul and back

to Sonia. Of course, with a generous dose of 'Priyanka (Gandhi Vadera) for president' being thrown in by loyalists. Today, what the Congress needs is an honest election - with actual candidates and a chance given to anybody, who wants to and is qualified, to contest for the post of president. The party needs, and deserves, a shot at finding its own Modi or Amit Shah. The Gandhi family's iron grip over the party needs no mentioning. But under its shadow, everything in the name of elections and selections has been reduced to a sham. In Congress, everything happens as per the whim of the Gandhi family. With most in the party happy to play along. Nearly two dozen leaders writing a letter questioning the top leadership and demanding organisational reforms is just an aberration. When Sonia 'displaced' Sitaram Kesri, Congress - a party with leaders who have serious divisions and preferences - did witness some protest. Since then, however, the party has been top-controlled, almost dictatorial and with dangerously fast-diminishing returns. It was way back in 1997 (Kolkata session) and before that in 1992 (Tirupati session) when the CWC saw some real contest. After the 1997 session, there hasn't been any election to the CWC. In 2004, when Congress came to power under the UPA umbrella, Sonia

Gandhi declined the prime minister's post, but not without appointing a leader - Manmohan Singh - of her choice. No election process to be bothered with. With the UPA's declining fortunes in its second term, the Gandhi family's weakening grip over contemporary politics became clear. And yet, the party became a game of 'passing the parcel' between Sonia and Rahul Gandhi. The latter was made vice-president of the party in 2013, and succeeded his mother as president in 2017 - all done as a smooth, largely unquestioned tradition, like in kingdoms of ancient times. Then Congress office-bearer Shehzad Poonawalla became an aberration when he questioned Rahul's elevation in 2017 - but his act was seen more as comic relief than a serious reminder of what ails the party. The Gandhis' reluctance to let go of control, along with their failure to evolve in the Modi-Shah era, has meant the party has fallen into a dark abyss, with the recovery road looking bumpy and distant. To say the Gandhi leadership has failed miserably in recent years to keep the Congress afloat will be euphemistic. Sources in the party say the situation has become acute after the passing away of chief strategist and Congress veteran Ahmed Patel. A sinking leadership and no lifeboat has meant there is no point-person to deal with the allies, other parties, or even to solve intra-party disputes. Those in team Rahul may feel they are heavyweights in the party, but in reality, are political lightweights outside the Congress cocoon. Faced with a do-or-die crisis, the Congress desperately needs to find its own version of a successful, and electorally astute leader. Rahul or Priyanka Gandhi cannot fill that void. The impending organisational elections can just be that platform to identify who can ably lead the party out of this mess. Narendra Modi was just a state chief minister. He may have been a popular three-time CM, but he is not the only one in the BJP or elsewhere to have served multiple terms successfully. De-

spite a fairly tall national leadership post - Atal Bihari Vajpayee - starting with L.K. Advani and going on to include the likes of Rajnath Singh and Nitin Gadkari (who have served as party presidents) - Modi managed to push his case and break into the national scene. At the BJP's national executive meet in Goa in the summer of 2013, the party was deeply divided over the issue of who its PM face in the 2014 Lok Sabha election should be. But Modi managed to garner more support compared to his rivals, and was declared the head of the poll campaign. That the BJP is no longer as democratic as it once used to be is true, but this doesn't cut ice as an argument by the Congress, simply because the former is winning under the current leadership. Modi and Shah are continuing at the helm by virtue of mass support they hold, which has been proved election after election. The Congress, meanwhile, has to revisit the lack of internal democracy, not because dynastic politics is evil, but because the dynasty has lost its mandate among those who matter the most - the voter. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as popular, charismatic and well-liked as he was, lost the BJP a crucial election in 2004, which gave the Congress its foothold back in national politics. At that point, it was Sonia Gandhi who managed to bring the Congress back to the spotlight. Would Advani have managed to give to the BJP what Modi did, in terms of both national and state-by-state capture of power? It is difficult to answer this but what cannot be denied is the fact that Modi gave the BJP a new lease of life. The Congress needs its own Narendra Modi, and that does not mean it needs a replica of the PM or someone who toes a divisive and provocative line. But the party does need a true national leader, an election winner and a politician with weight. Let the CWC and Central Election Committee elections provide an opening for that, instead of being reduced to a stage play directed by the Gandhis in which everyone else in the Congress is reduced to a mere prop.

The political success of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'

In the time of Covid, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's main pitch to the people has been about the economy: Atmanirbhar Bharat, or self-reliant India, has been his slogan for nearly a year now. Some view this slogan as hollow economic nationalism; others fear or support import substitution and protectionism, hoping the government's policy measures will mean a boost for manufacturing. As the coronavirus disrupted supply chains and the world's factory, China, took to military aggression against India, perhaps 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' was the only choice for us. It is the political success of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' that has not been commented on. Many



SHIVAM VIJ

wonder why Narendra Modi remains popular despite an economic recession, coming as it does as a high-point of non-stop economic decline since the 2016 demonetisation. The answer you'll usually get is Hindutva, propaganda, media control, weak opposition, and so on. Yet a big part of the answer is also a political campaign undertaken by Narendra Modi and the BJP, namely 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. As Covid and the lockdown wrecked the economy, the obvious question the voter would ask is, what is Modi doing about the economy? Where's the money? How do we buy roti? When are we getting our jobs and growth back? The media and the masses were still struggling to understand Covid when Modi did a pre-emptive 'surgical strike' on the economy question with 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. In the latest India Today 'Mood of the Nation' survey, 46 per cent of respondents said 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' was a "very good initiative". That's roughly equal to the vote-share (44 per cent) of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. With 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', Narendra Modi used his strongest political asset, nationalism, to give an answer to his biggest weak point, the economy. It is surprising that he took a while getting to the point of outright nationalism on economics given that the world has been swept by this current since at least 2016, when Donald Trump disrupted the globalisation consensus. Whether or not it is a clever slogan, whether or not it will yield any economic dividend, the success of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' has to be understood in terms of a 'drug' addiction called Vision. A form of supplying hope, Vision is the opium of

the masses. Keep giving people a Vision and they'll think you're taking them to some place better. The train is moving. The journey may be long and arduous. Delhi is still far. But we'll get there. Narendra Modi's political journey could be described as 'Vision Se Vision Tak', from one vision to another. He began by promising 'Achhe Din' or the good days. After the failure of demonetisation, he moved on to 'New India 2022'. A lot of other slogans in between, on This India or That India, were duly discarded. In regular surveys like the 'Mood of the Nation', Modi's lowest ratings are seen around January 2019. This was when farm distress had just taken away the BJP's bastions of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. No, it wasn't just Balakot but a number of defensive measures such as putting cash into the bank accounts of farmers that helped Modi reach a high point in the Lok Sabha election that followed. Immediately thereafter, he pre-emptively began to make people forget his 2022 promises by coining a new slogan, \$5-Trillion Economy by 2024. (Not very atmanirbhar to define India in US dollar terms, from the vantage point of 2021.) Five Trillion was never going to be possible, thankfully Covid gave us the excuse to forget all about it. That's when we got 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'. You can mock all you want at this vision-peddling, but it works wonderfully in politics. There was once a man who was so good at selling Vision that he is remembered and looked up to in popular culture even today, many years after his death: A.P.J. Abdul Kalam. Talk show host Oprah Winfrey has been selling the idea of a "vision board" to

Americans for many years now. She wants everyone to "vision board" their lives. Write on a board the things you want to accomplish this year. The idea is that writing your vision will help you visualise it and make it feel real. Campaigning for Barack Obama in 2008, his wife Michelle tried to make voters actually believe an upstart Black Senator could be President. She said at a rally, "I want you to leave here and envision Barack Obama taking the oath of office." Oprah Winfrey, who was present at this rally, came home and pinned two pictures on a board: one of Barack Obama, and one of a gown she thought she'd wear at Obama's inauguration. The implication of the power of vision and visualisation is obvious for the opposition. If the opposition has to succeed against the BJP, it must give voters an alternative vision, a better one, but also be able to visualise that vision and have a succinct slogan. When Indira Gandhi said 'Garibi Hatao', she was selling a Vision. In 2004, the Congress party asked voters, 'Aam Aadmi ko kya mila?' Or "What did the common man get?" That clearly articulated an alternate economic vision to 'India Shining'. Any alternate economic vision by the opposition today will have to be about naukri (jobs), rozgar (income), and unemployment. In survey after survey since demonetisation, it has emerged as the top concern in the Modi era. We saw recently how Tejashwi Yadav managed to create some hype in the Bihar assembly election simply by promising 10 lakh jobs. Rahul Gandhi's 2019 slogan 'Chowkidar Chor Hai' was no Vision, apart from targeting the wrong issue (corruption). But he and his party did give a visionary slogan: 'Ab Hoga NYAY', promising a minimum basic income support scheme. They launched the slogan just before the election. They should learn from that failure and understand that one must have a slogan for every year, every season, and not just one month before the general election. This seems so obvious, and yet the opposition is unable to do it. Or maybe they do talk about it all day and we don't get to hear it. They need to speak in slogans, create a vision board. If they don't like the thought of learning political communication from Narendra Modi, they could look at Oprah Winfrey and the Obamas, perhaps?

