

# The Assam Rising

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The problem is poverty,  
however we label it

02

Wales defender Keith Pontin's  
death may be linked...

07

## NEWS

### IN BRIEF

#### Me-Dam-Me-Phi Observed

**Guwahati, January 31:** The Ahom community across Assam is observing the festival of Me-Dam-Me-Phi on Sunday by offering prayers to the forefathers and ancestors. Me-Dam-Me-Phi is observed on January 31 every year. Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal will take part in the Me-Dam-Me-Phi ceremony in Sadiya today. Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma also attended the auspicious occasion of Me-Dam-Me-Phi in Sivasagar. The minister also participated in the festive rituals. Me-Dam-Me-Phi is the worship of the ancestors among the Ahoms. Literally, 'Me' means offerings, 'Dam' means the ancestors and 'Phi' means God. Similarly, there have been reports of celebrations of the festival in Golaghat, Gohpur, Kamrup, Bihpuria, Naharkatia.

#### Hawker Killed In Road Accident

**Guwahati, January 31:** In a tragic incident, a newspaper hawker died in a road accident at Thekeraguri in Lakhimpur in the wee hours of Sunday. As per sources, Jagannath Bora was killed after being hit by an unidentified vehicle on NH 15 under Chawldhuwa police station. The accident took place when the deceased person went to distribute daily newspapers in the region. Bora was survived by his wife and two sons.

#### Watcher Killed In Rhino Attack

**Guwahati, January 31:** In a tragic incident, a forest department staff on Saturday night was killed in an attack by a rhinoceros in Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve. A game watcher in the national park, the deceased identified as Moheshwar Hazarika was attacked and died on spot while patrolling last night at Siga highland in the Agorotoli range of the park. The director of the park and reserve, P Sivakumar informed that Hazarika succumbed to his injuries on the spot and brought dead to the Bokakhat civil hospital. As per reports, along with Hazarika, another staff was present at the site of the incident, however, he managed to narrowly escape.

## CM attends Me-Dam-Me-Phi programme at Sadiya

Chaolung Siu-Ka-Pha's ideals must be followed to establish Assam strongly at the world stage: CM



**Guwahati, January 31:** Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today attended the Me-Dam-Me-Phi celebration programme organized by Cultural Directorate, Govt of Assam and Tinsukia district administration at Sadiya. He also took part in rituals at the beginning of the programme. Speaking at the programme, the Chief Minister called for maintaining peace and harmony among all sections of the society following the ideals of

Chaolung Siu-Ka-Pha who set the foundation of a greater Assamese society uniting all communities. The Ahom kings had set up temples and places of worship at different corners of Assam which had strengthened the spiritual and moral base of the society, he added. Calling on the young generation to follow the ideals of Chaolung Siu-Ka-Pha to contribute to the nation building process, Sonowal highlighted the example of

Lachit Borphukan who valiantly fought with outside enemies to protect Assam and its people. He urged the youth to imbibe the spirit of patriotism shown by Lachit Borphukan and he stressed on the importance of realising the values taught by festivals like Me-Dam-Me-Phi to establish Assam strongly at the world stage. Sonowal also said since assuming power in 2016, the present state government has been working sincerely to protect the interest of all communities in the state and he also informed that steps have been taken by the state government to erect a statue of Swargadeo Chaolung Siu-Ka-Pha in Janata Bhawan premises at Dispur. He also highlighted steps like starting Siu-Ka-Pha a seat at Dibrugarh University, construction of memorial of 42 Swargadeos at Charaideo, selection of Sivasagar by the Central Government as one of the five iconic places in the country among others. During his speech, Sonowal also called for united efforts by all stakeholders to turn Me-Dam-

Me-Phi into a celebration like Kumbh Mela and he assured of looking into the demands like setting up a cultural college in memory of Phraseng Mung Borgohain at Sadiya, inclusion of 25 Deoghars in Asom Darshan scheme for providing Rs. 10 lakh for their development etc. Cultural Affairs Minister Naba Kumar Doley, in his speech, stressed on the need to follow the ideals of

Contd...Page 6

## 17 Cr Children To Get Polio Drops

**Guwahati, January 31:** Polio National Immunisation Day, also known as Polio Ravivar is underway across the country, administering polio drops to nearly 17 crore children under the age of five. On Saturday, President Ram Nath Kovind launched the drive with the fire round of the Pulse Polio Programme for this year in Rashtrapati Bhavan. "The countrywide drive will be supported by about 24 lakh volunteers, 1.5



lakh supervisors, and many Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and Rotary", an official release

Contd...Page 6

## Mann Ki Baat ; Country very pained at dishonour to Tricolour on R-Day: PM Modi

New Delhi, January 31 :

Breaking his silence over the vandalism at the Red Fort on Republic Day by a group of farmers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said, "The country was saddened to see the national flag being insulted". In his first radio broadcast, Man Ki Baat, of 2021, Mr. Modi also said his government was "committed to modernising agriculture and the efforts of the government will continue in that direction in the future as well". The Prime Minister also talked about the country's fight against COVID-19 and how the Made in India vaccine has not only made India self-reliant (Atma Nirbhar) but has also become a moment of self pride (Atma Gaurav). While recounting the developments in January this year including India's remarkable come-back in the four match test series in Australia, Mr Modi mentioned the violence on Republic Day. "Amidst all



this, the country was saddened by the insult to the Tricolour on January 26 in Delhi. In times to come, we have to infuse new hope and novelty. Last year, we displayed extraordinary patience and courage. This year too, we have to work hard to attain our resolves. We have to take our country forward at a faster pace," he said. Referring to India's on-going vaccination exercise, Mr. Modi said that not only is the world largest large-

est vaccination drive is but also at the fastest rate. While India has vaccinated over 30 lakh front line corona warriors in 15 days, he said, the United States needed 18 days and the United Kingdom took 36 days to reach this figure. The Prime Minister pointed out that India's decision to send vaccines to several countries has generated world wide appreciation and displayed its capabilities and self-reliance

Contd...Page 6

## Greta Thunberg, Donald Trump, WHO among Nobel Peace Prize 2021 nominees

**Washington, January 31:** Former US President Donald Trump, environment activist Greta Thunberg and Russian dissident Alexei Navalny are among those nominated for this year's Nobel Peace Prize. Nominees also include WHO and its COVAX

from members of parliaments worldwide to former winners, are eligible to propose candidates. Nominations, which close on Sunday, do not imply an endorsement from the Nobel committee. The recipient is selected by the Norwegian Nobel Committee,

ing secret for 50 years the names of nominators and unsuccessful nominees. But nominators can choose to reveal their picks. Thunberg was named as one of "the foremost spokespeople in the fight against the climate crisis", with the campaigning group she co-founded, Fridays for Future, also receiving a nod. Navalny, nominated by Russian academics, was named for his efforts for a peaceful democratisation of Russia, by Norwegian former minister Ola Elvestuen. Other names are Belarusian

Contd...Page 6



programme, according to a Reuters survey of Norwegian lawmakers, who have a track record of picking the winner. Thousands of people,

a five-member committee appointed by the Parliament of Norway. The Norwegian Nobel Committee does not comment on nominations, keep-