Pine Labs Introduces AllTap App to Empower Small Merchants

Offers 'tap on phone' contactless payment acceptance for India certified by PCI SSC, RuPay, Visa, Mastercard and Amex



Delhi, Jan 28 : Pine Labs, a leading merchant commerce platform in Asia, today launched AllTap, a feature-rich app that can significantly accelerate digital payments adoption in India. Pine Labs AllTap is a revolutionary new app for small merchants to immediately start accepting digital payments on their NFC-enabled smartphone without the need of any additional hardware. The 'tap and pay' feature within the app is secure and is certified by PCI Security Standards Council (PCI SSC), RuPay, Visa, Mastercard and Amex. While the ongoing pandemic propelled the adoption of digital payments in India, a large and critical segment of small entrepreneurs are still untouched by digitization. Pine Labs AllTap addresses this key segment especially small merchants, home entrepreneurs, street vendors, hawkers, cab drivers, and others who are not ready to invest in a traditional point-of-sale (PoS) terminal to accept digital payments. Commenting on the launch, B. Amrith Rau, CEO, Pine Labs said, "We heard from small merchants, taxi drivers, self-employed individuals, tuition-givers, and several other solopreneurs, who wanted a simple digital payments acceptance solution. We are proud to unveil AllTap in response to their needs. AllTap comes with a cutting-edge contactless payments technology and requires no additional hardware for merchants to start accepting digital payments. Their NFC-enabled smartphone is now a payments acceptance device. Pine Labs AllTap has tremendous potential to bridge the digital divide not only in India but also in other markets. We are excited to introduce this pioneering app in the market today."

Sanjeev Kumar, CTO, Pine Labs said, "With AllTap, we are offering merchants a robust PCI SSC-compliant Contactless Payments on COTS (CPoC) solution. This ensures all tap and pay transactions are fully secure. Our PCI SSC-CPoC listing underwent an extensive audit and certification from PCI SSC and leading networks Visa, RuPay, Mastercard, and Amex." Using the Pine Labs AllTap, merchants can convert their NFC-enabled smartphone into a payment acceptance device in minutes and avail a host of additional features such as converting a transaction into Pay Later EMIs to increase sales. AllTap is powered by Pine Labs' robust payment infrastructure which is already trusted by over 150,000 merchants. Pine Labs AllTap addresses several pain points of small merchants. Merchant can now switch to contactless digital payment, accept digital payments acceptance during door-step delivery, reduce the checkout time delays through quick tap-and-go payments. The app requires little documentation for the digital onboarding of merchants, making it a quick to download and use solution. Pine Labs AllTap app is available on Google Play Store and can be downloaded from here: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.pinelabs.epos>

About Pine Labs

One of Asia's leading merchant commerce platforms, Pine Labs serves prominent large, mid-sized and small merchants across Asia and the Middle East. The company's unique cloud-based platform enables it to offer a wide range of payment acceptance and merchant commerce solutions including enterprise automation solutions such as inventory management and customer relationship management. Its stored value platform includes issuing, processing, and distributing digital gift cards for corporate customers around the world. Incorporated in Singapore, Pine Labs' key investors include Actis Capital, Mastercard, PayPal, Sequoia India, and Temasek. To know more, please visit www.pinelabs.com

Aadhaar Enabled Payments: Taking banking services to the doorsteps of the underserved



New Delhi, January 28 : New banking service delivery models are helping to create a populace ready to adopt new-age financial products. Doorstep banking services using Aadhaar Enabled Payment System Solution (AEPS) is a new technological advancement that has helped India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) to bridge the digital divide. The total transaction value processed by the AePS system has crossed the Rs 8,000-crore mark, indicative of IPPB's scale and its ability to successfully tap into latent demand for financial products amongst hitherto underserved segments. IPPB was set up by the government with a motive to take banking services to the unbanked section of the society. In rural and peri-urban areas, the average time to reach a banking access point is 1.5 to 5 hours, compared to the average of 30 minutes in urban areas. FSS Technologies has partnered with the IPPB to offer financial services at the last mile through interoperable, affordable services. This partnership aims to bring millions of unbanked customers into the financial mainstream. Currently, there are nearly 410 million Jan Dhan accounts in India and since launching AEPS services, the bank has become the single largest platform in the country for providing interoperable banking services to customers of any bank. Dhanlaxmi Bank, new MD, CEO of Dhanlaxmi Bank, JK Shivan Dhanlaxmi Bank appoints JK Shivan as MD & CEO. NABARD Chief General Manager C Udayabhaskar, Odisha's total credit requirement, Odisha Finance Minister Niranjan Pujari, Finance Secretary A K Meena. NABARD estimates Odisha's total credit requirement Rs 1,10,735 crore for 2021-22. IPPB has deployed FSS Integrated Payment Stack to deliver digital payments products to its customers. This includes FSS Payments-in-a-Box, Aadhaar-enabled payments (AePS and Aadhaar Pay for merchants), bill payments, UPI payments, card payments, merchant payments (PoS and online). "The current financial services delivery infrastructure created by India Post Payments Bank spans 1160,000 villages and 400,000 digital points and addresses the accessibility challenges faced by customers in the traditional banking ecosystem," says K. Srinivasan, global chief revenue officer, FSS Technologies. "However, a combination of simple-to-use technology, along-with the ability to leverage the existing postal network and the inherent interoperability offered

by the AePS payments infrastructure has helped us deliver services to customers at their doorstep," he adds. The operation of FSS' AePS solution is very simple and requires zero investment on part of the customer. The service is based on agents performing transactions on behalf of customers using a tablet, a micro-ATM or a POS device. Customers of any bank can access their Aadhaar-linked bank account by simply using their fingerprint for cash withdrawal, balance enquiry and transfer of funds into an operating IPPB account, right at their doorstep.

Mumbai, January 28 : Companies like Staqu are changing how we interact with cameras and showing how AI can help streamline processes. For this, Amazon uses artificial intelligence to create a 6 feet radius around every employee. For this, Amazon uses artificial intelligence to create a 6 feet radius around every employee. Although gadgets were driving technology adoption even before the lockdown, smart technologies have been brought into focus by the pandemic. More companies rely on artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms to improve efficiency and keep workspaces functional. Increasingly traditional gadgets are being pared with new algorithms to find workable solutions. Warehouses run by Amazon started using smart technologies to alert authorities whenever people breach the 6 feet distance to maintain social distancing guidelines. For this, Amazon uses artificial intelligence to create a 6 feet radius around every employee. Once an employee breaches that parameter, it alerts them about social distancing. Nikhil Ramaswamy, CEO and Co-founder, CynLR. CynLR: Making robots smart and intelligent. With 18 months warranty, it is available on Flipkart at a

Mines ministry proposes policy changes to spur iron ore production

New Delhi, January 28 : Still, several successful bidders of those working mines failed to start production even after the lapse of 7-8 months of auction and execution of mining leases in their favour. Still, several successful bidders of those working mines failed to start production even after the lapse of 7-8 months of auction and execution of mining leases in their favour. As the steel industry is complaining about a shortage of raw material, the ministry of mines has proposed to adopt a carrot and stick policy, to spur iron ore production. Through the proposed Minerals (other than atomic and hydrocarbons energy minerals) Concession (Amendment) Rules, 2021, the ministry has proposed that the mining lessee will still have to pay statutory dues equal to the minimum dispatch stipulated in a quarter even if dispatch falls short. In case, the lessee fails to maintain the minimum dispatch criteria for three consecutive quarters, "the state government may terminate such lease after giving a reasonable opportunity of being heard." "The holding company faces debt maturities of about \$1.2 billion till March 2022. S&P revises Vedanta Resources outlook from 'negative' to 'stable' K. Srinivasan, global chief revenue officer, FSS

Technologies. Aadhaar Enabled Payments: Taking banking services to the doorsteps of the underserved. The mines ministry has also planned to incentivise a lessee for higher production. "For fully explored blocks, there would be a 50% rebate in the quoted rev-



enue share, for the quantity of mineral produced and dispatched earlier than the scheduled date of production as provided in the tender document," the mines ministry has proposed the Mineral (Auction) Amendment Rules, 2021. The move comes in the backdrop of production and dispatch shortfall of important minerals such as iron ore in

recent times which not only led to their price hike but also affected the manufacturing of iron and steel in the country. Keeping in mind the fact that leases granted for around 334 merchant mines including 46 operating mines will stand cancelled on March 2020, the mines

ministry had allowed auction of such leases even before their lease period got over and granted the new owners permission to operate such leases without acquiring the required approvals and clearances for two years. Still, several successful bidders of those working mines failed to start production even after the lapse of 7-8 months of auction and execution of mining leases in their favour. Further, many of the successful bidders who have started production, have not maintained the production and dispatch quantity up to the stipulated level. "Non-operationalisation of these mines has created an acute shortage of iron ore in the country. During the year 2019-20, the production of iron ore in the country as on September 2019 was 110.95 million tonnes (MT), whereas, during the current financial year (2020-21), the cumulative production of iron ore up to September 2020 was only 76.01 MT thereby registering a decline in production by 31.5%," the mines ministry said, justifying for adopting the stick approach. The mines ministry is of the view that the incentive will encourage the lessee of the fully-explored blocks to operationalise the mine and start production at an early date thereby increasing the mineral production in the country. "The objective of the amendment is to make minerals available in the market at the earliest considering that minerals are input to several industries," it said, adding that the amendment proposals have been proposed following recommendations of a high-level committee, headed by Niti Aayog vice-chairman.

The Retina Centre completes 2 years organizes a webinar on Ocular & Facial Cosmesis in Guwahati

Guwahati, January 28 : A webinar on Ocular & Facial Cosmesis was conducted at The Retina Centre in Guwahati. Dr. S.U. Ahmed, Founder & Director, The Retina Centre, gave the welcome address and the introduction of the session was done by Dr. JK Das, Senior Consultant, The Retina Centre. The webinar was chaired by Padma Shri' awardee Dr. AK Grover, Chairman, Ganga Ram Hospital. The webinar saw the participation of eminent national and international speakers and panelist. Other dignitaries who spoke on the occasion included Dr. Tanuj Nakra, Faculty, University of Texas and Dell Medical School USA; Dr. Rohit Sajju, Vice President, Asia Pacific Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Society; Dr. Yuniafrawati, President, Oculoplasty Association of Indonesia, Prof. Sharfuddin Ahmed, President, Ophthalmological Society of Bangladesh. The highlights of the discussion included brow lifting surgery, peculiarities of Asian eyelid and included a discussion on the future of Cosmetology with the Asian Perspective. The Retina Centre also celebrated the completion of 2 years, and speaking on the occasion, Dr. S.U. Ahmed, Founder & Director, The Retina Centre, said, "The hospital completing 2 years while growing stronger with each passing day in these dynamic times, is a proud moment for us all. During these two years, the management, doctors, and the staff have worked hard to realize our motto of providing quality eye care services of international stan-



dards at an affordable cost." Dr. Ahmed further added, "All our specialists of different subspecialties at The Retina Centre are well trained in India and abroad. They have a long career in these sub-specialties who have served in different hospitals and health organizations. We have extended our services to the people of Assam and North Eastern region in the last 2 years." The Retina Centre, a Guwahati based modern eye hospital, has successfully completed 2 years of delivering quality eye care in the city. In a short span of 2 years, The Retina Centre has established itself as one of the most trusted super-specialties eye-care hospitals in North-East India. The centre boasts of sub-specialties like Retina Vitreous, Cataract, Glaucoma, Oculoplastics & Orbit, Cornea, Neuro-Ophthalmology, Pediatric Ophthalmology covering the population of the entire North Eastern Region along with parts of West Bengal and Bihar.

Looking for new solutions: Pairing traditional gadgets with new algorithms



price tag of Rs 15,999. Soundcore Infini Pro: Stylish soundbar with rich and realistic aural quality. Other companies are using tags to create six feet boundaries to decrease the chance of catching the infection. When we think about such innovations, usually what comes to mind are the western countries, but India has had a spate of meaningful innovations over the last few years. Start-ups like Niramai and Staqu have worked on developing temperature screening devices. Some are even installed at airports so that authorities can monitor swatches of people to detect potential Covid-19 cases. However, such screening also raises concerns about privacy. How far

can technologies be allowed to go to permeate our lives? Is it ethical for employers to track every movement of their employee? In some cases, technology has proven to be a boon to maintain health, security and safety standards. But given all this is too new, its larger implications are yet to be determined. In the US, technology companies are wary of partnering with police officials. They have found that there is an inherent bias in how technology is being used. Algorithms, in some cases, are more likely to detect African-Americans as perpetrators than Caucasians. Companies, like IBM, have stopped their facial recognition programmes for government purposes. India has also been

in the midst of such controversy. Last year, the Union home minister in the Parliament remarked that the government was using government IDs, like driving licence, voter ID card, passport, etc, to identify perpetrators in the Delhi riots. Given the scale of destruction, some might say it was warranted, but what if the government starts using such means to quell even peaceful protests. However, that is just one end of the spectrum. On the other end are companies like Staqu, which have been aiding police to solve crimes using its famous AI Jarvis. Atul Rai, CEO and co-founder, explains that the company started its operation in nine districts and has since expanded. It has aided UP police and Punjab police, which earlier this year bagged Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) award, for developing smarter systems. The company has digitised records for criminals, so whenever a crime is committed, the police can use its database to identify criminals from camera footage. Rai says that the software has pretty impressive accuracy for identification as it has 99.7% accuracy in person detection and 95% accuracy for activity detection. Senior IPS officer from UP police SK

Bhagat, who is currently IG Vigilance and was then involved in Staqu's integration as IG Crime, explains how the process has developed. He says that while the police was earlier using photographs of perpetrators with low accuracy, it eventually developed systems where each police personnel could click photographs and upload it on the portal. However, he also says that the process was full-proof as the verification would be completed at the district bureau level. Rai says that there are three levels of checks that each upload has to go through before being finally uploaded on the system. Nilabh Kishore, another senior IPS official in Punjab and currently IG while regaling stories of how Staqu has been used to arrest criminal elements, also details the thorough stepwise procedure. He explains how the app is downloaded on the smartphones of all police personnel for them to easily access its features. However, it is difficult to determine the quantum or requests received and rejected by the district bureau. What both officers allude to is the concern for data safety and privacy. Staqu's contribution extends beyond helping police in nabbing criminals.

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AASU Stages Protest Over

Coronavirus pandemic time.Speaking to reporters, the agitating AASU members said that the price of essential commodities have also been hiked due to the hike in price of petrol and diesel. Moreover, the students' union said that they will stage massive protest if the government failed to reduce the price hike.The fuel price in India including Assam has witnessed a steep hike in fuel oil which is proving to be a reason to worry among commoners. The All Assam Students Union on Thursday staged a protest in Judge's Field in Guwahati against the soaring price of fuels.Taking the protests into city streets, the students union demanded relief in the prices. "We have come out to protest against the rising prices of petrol and diesel. We demand the Central Government and Assam Government to cut off the hike," one of the protesters said .Another protester said, "We urge the authorities to gives us relief in the price of fuels. If, the government does not listen to our pleas then we will stage a stronger sit-in demonstration in the coming days."In the past 10 days, the petrol price in Kamrup Metro has been fluctuating between Rs 88.16 and Rs 89.00.However, the price of petrol, diesel and liquor is said to come down from February, 2021 a sthe state government will withdraw additional Covid related taxes from next month.Covid taxes on these products were levied by the government last year to revive the state economy devastated after the Coronavirus pandemic hit the nation including Assam.It is also to be noted that the hike in the price of fuel oil has an advert effect on transportation when it comes to the inter-state movement of vehicles carrying groceries and other commodities.