## AMMK mouthpiece slams AIADMK, says party will be redeemed under Sasikala's leadership

**New Delhi, January 31:** The AMMK mouthpiece calls TN CM Edappadi Palaniswami a traitor and says Jaya's rule can never be established. The verbal power tussle between AIADMK and its breakaway faction the AMMK continued in Tamil Nadu. Namadhu MGR, the mouthpiece of



the AMMK reiterated that nobody can stop the redemption of the AIADMK under the leadership of VK Sasikala. The

statement comes at a time when Sasikala, who was released by the Bengaluru jail on January 27, is set to return to Tamil Nadu. The article published in Namadhu MGR slammed Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswami and called him a 'traitor'. EPS had been appointed as the state Chief Minister by Sasikala before she went to prison. However, as part of a compromise and

merger deal with the rebel-ling AIADMK faction led by O Panneerselvam, he had expelled Sasikala in September 2017. More recently, EPS has ruled out Sasikala's entry into the AIADMK. "People like this who betray their own houses will be known as 'chameleons and traitors' in history. They can never establish Amma's rule," the paper added. Referring to recent 'welcome' banners

Contd...Page 6

## A total of 699 minor to big road accidents occurred between January and December last year in Guwahati

**Guwahati, January 31:** A total of 699 minor to big road accidents occurred between January and December last year in Guwahati city. A total of 215 people were killed in these road accidents. To prevent road accidents, Assam State Transport Department has been implementing various awareness programs, including the National Road Safety Month but the number of road accidents in Guwahati has not decreased as expected. The number of road accidents is on the rise due to the

violation of traffic laws by vehicle drivers on the highways and on the city roads. The number of road accidents in the city has not declined after the lockdown due to the corona-centric situation. According to the Assam Police's Traffic Branch, the number of road accidents on the city's national highways has been the highest in the last one year. A total of 103 road accidents in January killed at least 30 people and injured 72 others. And in February, 20 people were killed and

Contd...Page 6



## Over 100 Punjab farmers 'missing' since Republic Day rally

**New Delhi, January 31:** More than 100 Punjab farmers who went to Delhi to take part in the Republic Day rally are 'missing', as per the Punjab Human Rights



Organisation. In collaboration with Khalsa Mission, the PHRO today announced free legal aid to the farmers booked by the Delhi Police for the Red

Fort incident. "It appears the police deliberately led the farmers to the Red Fort. A ruckus was created when the Nishan Sahib was hoisted there. This cannot be an offence. The Tricolour was not touched. Most protesters were illegally detained on the spot. Since then, their whereabouts are not known," activist Sarabjit Singh Verka said. Hakam Singh, a lawyer with the Punjab and Haryana High Court, said at least between 80-90 youths from Punjab had not returned to their camps at Singhu and Tikri. "A group of lawyers is trying to trace them. We are in touch with the police, farm unions and hospitals," he said. Lawyers under the banner of Panthic Talmel

Contd...Page 6



## The problem is poverty, however we label it

How ingenious are the British! Like the legendary Inuit people who coined 57 words for snow, we have devised a long list of clever aliases for the stuff that dominates everyday life. Know the ones I mean? Try food poverty. Fuel poverty. Child poverty. Clothing poverty. Transport poverty. Period poverty. These are phrases mouthed in Westminster and plastered across newspapers (which, this week, are discussing "digital poverty"). They help shape the UK in the 21st century. But this ever-growing jungle of subcategories obscures the one true problem they have in common. It is poverty: the condition of not having enough money to live your life. If your only choice of an evening is between skipping dinner or going to sleep in the cold before waking up in the cold, then you are not carefully selecting between food poverty and fuel poverty, like some expense-account diner hovering over the French reds on a wine list. You are simply impoverished. If you are using a sock as a sanitary towel, the problem lies not in the time of the month but in your lack of income - which doubtless means you're also not getting enough food or heating. Gas bills might jump or petrol prices soar, but if those things tip you into all-out crisis, that's because you were already poor. Poverty cannot be shelved tidily under different classifications, like books in a library. It jabs its tentacles into all parts of your life, distorting and defining everything from how you feel about yourself to whether you live or die in this pandemic. "Want" was how William Beveridge referred to poverty in his landmark report of 1942. For him it was the first of five "giant evils" that had to be slain in order to rebuild a bombed-out Britain. Today, however, it is the evil that dare not speak its name. It must instead be broken down into discrete categories, all the better to tuck into Whitehall documents or charity campaign strategies. In that fake neatness lies both great political hypocrisy and huge social danger. Cabinet ministers hate using

words as simple and shaming as poverty. It's why the welfare secretary, Thérèse Coffey, brightly refers to those forced to live on donated tins as food bank "customers". No, far more congenial to qualify and to narrow. Oh, it's about "cashflow problems", as the foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, so delightfully put it. Or schoolkids not having an internet dongle. Smaller messes take less time and money to tidy away. Whereas,



according to **Aditya Chakraborty** I D S 's world, the undeserving poor are always with us. The undeserving rich, such as he, on the other hand, get to marry the daughter of a baron, live in a £2m mansion owned by an obliging father-in-law, and deliver speeches to moneybags at £5,000 a time. Such are the deep prejudices faced by campaigners down the ages. The Child Poverty Action Group was formed 56 years ago, but at the outset its activists had no special interest in child poverty. The charity's official history states: "Child poverty" was not mentioned in the minutes of meetings. As the committee members saw it, poor children lived in poor families. But just weeks before launch: "Child Poverty Action Group" was adopted as the name... as likely to win more public sympathy than 'family poverty', which risked inciting rightwing tabloid rants about

'scroungers.' "This was in 1965, several years before George Osborne was even conceived. What giant strides this country has made. Even so, those founders were spot on. In my years of reporting on poverty and inequality, one reliable rule of thumb is that the kids are last to go without. First to starve are the mums. They're the ones who live on hot water and toast to keep the family in meals. But the terminally prejudiced cannot bear too much reality, and it is they who set the tone of the debate. In his recent book *The New Poverty*, the journalist Stephen Armstrong recounts how the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, travelled in 2015 to Folkestone in Kent, where he met Graham and Lisa Sopp. The couple had moved there after Graham had lost his job as a security guard and Lisa was promised cleaning work. Then their new flat fell through, Lisa's employer was taken over, and one of IDS's benefits offices kept messing them about. Suddenly, they were sleeping in a tent on the cliffs, and Graham got very ill. They took to walking the clifftops, identifying the perfect spot from which to jump. On meeting them, Welby observed: "There is no system in the world that will stop people having problems, but we must have a structure of support for people that meets not merely their financial needs but also their need to be treated as distinct human beings of infinite value." That view doesn't fit with a system where poor people queue for bags of surplus food, collect donated clothes for their babies and beg for help with their fuel bills and housing. The new language of poverty, so managerial and sophisticated, conceals a vast and growing baseness. However highly evolved its jargon, however lauded its campaigning footballers, Britain in 2021 treats poor people not as people - not as our family, friends, neighbours. Instead, it views them as a ragbag of different physical needs to be met by a patchwork of largely volunteer organisations. And in doing so, we deny both their essential humanity - and ours.