CM Sonowal attends Krishak

is what happened on January 28, 1894. "When the British officers were refusing to listen to the farmers' grievances, things heated up," said Deka. "There was a lathi charge, followed by an open firing which killed many of the peasants present." As stated in Dutta's book, "Official records, as mentioned in the Darrang District Gazette, 1905, edited by BC Allen, placed the casualties in the Patharughat incident as 15 killed and 37 wounded."However, unofficial sources claim it was a much higher number. Dutta writes: "Doli Purana, ostensibly written by an eyewitness named Narottam Koch, has the line Sat kuri raji mori thakil dar chelai pori which translates to imply that 140 were killed."The introduction to Dutta's book describes the incident as one of the "most tragic and inspiring episodes in the saga of the indian freedom movement." However, it rarely features in mainstream historical discourse of the freedom struggle. "Even within Assam, especially the younger generations, know nothing about Pothorughat," said Dutta, "While the British would keep meticulous records, there was little archival material related to this incident."According to Deka, for the larger Assamese community, Patharughat comes second only to the Battle of Saraighat, when the Ahoms defeated the Mughals in 1671. "It is extremely inspirational for the Assamese community, like a national awakening," Deka said.While many often refer to the episode as as the "Patharughat Ron" or the "Battle of Patharughat", Dutta said it was a "misnomer." "It was a peaceful protest and a precursor to the Civil Disobedience movement, which was later propagated by Mahatma Gandhi."In the introduction of his book, he writes that it was "one of the few occasions in the history of the pre-Congress, pan-Indian anti-imperialist movement, when, in the absence of a well defined leadership, the masses organised themselves to resist the autocratic designs of the British."A martyrs column was erected at the site on 28 January, 2001 by the Army and unveiled by SK Sinha, former Governor of Assam.Every year on January 28, the government and local people pay respects to the martyrs of the incident (Krishak Swahid Divas) in an official function. On January 29, the Indian Army pays its respects in military style. According to Deka, over the years, films, theatre, folktales and, serials have been made on the subject. "That is how it's slowly entering popular imagination," he said.On January 28, 2021, Assam CM Sarbananda Sonowal will inaugurate an Integrated Training and Skill Development Centre for the farmers near the site. According to Darrang DC Dilip Kumar Borah, the centre will be equipped to teach farmers new skills and technology. "Not only that, those who come to get educated as well as experts who come to teach from various parts of India will learn about the unique history of Patharughat," he said.

Biden admin reaches out : US NSA

UK. India is the first country outside the allies that he spoke to in a phone conversation.The call was initiated by Austin, and the conversation lasted for about 15-20 minutes, sources said.Singh tweeted, "We exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest to strengthen our strategic partnership."A Defence Ministry statement said Singh had previously congratulated Austin on his appointment. "During the telephonic talk, they reaffirmed their commitment to work together to strengthen the multifaceted India-US defence cooperation and the strategic partnership" and "discussed bilateral, regional and global issues," the statement said.Sources said that among the larger issues discussed, there was a focus on Indo-Pacific and China was part of the discussions.Pentagon's spokesperson said that "Austin emphasized the Department's commitment to the U.S.-India Major Defense Partnership, observing that it is built upon shared values and a common interest in ensuring the Indo-Pacific region remains free and open"."Secretary Austin noted the great strides made in the U.S.-India defense relationship, and he pledged to work collaboratively with the Defence Minister to sustain progress," the spokesperson said.On the conversation between the NSAs, Ministry of External Affairs said Doval "underscored that as leading democracies, with an abiding faith in an open and inclusive world order, India and the U.S. were uniquely positioned to work closely on regional and international issues including combating the scourge of terrorism, maritime security, cyber security and peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond".According to MEA, "NSA Sullivan stated that the US was looking forward to working together on the bilateral agenda and the common global challenges."It said the two NSAs "agreed to work closely to further advance India-U.S. relations, which are built on shared values and common strategic and security interests"."They highlighted the need to work collectively to address challenges in the post-Covid era and further expand the Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," the MEA said in a statement.

No Cash Transactions in Toll

record 50 lakh transactions per day with more than 2.20 crore FaSTags issued thus far , the National Highways Authority of India had said last week. FASTag, a radio frequency identification (RFID) sticker typically fixed to a vehicle's windscreen, lets toll booths wirelessly and automatically deduct the fee, thereby not requiring a vehicle to stop. The tags were made mandatory for all new cars sold after December 1, 2017, as a measure to encourage digital payments and free up congestion at toll booths.In a move aimed to give a major fillip to enhance digital payments and reduce bottlenecks at national highways, the Centre had mandated that all lanes of national highways toll plazas to be declared as "FASTag lanes" by December, 2019.Speaking at a virtual summit last week, Union road transport minister Nitin Gadkari had said that the electronic toll collection system was useful for commuters as they would not be required to stop at toll plaza for cash payments, adding that it also saves time and fuel. Making FASTags compulsory would also ensure that vehicles pass seamlessly through toll plazas as payment would be done on an electronic basis.FASTag is a simple to use, reloadable tag which enables automatic deduction of toll charges and lets you pass through the toll plaza without stopping for the cash transaction. FASTag is linked to a prepaid account from which the applicable toll amount is deducted. The tag employs Radio-frequency Identification (RFID) technology and is affixed on the vehicle's windscreen after the tag account is active. FASTag is a perfect solution for a hassle free trip on national highways. FASTag is presently operational at 180 toll plazas across national and state highways. More toll plazas will be brought under the FASTag program in the future.

Rajdeep Sardesai Reportedly

just one week, after which he was suspended for two weeks by the media house".During the violent clashes that broke out on January 26, Sardesai in a tweet reported that Navneet Singh, a farmer, had been killed in police firing.Sardesai had, in a tweet which he later retracted, said, "One person, 45-year-old Navneet killed allegedly in police firing at ITO. Farmers tell me: the 'sacrifice' will not go in vain." However, the Delhi police clarified that the farmer was killed when his tractor overturned and also released a video. However, there are speculations if the tractor was struck by a tear gas canister. Sardesai then retracted his statement and said, "While the farm protestors claim that the deceased Navneet Singh was shot at by Delhi police while on a tractor, this video clearly shows that the tractor overturned while trying to break the police barricades. The farm protestors' allegations don't stand. Post mortem awaited."Furthermore, the journalist also lauded the efforts of the police and said, they showed great restraint in Red Fort and ITO and said "no evidence of bullets fired".In a live coverage at 5:47 pm on January 26 for India Today, Sardesai said, "These were the allegations that were being made at the time when we were reporting this afternoon. The eyewitnesses and the friends of the deceased, when we spoke to them, they were insistent that a shot had been fired and the tractor overturned because a shot was fired...However, the police version, and particularly the video, makes it very clear that the particular act of the tractor overturning could be the cause of death...The police version appears more credible than what the farm protesters are claiming."

Congress Announces

of India (Marxist), the Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) Liberation, and the Anchalik Gana Marcha (AGM) are part of the alliance along with the Congress.The coalition of six parties promised to jointly fight the upcoming Assembly elections, and asked other "anti-Bharatiya Janata Party" parties to join the Grand Alliance. "The coming together of the six parties under a common platform is a major development," Baghel said in an address.The alliance, however, did not announce its chief ministerial candidate, The Indian Express reported. Assam Congress President Ripun Bora said leaders of all six parties held talks on Tuesday with Baghel and party general secretaries Mukul Wasnik and Jitendra Singh."We have come to the conclusion that in the coming Assam Assembly elections, we all will fight together to oust the BJP," Bora said. "At the same time, we will keep our doors open to invite the other regional parties of Assam and other anti-BJP parties to join our alliance."Congress' General Secretary and in charge of Assam Jitendra Singh said "people want this alliance", reported. "...in the last five years a new type of politics has come - of hatred and ruining the fabric of Assam," he said, adding that the coalition would come up with a common manifesto. "None of the parties have joined the alliance with any preconditions," Singh added.BJP National President JP Nadda on Monday said that his party will always take good care of Assam's unique culture and language. Nadda made the comments on a two-day visit to the state to kickstart BJP's campaign for the 2021 Assembly elections.Elections to the 126-member state Assembly are due in April-May. The Election Commission of India on Wednesday said the 2021 Assembly elections in Assam will be over by May 4, before the Central Board of Secondary Education exams in the state start.

Doctor Passes away

Panigaon, January 28:A renowned doctor of North Lakhimpur and a resident of K.B.Road, North Lakhimpur town Dr.Tabibuddin Ahmed Baruah(86) passed away today at 12-30 p.m. at a local private nursing home due to old-age ailments. He was a retired Government doctor. During his service period as a Govt. doctor, he worked in Mahendra Mohan Choudhary Hospital, Guwahati and North Lakhimpur Civil Hospital, besides other Govt. Hospitals in the state. After retirement as a Government doctor, he provided medical service at Mission Hospital,Ketela and Joyhing Referral Hospital, North Lakhimpur.He leaves behind his wife and two daughters.Late Dr.Baruah's funeral will be held tomorrow morning at North Lakhimpur.

20 progressive farmers felicitated at Krishi Swahid Divas in Hailakandi

Hailakandi, Jan.28: Krishi Swahid Divas was observed in a befitting manner here on Thursday. At a function organised by District Agriculture Department at its office complex, District Development Commissioner, RK Laskar said there has been a sea change in the agriculture sector with farm mechanisation taking place at a fast pace. Laskar said that the Central and State governments have been implementing a slew of schemes and projects in the agriculture sector which is the backbone of the country's economy. He said under the CMSGUY, a pet project of Chief Minister, Sarbananda Sonowal, 288 tractors and other agricultural implements have been distributed. The DDC attributed agriculture and allied sectors as engine of growth and prosperity. Laskar asked the educated unemployed youth to come forward and take up cultivation to become self independent and to contribute to the economic prosperity of the country. Speaking on the occasion, District Information and Public Relations Officer, Sabir Nishat said the state and central governments have accorded added thrust to agriculture as more than 70 per cent of the populace are engaged with agriculture and allied sectors. Terming the country's economy basically agrarian, Nishat urged the farmers to come forward to avail the various government schemes and projects to make themselves economically strong and vibrant. Nishat further said the day is being observed by the present government since 2017 to pay homage to the 140 peasants who sacrificed their lives while protesting against the enhanced revenue imposed on them by the British Raj at Patharughat in 1894. Terming the peasants' uprising against the repressive policy of the imperialist regime as one of the first peasant protests in the country, Nishat said efforts are on to get the Battle of Pathurughat national recognition as that of the Jallianwala Bagh incident which took much later. In his welcome address, Incharge District Agricultural Officer, Dr.AR Ahmed stated that a number of schemes of state and central governments have been implemented in the district which have benefitted the farmers a lot. He asked the educated youth to take up farming in a big as it has huge potential together with the support being given by the government by way of subsidies and loans. Head Scientist from KVK, K. Sanzeba Tayal also spoke on the occasion. EO from DVO Dr.AB Siddique was also present. Synchronising with the Krishi Swahid Divas, as many as 20 progressive farmers were felicitated by DDC, Laskar and other dignitaries. Vermi compost bags were given to them together with commendation certificates for their outstanding contribution to agriculture and allied sectors. A tractor along with agricultural implements was also handed over by DDC, Laskar to Diamond FIG

Awareness Campaign on water conservation in North Lakhimpur

Panigaon, January 28: The Lakhimpur District Administration in association with Lakhimpur District Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYC), North Lakhimpur, launched the National Water Commission's awareness campaign 'Catch the Rain, Where it Falls,When it Falls' for water conservation at the conference hall of the Lakhimpur District Deputy Commissioner Office yesterday. Lakhimpur Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Manorama Morang formally inaugurated the launching ceremony in presence of Lakhimpur Development Block Additional Block Development Officer Bipul Borah, Lakhimpur District NYC Officer Sujata Bhowmik,APA Parveen Kumar,Rupam Jyoti Chetia, Youth Club members Bhaskar Chabukdhara and Sailen Baruah and NYK volunteers, among others.In the ceremony, dignitaries gave their valuable suggestions for the better implementation of the project.Earlier, NYK members felicitated the invited dignitaries. Sujata Bhowmik conducted the launching ceremony while the District NYC members initiated to success the campaign.



Awarness Campaign on Water Conservation in North Lakhimpur

Miscreants had indiscriminately fire upon the villagers at Kharnaidisa,Two dead

Diphu, Jan 28 : on January at about. 11:30 p.m some unknown miscreants had indiscriminately fire upon the villagers at Kharnaidisa,Dhansiri under Diphu PS. At that moment villagers were celebrating Bushu Dima. Miscreants had indiscriminately fire upon and as a result Amit Nunisa,42 yrs,S/O Lt.Narendra Nunisa and Alota Maibongsa,60yrs,W/O Sri. Suresh Maibongsa both are of Kharnaidisa,Dhansiri were succumbed to death.At that incident one Sri. Ashit Phonglosa,25yrs,S/O Lt. Rupeswar Phonglosa of Kharnaidisa had sustained bullets injured on his left hand but seems out of danger.The said deceased bodies are at Diphu PS campus for holding Inquest & in this regard a case is register vide Diphu PS case no.22/2021,U/S 120 B/326/302 IPC & R/W section 27 Arms act.

Sensational Murder in Golaghat : Businessman Beheaded

Golaghat, Jan 28: Sensations prevailed today in the afternoon at Santipur area in Golaghat when a local businessman was brutally murdered by a youth. According to the report Asu Khan from Santipur area in Golaghat who runs a meat shop was murdered by a youth named Moina (real name not known) inside the meat shop. Moina with a sharp knife beheaded Asu Khan . After that Moina surrendered to the police. However the actual reason of this incident is yet to be discovered. The police has started investigation in this regard.

BSF Apprehended One Drug Smuggler Along With 860 Nos Yaba Tablets And 12 Kg Ganja



Guwaharti, Jan 28 : In two separate operations, troops of Guwahati Frontier of Border Security Force, foiled attempt of narcotics smuggling at Indo-Bangladesh border and apprehended one Indian drug smuggler along with 860NosYaba tablets and 12 Kg Ganja on 27 Jan' 2021, from bordering area of village Digaltari, PS- Sahebganj and village East Sitai, PS-Sitai,Distt-Coochbehar (West Bengal). Acting on tip off, on 27thJan' 2021, BSF troops of Border Out Post (BOP) Digaltari of 129Bn carried out special operation in general area of village Digaltari PS- Sahebganj, Distt-Coochbehar (West Bengal). Alerted BSF troops stopped the suspicious motorcycle bearing No.WB 64 N 1759 near BOP Digaltari which was plying from Nadirhat Market to DigaltariMarket. The Motorcycle was searched by the BSF troops, during search BSF troops recovered one packetkept concealed in said Motorcycle containing 860 NosYaba Tablets. This consignment wasbeing tried to be "smuggled from India to Bangladesh". Detail of apprehended drug smuggler is as under:- Najir Hussain (29 Yrs), S/o late Hussain Ali, R/o vill+PO- Dighaltari, PS- Sahebganj, Dist- Coochbehar (West Bengal). Apprehended drug smuggler along with seized Yaba tablets have been handed over to PS Sahebganj for further legal action. In second operation, on tipoff, on 27thJan 2021, BSF troops of Border Out Post (BOP) Chitracoot of 100 Bn BSF carried out special operation in general area of village East Sitai, PS- Sitai, Distt -Cooch Behar (WB) and seized 12 KgsGanja, while the consignments was trying to be "smuggled from India to Bangladesh". Seized narcotics items have been deposited to PS- Sitai for further disposal. Keeping in view the vulnerability of border, heightened activities of the smugglers and anti-national elements on the border, BSF troops are always alert towards the issues of trans-border crimes & illegal infiltration and are making all out efforts to prevent commission of such crimes.

Protest against price hike held; submitted memorandum to Assam Chief Minister

Diphu, January 28: Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), Karbi Students' Association (KSA) and Karbi Nimso Chingthur Asong (KNCA) have staged a protest demonstration against price hike on several essential commodities at Ru Semonsing Engti Memorial Park, Diphu today. The protesters put on the patato's, onion's chain on their neck and put an emptied gas cylinder in front. The protesters raised various slogans against the repeatedly sky-rocketing prices hiked by the NDA led government. They urge the government to reduce the prices of essential commodities, so that no one will suffer. They also submitted a memorandum to Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sanowal through Deputy Commissioner of Karbi Anglong after the protest demonstration. They urged the government to reduce the prices of essential commodities including petrol and diesel. It also urged to withdraw immediately about the recently passed farmers bill/Act of Agriculture and Farm Products, to fix Minimum Support Price of Agriculture and Farm Products, crops produced by small and marginalized hill tribe cultivators be exempted from the purview of tax systems and to provide sufficient funds to adopt permanent nature and higher production method of cultivation in order to improve hilly areas rural economy and to discourage Jhum cultivation, as mentioned in the memorandum. The protest demonstration was led by ASDC President Chandra Kt. Terang, KSA President Jemson Timung, KNCA President Merina Beypi and several others.