## Joe Biden must put an end to business as usual. Here's where to start



A record-breaking 4,000 Americans are now dying each day from Covid-19, while the federal government fumbles vaccine production and distribution, testing and tracing. In the midst of the worst pandemic in 100 years, more than 90 million Americans are uninsured or underinsured and can't afford to go to a doctor when they get sick. The isolation and anxiety caused by the pandemic has resulted in a huge increase in mental illness. 'Never been more optimistic': speeches, songs and celebrations cap Biden's inauguration day - as it happened. Over half of American workers are living paycheck to paycheck, including millions of essential workers who put their lives on the line every day. More than 24 million Americans are unemployed, underemployed or have given up looking for work, while hunger in this country is at the highest level in decades. Because of lack of income, up to 40 million Americans face the threat of eviction, and many owe thousands in back rent. This is on top of the 500,000 who are already homeless. Meanwhile, the wealthiest people in this country are becoming much richer, and income and wealth inequality are soaring. Incredibly, during the pandemic, 650 billionaires in America have increased their wealth by more than \$1tn. As a result of the pandemic education in this country, from childcare to graduate school, is in chaos. The majority of young people in this country have seen their education disrupted and it is likely that hundreds of colleges will soon cease to exist. Climate change is ravaging the planet with an unprecedented number of forest fires and extreme weather disturbances. Scientists tell us that we

have only a very few years before irreparable damage takes place to our country and the world. And, in the midst of all this, the foundations of American democracy are under an unprecedented attack. We have a president who is working feverishly to undermine American democracy and incite violence against the very government and constitution he swore to defend. Against all of the evidence, tens of millions of Americans actually believe Trump's Big Lie that he won this election by a landslide and that victory was stolen from him and his supporters. Armed rightwing militias in support of Trump are being mobilized throughout the country. In this moment of unprecedented crises, Congress and the Biden administration must respond through unprecedented action. No more business as usual. No more same old, same old. Democrats, who will now control the White House, the Senate and the House, must summon the courage to demonstrate to the American people that government can effectively and rapidly respond to their pain and anxiety. As the incoming chairman of the Senate budget committee that is exactly what I intend to do. What does all of this mean for the average American? It means that we aggressively crush the pandemic and enable the American people to return to their jobs and schools. This will require a federally led emergency program to produce the quantity of vaccines that we need and get them into people's arms as quickly as possible. It means that during the severe economic downturn we're experiencing, we must make sure that all Americans have the financial resources they need to live with dignity. We must increase the \$600 in direct payments for every working-class adult and child that was recently passed to \$2,000, raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, expand unemploy-

ment benefits and prevent eviction, homelessness and hunger. Despite what you may have heard, there is no reason why we cannot do all of these things. It means that, during this raging pandemic, we must guarantee healthcare to all. We must also end the international embarrassment of the United States being the only major country on Earth not to provide paid family and medical leave to workers. It means making pre-kindergarten and childcare universal and available to every family in America. Despite what you may have heard, there is no reason why we cannot do all of these things. Through budget reconciliation, a process that only requires a majority vote in the Senate, we can act quickly and pass this emergency legislation. But that is not enough. This year we must also pass a second reconciliation bill that deals with the major structural changes that our country desperately needs. Ultimately, we must confront the grotesque level of income and wealth inequality and create a country that works for all and not just the few. Americans should no longer be denied basic economic rights that are guaranteed to people in virtually every other major country. This means using a second reconciliation bill to create millions of good-paying jobs rebuilding our crumbling infrastructure and constructing affordable housing, modernizing our schools, combatting climate change and making massive investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy. It means making public colleges, universities, trade schools and Historically Black Colleges and Universities tuition-free and forcefully addressing the outrageous level of student debt for working families. And it means making the wealthiest Americans and most profitable corporations pay their fair share of taxes. We cannot continue to allow profitable corporations like Amazon to make billions of dollars in taxes and pay nothing in net federal income taxes. And billionaires cannot be allowed to pay a lower tax rate than working-class Americans. We need real tax reform. There is no reason Joe Biden

could not sign into law two major bills that will accomplish most of the goals I listed above within the first 100 days of the new Congress. We cannot allow Mitch McConnell and the Republican leadership to sabotage legislation that would improve the lives of millions of working Americans and is wildly popular. Let us never forget. When Republicans controlled the Senate, they used the reconciliation process to pass trillions of dollars in tax breaks primarily to the top 1% and multinational corporations. Further, they were able to confirm three rightwing US supreme court judges over a very short period of time by a simple majority vote. If the Republicans could use the reconciliation process to protect the wealthy and the powerful, we can use it to protect working families, the sick, the elderly, the disabled and the poor.

## 1200 Beneficiaries were awarded cheques under Swami Vivekananda Youth Empowerment Mission in Hojai

**Hojai, January 31 :** 1200 Beneficiaries were awarded cheques under Swami Vivekananda Youth Empowerment Mission (SVAYEM) by Hojai District Administration at District Headquarter Sankardevnagar on Friday. On this occasion, Sum Ronghang, Minister for Hills Area Development, Mines & Minerals graced the occasion as Chief Guest. Speaking on the occasion, Ronghang said through this SVAYEM Mission locals youths will be empowered. He further explained on detail about the mission. On the other hand, DC Dr. Sadnek Singh also spoke on the occasion and led emphasis on the objectives of this program. Local Legislator Shiladitya Dev, Lumding MLA Shibu Mishra, BJP Zila Parishad President Ramabala Devi and ruling party District President Anup Kumar Deb were also present on this occasion.



## NRL organizes SAKSHAM 2021 in Silchar



**Guwahati, Jan 31 :** More than 600 cyclists took part in the SAKSHAM 2021 Cyclothon organized by Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL) on 31st January, 2021 in Silchar as part of SAKSHAM 2021 Cyclothon being observed in 300 cities simultaneously across the country organized by Oil and Gas PSUs. Promoted under the slogan Green and Clean Energy to create awareness on health, environment and fuel conservation, the Cyclothon followed an about 6 km route starting from the Police Parade Ground, Silchar via Tennis Club via State Bank via Narshimtula to culminate at Radiant English school, Nagatilla point. The event was organized with due consideration to social distancing protocols. Cyclothon is part of SAKSHAM (Sanrakshan Kshamta Mahotsav) 2021, a month long campaign observed across the country from 16th January 2021 to 15th February 2021 promoted under the tagline 'Green and Clean Energy'. Spearheaded by Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) with the help of Public Sector Oil & Gas companies under the aegis of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MoP&NG), Govt. of India, the objective of this campaign is to sensitize the masses about the conservation and efficient use of petroleum products for better health and environment. The Cyclothon was flagged off by Hon'ble Dy. Speaker, Assam Assembly

Shri Aminul Haque Laskar who was the Chief Guest for the event in presence of Hon'ble MLA Silchar Shri Dilip Paul DC, Cachar Smt. Keerthi Jalli, IAS; SP Cachar Shri Bhanwar Lal Meena, IPS, CEO Zila Parishad Silchar Ms. Deepshikha Dey, GM (Mktg) NRL Mr. Subrata Das, DGM (Corporate Communications) NRL Ms. Madhuchanda Adhikari and a host of other dignitaries. Youth icon and paracyclist Shri Rakesh Banik graced the occasion and motivated the hundreds of children and youths who thronged Police Parade ground at 6.00 AM in the morning. GM (Mktg) NRL Mr. Subrata Das welcomed the gathering and enunciated about SAKSHAM and its objectives. This was followed by SAKSHAM pledge taking on oil and gas conservation led by DGM (Corporate Communications) NRL Ms. Madhuchanda Adhikari. Chief Guest in his speech exhorted the youths and children to make cycling a part of their daily life to stay healthy and fit. MLA Shri Dilip Paul in his address talked about the need to come back to a basic lifestyle practiced in the past which included cycling, to combat issues of pollution, health and conservation. DC Smt. Keerthi Jalli spoke about the need of oil and gas conservation that are non-renewable sources of energy and request every one to adopt sustainable habits and solutions for a better future. SP Shri B L Meena thanked NRL for the initiative taken in promoting cycling in Silchar.