Indian, Chinese troops clash at Naku La in Sikkim, injuries reported on both sides

NEW DELHI, Jan 28 : Amid the ongoing standoff between India and China in the Ladakh sector, soldiers of both the countries reportedly clashed with each other at Naku La in Sikkim border area. According to reports, the clash between Indian troops and the Chinese PLA took place last week after the latter tried to intrude. The report stated that soldiers from both sides received injuries in the brawl. However, the situation has been brought under control now. Indian Army released a statement on the latest Naku La clash between troops of two neighbouring countries. It said, "We have received several queries regarding a face-off between Indian Army and PLA troops in Sikkim sector. It is clarified that there was a minor face-off at Naku La area of North Sikkim on 20 January 2021 and the same was resolved by local commanders as per established protocols.

Dr Richard Freeman verdict delayed again as tribunal drags into third year



London, January 28 : The extraordinary fitness-to-practise medical tribunal of the former Team Sky and British Cycling doctor Richard Freeman will now drag into a third year after unforeseen circumstances forced yet another delay in proceedings.The adjournment is the latest twist in this remarkable saga, which was expected to last for two months when it began in February 2019. Despite multiple delays since, caused in part by Freeman's stress issues and his evidence overrunning, it had been expected that Freeman's QC, Mary O'Rourke, would finish her summing up on Wednesday.However, the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service has confirmed that due to "unforeseen circumstances not related to Dr Freeman" there will have to be another delay before it reconvenes again on 6 February - two years after it began - to hear closing submissions on facts for the doctor.Freeman has accepted 18 of the 22 charges against him from the GMC, including ordering the banned Testogel in 2011 and lying to UK Anti-Doping. He also admitted to abusing his position by persuading an employee of the medical supplier Fit4Sport to cover his tracks.However, the doctor denies "knowing or believing it was to be used by an athlete to improve performance" and says he purchased it for British Cycling's head coach at the time, Shane Sutton, to treat his erectile dysfunction, which Sutton denies.On Monday, the General Medical Council summed up its case against Freeman by claiming the doctor had worked with "sleepers" in Team Sky and British Cycling, who had previously used banned drugs, when buying testosterone to boost the performance of an unnamed rider.Summing up the GMC's case, Simon Jackson QC said Freeman had "lied at every stage" about ordering 30 sachets of Testogel in 2011 - and then had tried to cover up his "web of deceit" by setting up Sutton as the fall guy."Dr Freeman looked at what the riders wanted and he didn't focus on what the World Anti-Doping Agency Code prevented," Jackson said. "He was prepared to sign up with an incoming doctor with his unknown magic and he, on this occasion and other occasions, crossed the Rubicon by ignoring medical convention to do what he thought would provide an answer."The only logical and proper conclusion was that the intended use was a doping use."

Oliver Burke shocks Manchester United with Sheffield United winner

London, January 28 : Manchester United were insipid, Sheffield United impressive in a display that doubled the bottom-placed team's victory tally: the substitute Oliver Burke's 74th-minute winner summing up why the home side deserved to lose.David de Gea failed to clear and instead handed John Lundstram possession near goal. The visitors were allowed too much time, even after Burke's initial shot, and Lundstram found the player again inside the home side's area with zero pressure - Paul Pogba the nearest offender - and the No 14 hit a first Premier League goal in off Axel Tuanzebe. This followed Ole Gunnar Solskjær's side falling behind the first time via equally hapless defending from their achilles heel: the high ball from a set piece, Kean Bryan



the beneficiary. And while Harry Maguire managed to equalise and Edinson Cavani spurned a late chance, the Blades emerged with the victory.Solskjær will hope this is a blip and was keen to downplay the reverse, stating there will be no "big inquest". He can be thankful that third-placed Leicester dropped two points at Everton but Manchester City are flying and can go four points clear if they win their game in hand.Tuanzebe, given a first league start since October 2019 after Eric Bailly was injured in training, had a disappointing game as the home side started strongly before fading badly. They dominated the ball but as Solskjær said his team lacked "magic" where it counted: near Aaron Ramsdale's goal. There was one flowing move that scattered the salmon-shirted visitors when Manchester United advanced from halfway. Pogba was the instigator and he began imperiously - one instant no-look chip releasing Bruno Fernandes behind the lines - only for the Portuguese player's unsure touch to stymie his run on Ramsdale's goal.Yet there was alarm when the visitors came close to a sucker-punch via a John Fleck pass that split the defence and gave Billy Sharp a clear shot which De Gea's legs

repelled, but only just. Manchester United's riposte had Fernandes lobbing into Mason Greenwood whose right-to-left run had the visiting rearguard flailing. The No 11 skipped round Ramsdale but took an extra touch and the keeper could smother the ball.But, now, came calamity for Solskjær's men, Fleck exposing the vulnerability at dead balls. The midfielder's corner from the right was placed into the sweet spot in front of De Gea. Both the Spaniard and Tuanzebe leaped yet neither could prevent Bryan heading in off the post.Solskjær later claimed Sharp had impeded De Gea but the bigger issue is the latter's lack of command under aerial artillery.This was the eighth league goal United have conceded from a set piece this season and left Solskjær stony-faced: his disquiet nearly deepened when the slumbering Tuanzebe allowed David McGoldrick to slip in before Aaron Wan-Bissaka did enough to end the danger. Moments later Anthony Martial - another who disappointed - rolled the ball home but Maguire was adjudged by Peter Bankes to have fouled Ramsdale and VAR backed the referee up, Solskjær again bemoaning this decision. United pressed until the interval but this was as close as they came to the equaliser meaning the manager's half-time chat had become vital.It made little difference as what unfolded was the same pattern of the home side hogging the ball but too far from goal. Greenwood did have one golden chance to equalise when Fernandes threaded him in but he fired across Ramsdale and wide. This signalled a need for patience from the home side, the challenge being to stay composed and the opportunities would surely arrive. Instead, Alex Telles wasted a corner and there was frustration when Nemanja Matic fouled needlessly, then Fernandes hit a simple pass straight out. This had become the ideal scenario for the visitors: a spoiling job with their noses in front while continuing to threaten sporadically as when McGoldrick unloaded too high at De Gea.After the latter was again a statue at a high corner, the hosts moved upfield and claimed a free-kick. Marcus Rashford took a potshot from distance that Ramsdale gathered with ease. Yet far better was what came next. Telles swung in a corner from the left and a free-running Maguire headed expertly in.Yet next came Burke's winner and disappointment for Manchester United. On Saturday they visit Arsenal, where they must bounce back.

Thomas Tuchel offers fresh Chelsea direction and hope for Havertz

London, January 28 : Welcome, then, Thomas. At times such as these it is traditional to say something along the lines of: "If the manager wasn't aware of the task facing him in the white heat of this, the English Premier League, then he will be now." These are of course anything but ordinary times. But at the end of this enervating, slow-burn 0-0 draw with Wolves, during which Chelsea's new appointment was probably the single most animated presence inside Stamford Bridge, it seemed unlikely Thomas Tuchel would find himself struggling with the fabled "intensity" of English football.Instead a debut Tuchel selection reconfigured into an attacking back three looked quite a lot like the last few selections of the sadly departed Frank: a team still baffled by its own shadow, and lacking clear idea of how it wants to play. As is often the case on these occasions, the greatest point of interest was the new head coach himself, this agreeably angular and awkward footballing technocrat who seemed determined to make an uncharacteristically breezy first impression.Before kick-off Tuchel was startlingly carefree in front of the BT Sport cameras. There he was suddenly, smiling the warm friendly smile of a man who has only this morning looked up the words "warm friendly smile" in a medical dictionary, practised in his hotel mirror the precise physical movements required, and who remains cautiously happy with the results. "I'm very excited," Tuchel said, which is good to know, although also kind of assumed. The best bit came at the end of a hyper-fluent live TV English language test, when he simply turned on his heel and walked off. That brusqueness is the real thing. He might need a fair bit more of it.Tuchel may be a genuine, scale-appropriate

replacement for Frank Lampard, an actual established football manager with his own energy and his own methods. But the first real obstacle is that everyone has to like him. How to put this? Tuchel has never seemed that interested in being liked. He doesn't look cuddly or warm. What does he



look like? An angular Bavarian tactician with a thorn in his side. A surprisingly irritable graphic designer. A 1930s intellectual trying, unsuccessfully, to disguise himself as a middle-aged dance music producer.All managers take time to find a comfortable touchline style in a new league. How you look, how you occupy that space. It all

transmits. Even in the dark times Antonio Conte had the grace to at least look like the executive arm of a high-end jewel heist ring. There is a theory the Chelsea crowd never really got over the first sightings of Maurizio Sarri in his dog-walkers tracksuit, fag-butt drooping from his lower lip.