## Assam commits to eliminate Neglected Tropical Diseases

*Assam joins the World NTD Day movement to reiterate its commitment towards elimination of NTDs*

**Guwahati, January, 2021:** World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day, which is being observed today across India, is a key moment in the fight against NTDs, a group of preventable diseases include Lymphatic Filariasis (Haathipaon), Visceral Leishmaniasis (Kala-Azar), leprosy (Kusht-Rog), dengue, chikungunya, snakebite, rabies etc. that are responsible for killing and disabling millions of people in India every year. Now, as India takes a stand against NTDs in alignment with the WHO NTD Roadmap 2021-2030, Assam has reiterated its commitment to ensuring that India's NTD elimination goals are met. Speaking about the state's determination to address the challenge of NTDs, Dr Harpal Singh Suri, Joint Director cum State Programme Officer, Government of Assam said "we remain committed to ensuring India meets its NTD elimination target much before 2030". Out of 27 districts in the state, 10 districts are endemic for lymphatic filariasis and another 17 districts are non-endemic. Out of 10 filaria endemic districts, we are targeting 9 districts for LF elimination in 2021. Prevention and control of endemic NTDs is being prioritised through national disease control programmes for Lymphatic Filariasis, Visceral Leishmaniasis, Leprosy, Rabies, Soil transmitted Helminthiasis and Dengue which have globally aligned strategies and dedicated annual financial outlay. Significant progress has been made towards achieving the elimination targets for Visceral Leishmaniasis (Kala-azar) and Lymphatic Filariasis (LF) in Assam. Assam has successfully reduced Visceral Leishmaniasis

in all endemic blocks achieving the target of elimination (Zero indigenous cases). Of the LF endemic districts, 98 out of 272 have been validated for interruption of transmission (TAS-1) and have successfully stopped MDA. Dengue remains a challenge due to its rapid geographical spread, but Assam is sustaining the case fatality rate at 0 since 2018. Service delivery for all diseases including NTDs is through the agency of public health systems. Platforms are being created for Filariasis, Visceral Leishmaniasis, Soil transmitted helminthiasis and leprosy to harmonize elimination efforts in case finding, vector control, mass drug administration etc. wherever possible. Intersectoral coordination for vector control are being strengthened such that gains made for dengue, filaria and VL individually. In Assam, NTDs like Lymphatic Filariasis, pose a significant public health challenge. However, the state has been taking concrete steps against these diseases. While COVID-19 diverted resources and attention away from other critical health issues like NTDs, Assam was quick in resuming NTD related activities in alignment with the WHO's guidance. Speaking about the state's efforts against NTDs, Dr. Surisaid "Out of 10 filaria endemic districts, 9 districts have already successfully completed/ passed 1st & 2nd TAS. We will conduct 3rd TAS in February 2021. After successful passing of 3rd TAS the state may be able to apply for ELF certification. We are confident that our efforts will pave the way for building an NTD-free generation in India. We will eliminate LF by 2021".



## Noida Authority will not allow registry in these sectors



**New Delhi, January 31 :** The Gautam Budh Nagar district administration has banned registry of homes in as many as 81 villages of both Noida and Greater Noida. The ban has been imposed in villages in and around Khadar areas on the banks of Hindon and Yamuna rivers. Gautam Buddha Nagar: The Gautam Budh Nagar district administration has banned registry of homes in as many as 81 villages of both Noida and Greater Noida. Here are some important information people should know before buying flats and houses in these villages. The ban has been imposed in villages in and around Khadar areas on the banks of Hindon and Yamuna rivers. The Gautam Budh Nagar District Disaster Management Committee has issued an order that no person can construct in the submergence area. If constructed, its height cannot exceed 15 meters. Any

construction of buildings above 15 meters in Khadar area has been banned. To make any such building, it will be mandatory to get the approval from the development authority concerned. A 'no objection certificate' will have to be obtained to get the registration done. There will be no registry for those who do not follow the rules. Prospective buyers for Noida or Greater Noida need to take information from the district administration. Following the orders of the District Disaster Management Committee, the District Magistrate in a letter issued an order to the Noida, Greater Noida and Yamuna authorities to issue an NOC. At present, no such NOC has been issued since the letter was sent to the concerned authority of the district administration. Currently, all such registries have been blocked. The people of Noida have also appealed to the High Court to put a stop to this order of the District Disaster Management Committee. But till the time the High Court takes cognizance of the case and gives a decision it is risky to buy any such property. Recently, the Noida Authority had raised objections on housing projects in five sectors of the city and prohibited their registration over a report that claimed about a third party was being benefitted from it.

**New Delhi, January 31 :** Amit Shah was scheduled to arrive in Kolkata on Friday night on a two-day visit to take stock of the BJP's preparedness ahead of the West Bengal assembly election. His visit was expected in the backdrop of growing rebellion in the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC). Amit Shah was scheduled to arrive in Kolkata on Friday night on a two-day visit to take stock of the BJP's preparedness ahead of the West Bengal assembly election. His visit was expected in the backdrop of growing rebellion in the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC). Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday postponed his visit to West Bengal amid farmers' protest at Delhi's borders and IED blast outside the Israeli embassy in the national capital. Shah was scheduled to arrive in Kolkata on Friday night on a two-day visit beginning on Saturday to take stock of the BJP's preparedness ahead of the West Bengal assembly election. His visit was expected in



the backdrop of growing rebellion in the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) with several ministers and MLAs openly speaking out against the party and the functioning of the state government. Speculations were rife that former minister Rajib Banerjee who has resigned as a cabinet minister and TMC MLA, expelled TMC MLA Baishali Dalmiya and Uttarpara MLA Prabir

Ghoshal would join the saffron party during Shah's visit. On Saturday morning, Shah was scheduled to visit Iskcon, Mayapur. After that, he was scheduled to go to Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas, a bastion of Matuas, where he was scheduled to address a public rally. Later in the day, he was scheduled to hold a closed-door meeting with social media cell of the party. He has

some other engagements too. Shah was also expected to hold a meeting with party leaders to review its poll preparedness. On Sunday he was scheduled to visit Aurobindo Bhawan to pay his respects to Sri Aurobindo followed by Bharat Sevashram Sangha. From here he was expected to proceed to Howrah to address a public meeting. He was also scheduled to visit Belur Math. In the biggest single-day exodus from the TMC, political heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari, along with 35 party leaders, including five MLAs and an MP, had joined the BJP during Shah's rally in Medinipur on December 19. Since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when the BJP bagged 18 seats from the state, 14 legislators of the TMC, four from the Left Front and two from the Congress have joined the saffron party. Elections to the 294-member state assembly are due in April-May.

## 100% occupancy allowed in cinema halls from February 1, Centre issues guidelines



**New Delhi, January 31 :** In its latest set of guidelines, the government had allowed cinema halls to operate at a higher capacity. The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting issued a new set of SOPs to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus. New Delhi: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has permitted cinema halls to operate at 100% seating capacity from February 1. In its latest set of guidelines, the government had allowed cinema halls to operate at a higher capacity. In this regard the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting issued a new set of SOPs for cinema halls and theatres to prevent the spread of novel coronavirus. Since the theatres pose a risk of spreading the infection, to contain the

spread of the disease, cinema halls have taken some other measures too. Apart from mandatory wearing of masks and temperature checks, theatres will have separated seats, staggered show timings bookings, mandatory social distancing, and digital payments are being encouraged. Here are the general guidelines at cinema halls to follow from February 1: \* Adequate physical distancing of at least 6 feet to be followed outside the auditoriums, common areas and waiting areas at all times. \* Use of face covers/masks to be made mandatory at all times. \* Availability of hand sanitizers, preferably in the touch-free mode, at entry and exit points as well as common areas within the premises. \* Respiratory etiquettes to be strictly followed. This