And it was Sarri's shadow that seemed to hang over this Chelsea team as they settled into sustained periods of tame possession at Stamford Bridge.Tuchel also has a midfield obsession. He likes ball-hogging central controllers. At which point, enter Jorginho, a fine player, but one who still carries about him a mild, yellowing whiff

of something Sarri-ish. With an hour gone Jorginho and Mateo Kovacic had touched the ball 200 times between them, although not necessarily in a way you'd notice. Kai Havertz made a first home league start since early December, stationed as a kind of narrow inside forward. For the neutral this



is perhaps the most exciting part of Tuchel's arrival. Havertz has been a flaccid, meandering presence in English football. But he is an enchanting presence when the parts align. Here there were glimpses and sparks, and one powerful driving run from the centre circle. On the whole he was a slightly less flaccid meandering presence.Otherwise Chelsea

dominated the ball. In the first half they had 79% possession and made 433 passes to Wolves' 90, most of them a private conversation among the blue shirts. But then this is still a group of players who lack the certainty to swarm forward with any conviction, to take chances, to move out of their positions.Midway though the first half Tuchel could be seen "doing some coaching", barking out instructions at a break in play to Callum Hudson-Odoi, who did his best to frown urgently and look like he was actually taking it all in mid-match. In between he leapt and skipped on the touchline, a slightly scarecrow-ish in his quilted blue nylon suit. Tuchel is a barker and a flincher, a manager who doesn't so much kick every ball as sense every avenue of spade, read every zonal overlap.In reality there was little to be learned here, beyond goggling at the altered optics. The facts remain the same. This is a really excellent Chelsea squad, crammed on all fronts with high-end talent, but without any real notion of how to make those parts speak to one another. Tuchel is known for the intensity of his training-ground presence. A sleepy 0-0 against a staggeringly cautious Wolves team felt like a free hit first up. But nobody gets time at Chelsea, or much time. Time to put away the smile - really, Thomas, please - and get to work.

Players' union survey claims widespread racism in English cricket

London, January 28 : More than one-third of black, Asian and minority ethnic cricketers say they have experienced racism in the game, a survey of professional players in England has found. The response came as part of a programme undertaken by the Professional Cricketers' Association to tackle racism in the game.Twelve of the 24 black and minority ethnic players to respond to the survey - of which 12 are current professionals, the other 12 are made up of past and academy players - said they had experienced racist abuse, something the PCA says equates to 38% of BAME members. In the survey, which was sent to 600 current and former professionals, but received only 173 responses, 11 players who identified as white or caucasian also said they had experienced racism.Provoked by a response among their members to the Black Lives Matter movement last summer, the PCA says the survey will feed into an ongoing education programme for its members, which will include training in unconscious bias. The results suggest there is confusion among players about what constitutes racist behaviour.While an overwhelming majority of respondents of all races said that counties allowed "players from all ethnicities to flourish", 36% were uncertain whether there was a problem of racism within cricket.Of those who said they had witnessed or experienced racism 45% said it had come from other players and 10% from coaches, with 26% from fans. When asked to pinpoint what they thought was the intent behind such incidents, 62% said they thought it was "banter".The PCA said it had not sought to closely define "banter", saying it was widely understood within the game. Education workshops for all domestic male and female teams as well as the England men's and women's squads are to be introduced from March.

Padraig Harrington impressed by Charlie Woods after Tiger teaming

Paris, January 28 : Padraig Harrington knows all about the introduction of a son to the sporting world. Patrick, then three and a half, asked if ladybirds could be placed in the Claret Jug after daddy won the Open in 2007.Harrington was in the field as Tiger Woods played alongside his son, Charlie, at December's PNC Championship. To some, Woods was needlessly exposing his 11-year-old to the spotlight. Harrington, though, looked on with admiration. "I just think Charlie was happy," Harrington said. "He was happy doing what he wanted to do. I don't believe for a second that there was anything but sheer enjoyment and enthusiasm."He's very respectful around his elders. When he was in that environment, you would have seen a little bit of banter between him and Justin Thomas but with the other guys, you could just see it; that he's an 11-year-old kid looking up to them. He really seems to be in a great place in terms of his personality. He loves golf but he's not getting ahead of himself in any shape or form. He's just a kid."In Harrington's mind, Charlie Woods was inevitably going to have to deal with high attention levels regardless of a pre-



Christmas appearance in Orlando. "Clearly he loves golf," Harrington said. "Because he's chosen to go down that road, there's going to be a huge amount of focus on him and whether he was in that tournament or not, there's videos of him playing mini-events and things like that."It probably was an appropriate way to bring him out, lead him out into the limelight. He's going to be there. You can't hide him from it. That wouldn't be a normal life, either. You have to understand that just like being a professional golfer: 'If I want to be successful, I have to accept the level of fame that goes with it.' Most people think 'Oh, well, fame is good.' What I mean by fame is whatever goes with fame. If you're not prepared to accept that, you won't be very good as a professional golfer. They go hand-in-hand."

Thomas Tuchel upbeat after first game but dampens Chelsea title hopes

London, January 28 : Thomas Tuchel gave a positive review of his opening match as Chelsea manager, declaring: "If this is was our starting point, I am excited about where we will end up," after watching his team battle to a goalless draw with Wolves.The German was granted only one evening training session to work with his players but said he had been pleased with the reaction of his squad who had been "totally open to our ideas", including a switch to a defensive back three.He did, however, all but rule out the possibility of challenging for the Premier League title this season.Tuchel said: "I thought the effort the team and the guys put in deserved three points, but I just went into the dressing room and told everybody there is no room for disappointment now, there is no room for doubts."I was very happy with the performance. Energy-wise, we had I think 16 recoveries in the last third. We were very structured, we did not allow any counterattacks from one of the most dangerous teams in counterattacking. We were brave, we had courage and we played really as a team."It was a pity we didn't have the support from the fans, I think they could have helped these half-chances create the one decisive goal that helps open up the spaces a bit more. So it was hard

work but we never lost intensity and for that I am actually very happy. If this was our starting point, I'm looking forward to where we will end up."Asked about the possibility of catching the division's frontrunners, Tuchel said: "It's far away, eh?Honestly, when you sign for Chelsea as a player or like me as a manager it's absolutely right you sign for the expectation to challenge for titles. You sign for the expectation to fight for titles. So that means Premier League, Champions League and all the cups."It's absolutely clear that at the same time we have to be realistic. At the moment there are a lot of teams between us and the place No 4, there are a lot of points between us. So maybe it is the best moment now, by stepping up in the middle of the season, to not lose the focus by looking too far but work on a daily basis on the details in our game. The points will follow. I am absolutely sure."We have the capacity with this squad to hurt everybody in every league and in every competition. It's my job to bring the team to that level as fast as possible and we are here for that, but now there's no

other approach than by doing it step by step."While talking up his team's abilities, however, Tuchel also admitted that his first thought in preparing the game in such short order was to protect against the possibility of defeat."We had of course a clear idea to maybe start with three to help them defend against the two fast strikers, so that we do not have the situation that we maybe slip or give an easy counterattack away," Tuchel said. "So we decided to have control with three on the pitch, with a double six [in midfield]. I found a team that was totally open to our ideas and if you have a team like this, there's nothing more you can wish for."