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trillion of investment for the deployment of solar energy at affordable costs. It is the first inter-government organisation headquartered in India, in Gurugram. In the wake of Covid-19, ISA has been working towards providing 24x7 electricity to some member countries to power cold storages that will store vaccine. The ISA is a coalition of solar resource-rich countries that lie either completely or partly between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. Eighty-nine countries have signed the ISA's Framework Agreement and of these 72 have deposited their instruments of ratification. Two weeks ago, India said membership

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## Noida Authority will not allow registry in these sectors



**New Delhi, January 31 :** The Gautam Budh Nagar district administration has banned registry of homes in as many as 81 villages of both Noida and Greater Noida. The ban has been imposed in villages in and around Khadar areas on the banks of Hindon and Yamuna rivers. Gautam Buddha Nagar: The Gautam Budh Nagar district administration has banned registry of homes in as many as 81 villages of both Noida and Greater Noida. Here are some important information people should know before buying flats and houses in these villages. The ban has been imposed in villages in and around Khadar areas on the banks of Hindon and Yamuna rivers. The Gautam Budh Nagar District Disaster Management Committee has issued an order that no person can construct in the submergence area. If constructed, its height cannot exceed 15 meters. Any

construction of buildings above 15 meters in Khadar area has been banned. To make any such building, it will be mandatory to get the approval from the development authority concerned. A 'no objection certificate' will have to be obtained to get the registration done. There will be no registry for those who do not follow the rules. Prospective buyers for Noida or Greater Noida need to take information from the district administration. Following the orders of the District Disaster Management Committee, the District Magistrate in a letter issued an order to the Noida, Greater Noida and Yamuna authorities to issue an NOC. At present, no such NOC has been issued since the letter was sent to the concerned authority of the district administration. Currently, all such registries have been blocked. The people of Noida have also appealed to the High Court to put a stop to this order of the District Disaster Management Committee. But till the time the High Court takes cognizance of the case and gives a decision it is risky to buy any such property. Recently, the Noida Authority had raised objections on housing projects in five sectors of the city and prohibited their registration over a report that claimed about a third party was being benefitted from it.

**New Delhi, January 31 :** Amit Shah was scheduled to arrive in Kolkata on Friday night on a two-day visit to take stock of the BJP's preparedness ahead of the West Bengal assembly election. His visit was expected in the backdrop of growing rebellion in the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC). Amit Shah was scheduled to arrive in Kolkata on Friday night on a two-day visit to take stock of the BJP's preparedness ahead of the West Bengal assembly election. His visit was expected in the backdrop of growing rebellion in the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC). Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday postponed his visit to West Bengal amid farmers' protest at Delhi's borders and IED blast outside the Israeli embassy in the national capital. Shah was scheduled to arrive in Kolkata on Friday night on a two-day visit beginning on Saturday to take stock of the BJP's preparedness ahead of the West Bengal assembly election. His visit was expected in



the backdrop of growing rebellion in the ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC) with several ministers and MLAs openly speaking out against the party and the functioning of the state government. Speculations were rife that former minister Rajib Banerjee who has resigned as a cabinet minister and TMC MLA, expelled TMC MLA Baishali Dalmiya and Uttarpara MLA Prabir

Ghoshal would join the saffron party during Shah's visit. On Saturday morning, Shah was scheduled to visit Iskcon, Mayapur. After that, he was scheduled to go to Thakurnagar in North 24 Parganas, a bastion of Matuas, where he was scheduled to address a public rally. Later in the day, he was scheduled to hold a closed-door meeting with social media cell of the party. He has

some other engagements too. Shah was also expected to hold a meeting with party leaders to review its poll preparedness. On Sunday he was scheduled to visit Aurobindo Bhawan to pay his respects to Sri Aurobindo followed by Bharat Sevashram Sangha. From here he was expected to proceed to Howrah to address a public meeting. He was also scheduled to visit Belur Math. In the biggest single-day exodus from the TMC, political heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari, along with 35 party leaders, including five MLAs and an MP, had joined the BJP during Shah's rally in Medinipur on December 19. Since the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when the BJP bagged 18 seats from the state, 14 legislators of the TMC, four from the Left Front and two from the Congress have joined the saffron party. Elections to the 294-member state assembly are due in April-May.

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## THE ASSAM RISING

VOL. NO. V, ISSUE NO. 355 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 01, 2021

## Victory over Covid

It is this global focus and sharing of data and expertise, along with worldwide clinical trials and manufacturing, which have brought us this far. Now is not the time for vaccine nationalism or protectionism from any part of the world. Now is the time for even greater collaboration. We want every person in every country to have access to vaccines. To do this, we need to be able to rely on the tried and tested global medicines supply chains that have proved to be so resilient in this pandemic. Manufacturing takes place in the UK, Belgium, France, Germany, the US, China and in many other places as companies work with partners to set up supply chains to serve various markets. These global supply chains are absolutely vital - whether for moving around components of medicines and vaccines or the finished products - and they must be allowed to operate unimpeded. None of these sites must face restrictions. Introducing any kind of export obstructions for manufacturers distributing Covid-19 vaccines means we are trying to fight the pandemic with our hands tied behind our back. The reality is that vaccine manufacture is inherently a tricky and uncertain process and fraught with difficulty. It was always going to be impossible to manufacture billions of doses of any vaccine overnight. However, manufacturing capacity is being scaled up at astonishing speed to deliver the doses required. It is understandable then that tensions run high if things go wrong. The reality is that vaccine manufacture is inherently a tricky and uncertain process, fraught with difficulty for even the most experienced companies. Alongside the scaling up of capacity, producers without Covid-19 vaccines are lending their own manufacturing capacity and expertise to produce even more doses. Export bans undermine this collaborative effort. Companies are working as fast as they can to protect everyone. Export restrictions do not do anyone any good and we urge governments to avoid them. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Saturday said people of the city, his government and the Centre together have attained victory over Covid-19 but the fight is not yet over. Speaking at the inauguration of a 450-bed Delhi government hospital in Burari via videoconferencing, he said in the last one month, coronavirus-related parameters have improved in the national capital. "Two crore people of Delhi, Delhi government and the Centre together have attained victory over coronavirus but it would not be correct to say that the fight is over," Kejriwal said. He said in the past one month, the number of Covid-19 cases in Delhi has gone down, deaths have reduced, recovery rate has improved and positivity ratio has lowered. With the inauguration of this hospital, the number of beds for coronavirus patients in the city will further increase, he added. Health Minister Satyendar Jain, who recently recovered from Covid-19, inaugurated the hospital in Burari. As of Friday, Delhi had 128,389 Covid-19 cases, while the toll due to the disease stood at 3,777. There were 13,681 active cases in the city. China's senior coronavirus expert said on Tuesday that the country has achieved a "phased victory" in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic but insisted that the nation should continue acting "prudently." China's senior coronavirus expert said on Tuesday that the country has achieved a "phased victory" in the battle against the coronavirus pandemic but insisted that the nation should continue acting "prudently." Speaking in front of a televised assembly at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, Zhong Nanshan credited China's efforts in having "contained" the virus months after it was first detected in the central city of Wuhan late last year. The US and others have alleged that the coronavirus outbreak spread out of control because China withheld information about it. China has maintained that it acted swiftly and responsibly but has rejected calls for an independent investigation into its handling of the emergency. At the same event, President Xi Jinping conferred China's highest civilian award on Zhong for his work in battling COVID-19 and SARS, a disease caused by a related virus that occurred in 2002-03.

# These Muslim women comedians are making us laugh. In India of 2021, it's no joke

India's booming stand-up comedy space took quite the hit due to Covid-19, with offline gigs no longer a viable option. But what the pandemic failed to disrupt was the dominance of Hindu, upper-caste men, understood to be the 'whole' of the comedy scene. The names in the 'top five' list of comedians in India stand witness to this. Women comedians end up in a different category altogether - that of 'women comedians', and not simply comedians. But the rise of Muslim women comedians in India and across the world is a silver lining. Their rise is not coming out of thin air, nor does the themes and punch lines in their performances. India's current sociopolitical climate has a major contribution in ensuring that their jokes land well, even when they are inside jokes. Because it is all about having a voice. And their struggle to pick up the mic, or hold their phone cameras to reach out to the millions is just the beginning of their quest to ask important questions through their art, despite knowing that getting a few LOLs is just the first step that humanises their community. Indian Muslim women comedians are making and marking their space for all to see, and doing it in their own, unique styles - be it roast, improv, sketches or Instagram reels. Lockdown meant the online space was breaking out like never before, and Instagram took over after TikTok was banned by the Narendra Modi government. From reels to IGTV, Instagram allowed many creative individuals like Shazma and Soha or 'the bajis' from Delhi to flourish. The everyday, relatable videos of the duo make for content that one can keep going back to, share with family



or shake one's head while going 'this is so my family!' Tina Das decide for herself - the kind of content and comedy she over them. And the audience agrees. Just read the comments. People appreciate the middle-class 'budgeting' over transport and Starbucks coffee, the language used, that resonance of Old Delhi-Chandni Chowk area and the everyday mishaps of life. Kareema Barry's 'Futtoh phuppo' is a quintessential aunt, who wants her niece to get married and cook well, and has an opinion on everything under the sun. But she could also be as easily a Hindu or a Sikh aunty, because the humour on display is more about shared experiences as an Indian. Kareema's videos also deal with current affairs, from government's handling of the pandemic to mental health. While the 'Muslimness' might be overt through attire, or references to cultural and religious practices, the universality of the humour is what makes the videos so fresh. They are political in the way 'personal is political' for women, and one that a woman gets to

dians, including Kaneez Surka in April 2020. And that itself is a not-so-subtle reminder of how undemocratic the Indian comedy scene is. Urooj Ashfaq, who has been performing live for some time, found fame in If Apps Were People and as the host of Comictsaan Season 2. Urooj's brand of self-deprecating humour often takes on the struggles of being Muslim in an India that thrives on everyday Islamophobia. Urooj's video while being hilarious, also explores the trope of reclaiming the 'victimhood' handed out to being a Muslim in India. Her take is a reminder that stereotypes exist in every religion and culture, but being part of a majoritarian religion helps in driving them to extents that become more violent in everyday expressions. It is not simply India where the comedy scene has witnessed the rise/entry of female Muslim comedians. From Iranian-American comedian Negin Farsad to Pakistani-British Shazia Mirza and Maysoon Zayid, who is also the first Muslim female comedian to perform in Palestine and Jordan, the international comedy space too is witnessing the arrival of Muslim comedians, with their individual brands of comedy as well as heritage. If women are not 'funny enough', Muslim women somehow are not seen as funny because of how 'oppression' is somehow understood to be part of being a practising Muslim woman. But be it in neighbouring Pakistan, where female comedians are boldly taking to the stage, India, or across the world, this stereotype is being challenged by women showing how diversity of humour enriches comedy, and allows for a richer, funnier, more intelligent engagement.

## Economic Survey 2020-21: A Tribute to India's resilience

**Surbhi Jain and Sonali Chowdhry**

Economic Survey 2020-21 is an ardent tribute to the immortal human spirit of grit and compassion encapsulated by the tireless battle against the pandemic by our frontline COVID-19 warriors. It is also an acknowledgment of the path traversed by the country in controlling the pandemic and cushioning the economic impact - ably led by meticulous, bold and foresighted policy. The Survey acclaims the resolve exhibited by each Indian in finding its way from the darkness of 'lives vs livelihoods'

to the glow of #SavingLivesAndLivelihoods'. The resilience of the Indian economy to rise from a sharp contraction of 23.9% in first quarter of 2020-21

has been endorsed by recent estimations by IMF. India is estimated to emerge as the world's fastest growing economy in the next two years. This spirit resonated in the recent Team India's victory in Australia where their resilience to rebound from 36 all out to winning the Test series was akin to the V-shaped recovery of the Indian economy. Through this year, as India bravely fought the global pandemic, it charted its own unique trajectory - showing remarkable resilience, be it fighting the virus or ensuring economic recovery. This



resilience is driven by the strength of our systems that enforced the graded public health measures, ramped up the health response and ensured free food grains to 80 crore people. The crucial social institution of digital payments built arduously in recent years enabled putting in place a swift mechanism to provide succour to the weaker and vulnerable sections through cash transfers. India also derived its strength from the support of 137 crore Indians who practised social distancing, wore masks, observed 'covid-appropriate' behaviour and industriously contributed to the fight. Economic Survey recognises the integral role of effective policymaking in charting the path to economic growth and social development. The upturn in the economy while avoiding a second wave of infections makes India a sui generis case in strategic policymaking, of being fearless to choose the road less travelled by. India's human-centric policy response to the pandemic, tailored to India's unique vulnerabilities, monstrated the power of upholding self-belief in immense uncertainty. Empowered by visionary and foresighted policy, India has endeavoured to turn this crisis into an opportunity by ramping up its health and testing infrastructure and implementing a slew of seminal reforms to strengthen the long-term growth potential of the economy. A clarity of objectives in policymaking is imperative as there are inherent trade-offs posed by uncertain and dynamic factors for any country's development. At a time of rapid change and mounting uncertainty, the clear objective of 'Jaan Hai to Jahan hai' and to 'break the chain of spread' helped the government face the dilemma of

'lives vs livelihood', pace the sequence of policy interventions and adapt its response as per the evolving situation. The policy response was tailored to different phases of the epidemic, adapting to evolving requirements to provide succour to people, support demand, facilitate the recovery to pre-pandemic levels and ensure fiscal sustainability. A gradual, smooth transition was paved from 'Jaan Hai to Jahan hai' to 'Jaan bhi aur Jahan bhi'. The Survey makes the case for continued focus on economic growth as the most important objective for policymaking at India's current stage of development. It delineates the constituents that would strengthen effectiveness of policymaking - continued reforms, innovation, timely regulatory support and withdrawal of forbearance. Continuing the endeavours of previous Surveys to relate economics to a common person, Survey, 2020-21 constructs an index of 'the bare necessities' across States in India. It shows that compared to 2012, access to "the bare necessities" has improved across all States in the country in 2018. The improvements are widespread as they span each of the five dimensions viz., access to water, housing, sanitation, micro-environment and other facilities. The policy emphasis on 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' in recent years has led to this improved access. Economic Survey, 2020-21 is, therefore, a testimony to the resilience and intrinsic strength of the fundamentals of the Indian society and the economy. This Survey embodies the deep sense of confidence that Indians have demonstrated to come out victorious against any adversity.

## China's anti-monopoly rules risk disaster as it goes after tech giants like Alibaba



How does Beijing define a monopoly? Could one be a national company with a 48% market share in the economically booming southern province of Guangdong and just 10% in the far northern rust belt of Heilongjiang be one? It's unclear, and that ambiguity risks destroying China's tech-enabled social infrastructure with a new campaign to cut giant businesses down to size. The investigations into alleged monopolistic practices of Alibaba Group Holding Ltd. and the big sway of Ant Group Co. have been accompanied by sharpening various antitrust regulations. The latest central bank definitions would make an institution with more than half the market in national payments (including online and mobile) a monopoly. That follows November guidelines that zeroed in on several practices, including the controversial 'picking one from two' where e-commerce merchants are forced to choose a single marketplace for exclusivity. When it comes to monopolies, it's important to ask how targets and activities are defined and identified, what the characteristics of too powerful a player in the market are, and whether status varies across sectors. Companies like Meituan and Alibaba have enabled businesses and hundreds of millions of consumers to get food delivery, make payments, shop and take loans straight from their phones. They've become deeply ingrained in China's social infrastructure. But regulators have to contend with how much power they should have.