Are England ... good again? Five key questions as they head for India

London, January 28 : Joe Root reverse sweeps against Sri Lanka, Dom Bess bowls during a training session, Joe Root with the Moose Clothing Cup 2021 trophy after the series win over Sri Lanka and James Anderson celebrates with Stuart Broad against the West Indies in 2017. The signs are good but we

portant as Ben Stokes, Jofra Archer and Rory Burns. There now exists the expectation that when things need dealing with, someone will assume the responsibility, which speaks of a happy, balanced team that believes in what it is doing. There is plenty of improving still to be done, but the direction of travel



cannot be sure because the South Africa and Sri Lanka sides England have beaten are not, to borrow a footballing phrase, "in a good moment". Still, winning five straight Tests away from home cannot happen by mistake and, along with the home victories over West Indies and Pakistan, give reason to believe that something is building. In two of these series and many of these matches, England have had to come from behind, so there are obvious areas for improvement. But Test matches last five days with undulations and fluctuations part of their nature. While repeatedly being battered by West Indies in the 80s and Australia in the 90s, England still had their moments. So what is telling is not that they have had to reverse the flow but that they are able to reverse the flow, no longer hoping to win but expecting to win - even when missing players as im-

portant as Ben Stokes, Jofra Archer and Rory Burns. There now exists the expectation that when things need dealing with, someone will assume the responsibility, which speaks of a happy, balanced team that believes in what it is doing. There is plenty of improving still to be done, but the direction of travel

threatening and the stress of selection concerns which quality players to leave out, so it is no surprise to see Root in such fine form, especially after time at home. Batting is an art best performed when calm and Root sounds like someone who has rediscovered himself, finding equilibrium in the process. When at his best, there is a destructive serenity about his work that is equal parts relaxing and exhilarating. It was moving to hear how reverentially his teammates discussed the inspirational, educational joy of watching him thrive. The most important aspect of leadership is performance and in that aspect Kohli, Smith and Williamson are touchstones, boasting significantly higher averages when in charge than when in the ranks. For the first time in a long time, Root looks ready to join them. Who knows? Sri Lanka did not fold in the first innings of the first Test and third innings of the second Test because they were bamboozled by the devastating origami of Dom Bess and Jack Leach, but the pair certainly accentuated the creases, so it is possible to be cautiously positive; both came on tour under pressure and when their team needed them to deliver, they did. Without the former's batting, England would have conceded a substantial first-innings lead that would likely have settled the match while tying the series and no less a maven than Kumar Sangakkara surmised that Bess and Leach "bowled enough balls in the areas that matter" to turn the contest. Unless they also bowl few enough balls in the areas that do not matter, that will not be enough to challenge India, but they have played just 12 Tests each, are still improving and will be competing for selection with Moeen Ali. It's not a perfect state of affairs, but

it's a slightly better one than it was. Jack Leach celebrates taking Angelo Mathews's wicket during the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle. Jack Leach celebrates taking Angelo Mathews's wicket during the first Test against Sri Lanka in Galle. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket. When I moved in with my girlfriend, now wife, I was faced with a smorgasbord of new Indian takeaways. Naturally, she directed me to the best dish at the best place - lamb dhansak, madras hot, at the late lamented Neyas now that you ask - but I still couldn't help myself, trying all the things I thought I might like more in all the places I thought I might like them more, before slinking back to where I started. So it is with England quicks. It's easy to think particular conditions demand particular styles, but there is no style more effective than enduring brilliance. As such, England's starting point should not be Broad or Anderson but Broad and Anderson. Though there may be reasons to deviate from them, the burden of proof should be upon those reasons rather than upon players who are not just in the form of their lives but in the form of English cricket's life. After their rabid and affirming win in Australia, the hosts will be feeling invincible and with good reason. But they are not and England are nicely settled into sub-continental conditions. They've already had some luck with Ravindra Jadeja's injury and need more from the four tosses, amusing though it would be to watch them take last dig on a raging Bunsen. Most likely, India in India are too much at this point, but if England can bat first and score heavily - a task that ought not to be beyond them - the introduction to their attack of SB Pressure might just compensate for the absent WC Spinner.

Olympic and Euro 2020 chiefs confident events will go ahead this year

Tokyo, January 28 : Organisers of the Olympic Games and Euro 2020 are increasingly bullish the two biggest sporting events of the year will go ahead, although the International Olympic Committee president, Thomas Bach, has conceded for the first time that fans might have to miss out on the Tokyo Games to ensure they are safe. There have been growing concerns that both events were in peril because of the steep rise in Covid-19 cases and the slow rollout of vaccines. However, Bach dismissed suggestions the Olympics may have to be cancelled or moved and said the fact that sporting

people who keep our society alive. "Bach said all 206 national Olympic committees - along with the sports federations, athletes representatives and Japanese organisers - stood behind the IOC in wanting the Games to go ahead from 23 July. "If we thought we were being irresponsible and the Games could not be safe we would not go for it," he said. "Our task is to organise the Games, not to cancel them. And our task is to make the Olympic dreams of athletes come true. This is why we are working day and night to organise a safe Olympic Games in Tokyo." A similarly upbeat tone was struck by the Uefa



events had already taken place safely gave him growing confidence. "We have at the moment the handball world championships with 32 teams from all over the world in a bubble of 3,000 people in Egypt," he said. "More than 7,000 events have been organised by the international federations and out of 175,000 Covid tests only 0.18% were positive." The competitions could be run and organised and none of them developed into a hotspot. This is why we are so, so confident. "However, when pressed on whether packed stadiums of spectators would cheer on the 10,500 athletes who are due to compete in Tokyo, Bach was more circumspect. "This I cannot tell you," he said. "Because our priority is to ensure a safe Olympic Games and we will do whatever is needed to do that. Everybody would love to have full-capacity stadia and the roaring crowds. But if that is not possible we will respect our principles, safety is our first priority." Bach also reiterated that a wave system for athletes at the Tokyo Games was under discussion, with participants staying for five days before being flown out and replaced by those whose events come later. He confirmed that while the IOC would not require athletes to have a coronavirus jab, the hope was that as many as possible would receive them in the second or third wave, after high-risk groups had been given vaccines. "We are not in favour of athletes or champions jumping the queue. In the first lines must be the high-risk group - the healthcare workers, and the

president, Aleksander Ceferin, who said he was optimistic the Covid-19 situation "would be very different" by the time football's Euro 2020 is due to kick off on 11 June. Ceferin left open the possibility that fans would be able to attend the tournament after a meeting of Uefa and representatives of the 12 host countries - including England, Scotland and Ireland - on Wednesday. Uefa has extended the deadline until April for countries to come up with a plan A and a Plan B for fan numbers, with each host venue being asked to choose from four options - full stadiums, 50% full, 33% full or empty stadiums. "I am optimistic that things are highly likely to be very different with regard to the virus as we move closer to the tournament," said Ceferin, "and it is important that we give the host cities and governments as much time as we can to formulate an accurate picture of what will be possible come June and July." Fans are such a big part of what makes football special and that is true of the Euros as much as it is of any game. We must allow ourselves the maximum space to allow their return to the stadiums. "Uefa is committed to holding Euro 2020 in the 12 cities originally planned. The Euros is the flagship competition for national team football in Europe and is a vital source of funding for grassroots and wider football development. "Wembley is due to host the semi-finals and the final of the tournament, along with all three of England's three group games and a last-16 match.

'I am in the lucky group': Johanna Konta reflects on Australian Open quarantine

London, January 28 : Johanna Konta knows she is one of the lucky ones as the end of the British No 1's quarantine period for the Australian Open comes into sight. Players who arrived in Australia earlier this month have been undergoing a strict two-week quarantine to avoid the spread of coronavirus. Some, including Konta, have had it easier than others as they have been allowed to go out for five hours a day to practice, but 72 others, which includes fellow Briton Heather Watson, have been locked in their hotel rooms completely following positive Covid-19 cases on flights that had taken them to the country. Konta is on day 13 of the quarantine and is looking forward to a dose of normality. "This has definitely

been a very different Australia trip so far, but the end is in sight for our quarantine period," she told ITV's Lorraine programme. "Hopefully once that ends we can get back to some normality. I am actually in the lucky group that is able to go out for five hours a day to practice, we have about two hours' court time, an hour and a half gym time and then an hour to get food and basically get ready to come back. I have been very lucky, we have a number of players here who unfortunately have to be in hard lockdown, meaning they haven't left their rooms for about 12 days now." One of them is Heather so I have been trying to check in with her but she is doing a phenomenal job in making the best of a tough situation. It is a very different experience, it is not something I have experienced before and hope-

fully I won't have to do too much of this again in the future. "Even for us lucky ones in the first five days we weren't allowed out while things were getting sorted for us to be able to go and practice. Even those five days for me were tough so I can only imagine what Heather is feeling on day 11 or 12, whatever she is on. All credit to her." Despite the hardship she has gone through Konta, who has been struggling with a knee injury that blighted her 2020 campaign, is grateful for an opportunity to be able to compete. "I feel very grateful and very lucky as an athlete to perform, to work, to compete and not a lot of people can say that," she added. "I am looking forward to the opportunity of playing, hopefully playing in front of a crowd. We are being told there is an opportunity of us having a decent

crowd, we haven't experienced that for many months, just shy of a year, so that will be a treat. "I am feeling really good, being in this situation of the limited amount of training and quarantine, it put things into perspective. I feel very lucky and very healthy suddenly.



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