**ANJANI TRIVEDI**

just being the commanding player in a market. China has often used its anti-monopoly law, implemented just over a decade ago, to take on foreign entrants. Qualcomm Inc. ended up paying a \$975 million fine, one of the country's largest, following an investigation into anti-competitive practices. Authorities imposed fines of around 20 billion yen (\$193 million) on Japanese auto parts makers for price-fixing violations. On average, penalties of 1.8 million yuan (about \$278,000) have been leveled for abuse of dominant market position, according to an analysis by the South China Morning Post. Now, Beijing is targeting domestic players, which are more crucial where consumers are concerned. The internet companies at the center of this drive haven't previously come under such scrutiny and were relatively free-wheeling. The rules focus on three broad areas including: (1) market concentration or merger control, (2) agreements between competitors that lead to price fixing or limits on production or resale prices, and (3) abuse of a dominant market position. By comparison, the analogous U.S. laws date back to the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 and break things down further. The American rules cover a range of sectors and are focused more on consumer protection, and less on the producers and companies involved. For instance, the legal code details a framework for evaluating agreements between competi-

tors based on guiding principles and goes in-depth on various types of mergers, enforcement and the like. There's significant detail on interpretation of issues such as price fixing and bid rigging. As Chinese consumers become front and center of Beijing's economic policy agenda going into 2021, the powerful hold of the tech giants is worrying. Their super-apps have prevailed where the state hasn't. These companies weren't created and subsidized by the state as industrial enterprises (which, in fact, created monopolies). International competition may have been kept out or didn't cut it, but the domestic technology sector thrived with stiff competition. Richard Ji, founder of the venture capital firm All-Stars Investment, told the Financial Times: "For every IPO [initial public offering] of a tech company, there are 40,000 start-ups who don't make it." But can retrospective regulatory moves now create a truly free market? Reducing Alipay to a 49% market share from 50% and Tenpay, known for WeChat, to a bit more from its current 39% wouldn't seem to move the needle on real competition. Breaking down these companies and their reach to make way for others with potentially less user trust would have more impact. But that may run counter to what Beijing has tried so hard to do - create a digital infrastructure. Chinese consumers aren't starved for choice in services. Taking away the convenience and efficiency they've grown accustomed to may be more problematic. China's latest five-year plan is about building fifth-generation networks and new-economy infrastructure. Crude, catchall and reactive regulation could undermine such ambitions. These goals can coexist only if the rules of the game are clear. More money to be made means more competition; too much regulation threatens the opposite. Rules will be more effective if they're sector-specific. Payments are different from food delivery or search engines. Hoping that businesses will operate fairly within the confines of three broad buckets is short-sighted and simplistic. As dangerous as potential market misbehavior may be, consumers have benefitted from giant companies, especially in the times we're living through.



## High-speed broadband services

# Telcos and technology majors spar over spectrum band

**New Delhi, January 31 :** The divide between the two sides is whether spectrum in the concerned band should be delicensed or should be allocated through auctions as is the case for access services spectrum. The Trai had recommended that both E and V band should be opened with 'light touch regulation' and allotment should be on a 'link to link basis'. The Trai had recommended that both E and V band should be opened with 'light touch regulation' and allotment should be on a 'link to link basis'. Telecom operators like Bharti Airtel, Reliance Jio, and Vodafone Idea, have once again clashed with technology players like Google, Microsoft, Apple, Facebook etc, over a spectrum band which has the potential to provide high-speed broadband services, especially in remote areas and for better in-building coverage. Though the fight is a couple of years old, it resurfaced earlier this month when the department of telecommunications scheduled meetings with operators and industry associations to plan issues related to spectrum management and allocation over the next few years. In addition, it is likely to buy additional spectrum in 1800 MHz and 2300 MHz band in order to build a portfolio of 10 MHz and 40 MHz, respectively. Spectrum auctions may be a no-show: Telcos expected to do minimum buying, leaving about 60% spectrum unsold. WhatsApp vs signal features: Thinking of switching from WhatsApp to Signal? Here's everything you need to keep in mind. The divide between the two

sides is whether spectrum in the concerned band should be delicensed or should be allocated through auctions as is the case for access services spectrum. The telecom operators are of the view that the spectrum in the concerned band should be auctioned as not doing so would lead to loss of revenue to the government as these bands have a very high commercial value proposition. Telcos have conveyed the same to the government through their association,



Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI). Opposed to their stand are technology players, who through their association, Broadband India Forum (BIF) have said that the spectrum should be delicensed and not auctioned as it is not the same as spectrum for access services. Questioning the COAI's stand, BIF has pointed out that auctioning of spectrum in these bands would go against international best practices. The concerned

spectrum is the E and V bands, which are used as backhaul to connect mobile where fibre is not available. Sources in the department of telecommunications (DoT) have thus far maintained that auction is ruled out but so is administrative assignment, which means allocating spectrum on first-cum-first-served basis. What's likely on the cards is a light touch licensing but a final decision is awaited. In fact, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, which

submitted its recommendations to the DoT way back in August 2014 has also favoured a light licensing approach and not auctioning this spectrum. The Trai had recommended that both E and V band should be opened with 'light touch regulation' and allotment should be on a 'link to link basis'. It had said that E band carrier should be charged at Rs 10,000 per annum per carrier of 250 MHz each and there should be initial promotional discount of 50% for three years from

the date of allocation of first carrier in this band. In case of charging of V band carriers, it had said that it should be Rs 1,000 per annum per carrier of 50MHz each. It has said that prices would be reviewed after five years based on deployment and usage. The argument against auction is because there's not much the government is going to get by doing so unlike access spectrum. The value of a spectrum band depends upon various factors, like ecosystem but the most important factor is its propagation characteristics. The lower frequency spectrum is more valuable compared to the higher frequency as the radio waves riding on the former travels further, thereby requiring fewer base stations, which means less operational costs. The value of E and V band spectrum is low because they have very poor propagation characteristics as they fall between 71-76 Ghz and 81-86 Ghz (E band) and between 57-64 Ghz (V Band). These bands are like fibre and can be used for broadband services but not for direct mobile connectivity. According to some analysts, the telecom operators are opposed to the move to delicense the E and V bands as they fear that technology companies may enter into the broadband market and use the delicensed spectrum, which would come free of cost, to provide services to consumers. This may lead to a non-level playing field as telecom operators have spent billions of rupees in acquiring access spectrum to offer the same kind of services. Companies like Microsoft, Google, Facebook etc have in the past shown their intent to provide broadband using delicensed spectrum.

## Samsung Galaxy M02s: Sharp looks, great performance and solid battery life at an attractive price

**Mumbai, January 31 :** The Galaxy M02s is one of the best Android phones you can buy in the sub-10K price segment, with its latest specs, impressive camera capabilities and good all-round performance. Out of the box, the Galaxy M02s phone promises to give an entirely new experience in your hand. Out of the box, the Galaxy M02s phone promises to give an entirely new experience in your hand. What are the advantages of a large size mobile screen? A pertinent query I have often posed to young consumers. My curiosity stems from the fact that does a bigger screen not impact performance? Isn't it a drain on the battery? The responses are varied. A larger screen offers better clarity. Watching a movie is a visual treat. Most important, with a larger phone screen size, it's much easier to effectively view, edit and use productivity apps such as email, calendar, documents and presentations. Business users can more effectively multitask using multiple windows to view two apps

simultaneously. Samsung is making a concerted attempt to lure heavy content-consuming young consumers as well as business users with its new offering, Galaxy M02s, the newest member of Samsung's hugely popular Galaxy M series. A powerful and affordable smartphone that offers a host of Samsung's first ever features in the sub-Rs 10K price segment for the digital first consumers. "Whether it is online education, gaming, entertainment on demand or virtual connectivity, the Galaxy M02s is designed to max up every experience," says Aditya Babbar, director, Mobiles Business, Samsung India. The device offers a bigger 6.5-inch screen, a non-stop 5000mAh battery, and a powerful Qualcomm processor with 4GB RAM, all under Rs 10,000 for the first time," he says. Samsung Galaxy S21 Ultra, Samsung Galaxy S21 Ultra review: Dark knight rises. Oppo Reno 5 Pro, Oppo Reno 10x Zoom. From Reno 10x Zoom to Reno

5 Pro: Oppo Reno series challenged status quo once, then it settled for new normal. Galaxy M02s is available in three colours-Black (our trial unit), Blue and Red flaunting a haze and matt textured body. It is priced at Rs 8,999 for 3GB+32GB variant and Rs 9,999 for 4GB+64GB variant. It has a 13MP main camera, 2MP macro lens, 2MP depth sensor along with 5MP front camera. I reckon that top-of-the-line specs in this segment, make it flaunt worthy and performance oriented. Out of the box, the Galaxy M02s phone promises to give an entirely new experience in your hand. Samsung R&D folks have poured their heart into it, as evidenced by nearly every aspect of the device. Importantly, the effort here has been to offer to the consumers affordable technology that is top-notch. There are no hard edges on the phone; the device has smooth curves, the phone is sturdily built and can withstand accidental falls. Overall, it's a lot smoother to the touch, but still offers a firm grip against your fingers when you hold it casually. Galaxy M02s comes with a 6.5-inch Infinity-V display for immersive viewing, content streaming, video calls and attending online courses. The large HD+ screen is a delight for binge watchers to enjoy their favourite content on the go. Photos look natural, videos come to life with striking graphics and you'll get a clear view of all the finer details in your documents. Company officials claim the Galaxy M02s allows you to 'Max Up' your storage experience with memory expandable up to 1TB. Plus, there is a clean, fast and easy to use user interface. Galaxy M02s is powered by Qualcomm Snapdragon processor and comes with up to 4GB RAM that ensures enhanced performance, smooth multitasking, seamless app navigation and long hours of gaming. The phone has a 13 megapixel main camera to capture every moment of your life in intricate detail to share with friends. The perfect selfie is always achievable thanks to the 5MP front facing camera which takes great photos in any light condition including the low light of a restaurant. In my overall experience, the Galaxy M02s left a lasting impression.

## Tata Motors launches the Limited-Edition Tata Tiago Celebrates 1st anniversary of Tiago Refresh range

**Mumbai, January 31 :** Keeping up with the brand promise of offering consumers the 'New Forever' range, Tata Motors, India's leading automotive brand, today announced the launch of a limited edition Tata Tiago at a price of INR 5.79 Lakh (ex-showroom Delhi). This launch will commemorate the first anniversary of Tiago Refresh and its success in the hatchback market. Building on the XT variant, the Tiago Limited Edition will be available in manual transmission, with three single tone colours - Flame Red, Pearlescent White & Daytona Grey. Additional features include: \* New 14-inch Bold Black Alloy Wheels, \* 5-inch Touchscreen Infotainment by Harman, consisting of: \* 3D Navigation through Navimaps o Reverse Parking Sensor with Display o Voice Command Recognition o Image & Video Playback, \* Rear Parcel Shelf. Commenting on the launch of this new variant, Mr. Vivek Srivatsa - Head - Marketing, Passenger Vehicles Business Unit, Tata Motors said, "Since its launch in 2016, the Tiago has been very successful in its segment and has been appreciated by all. Following the same, the product's BS6 version was introduced in 2020 which also received a 4



**Guwahati 31 January:** One of the oldest and leading companies in the country Amul Innerwear unit Kandy Floss has entered the Northeast market including Assam. The business is being expanded under the supervision of Khushi Enterprise, a well-known reputed distributor in Guwahati as a super stockist of Kandy Floss of Northeastern region. Businessman Ajay Verma, head of Khushi Enterprises, said that one year old brand "Kandy Floss" has become a famous name for Kids apparel, which makes pure cotton hosiery garments for children between 0 and 2 years old. He said a large variety and designer apparel is available for Kids which were specially designed by famous designers of the country. Kandy Floss kids wear segment deals in Baba Suit, Frock, Capri, T-Shirt, Barmuda, Pajamas etc

with a minimum starting price of just 125 Rupees. He said that Kandy Floss costumes are being appreciated in other states of the country. Kandy Floss kids wear designer apparel will now be available at reasonable prices for the customers of Northeast including Assam. So far, Kids wear market has remained largely untapped due to the dominance of the unorganized sector. The increasing penetration of internet and influence of western style have led to a rise in demand for branded and designer apparel. The advent and rapid rise of digital age has also led to kids becoming increasingly aware of brands and being conscious of their looks and style," said Mr. Verma. The company's goal is to provide Kandy Floss apparel to all small and big districts and villages of Assam and Northeast.

## Most nutritional juice from Himalayan berries unveiled by Keva, first time in India

**Guwahati, January 31 :** Keva Industries today launched Himalayan Berry Juice which promises to be a store full of oxygen, vitamins and minerals, being an effective formula for natural well-being. It was presented to be a premium natural formulated juice with highest levels of antioxidants including 190+ bioactive nutrients that can nourish the body's cells to protect the skin from free radicals and the natural aging process. During the occasion, Dr. Karan Goel, CEO of Keva Industries spoke, "We are passionate to focus, research and bring forth the most nutritional health choices for the public as we are endeavoured to deliver supreme quality, alongside innovation. This newest launch of Keva is a cluster of health enhancing nutrients which are vital for a healthier well-being. This product launch show cases that we are committed to bring the best in revolutionary health segment." Consisting of the pure wonder berry and nature's most balanced fruit from the Himalayas- Sea Buckthorn, this product is a pack of nutritional values. Himalayan berry is a powerful food containing 12 times the amount of vitamin-C as orange with fiber, antioxidants, vitamins A, B1, B12, C, E, K, Flavonoids, lycopene, carotenoids and phytosterols along with a high Omega Fatty acid content including 3, 6, 9 and the rare, 7. Sea Buckthorn or Hippophae rhamnoides is one of the important natural resources of the mountainous region, at an altitude of 4000-14000 feet in cold climates. This miracle fruit is helpful in supporting many body functions like cardio vascular function, proper brain and nervous system function, skin and hair, digestive system function, urogenital lining and many more. Sea Buckthorn has been thoroughly researched in over 130 modern scientific studies that have found that this berry promotes health. The Defense Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), India



has endorsed and recognizes the immense benefits of Sea Buckthorn. It recommends Sea Buckthorn for soldiers of the Indian Army especially those serving in high altitudes. Dr. James Liu, general manager, Health King Enterprise & Balanceuticals Group Inc., Chicago said "Sea buckthorn oil has been used to treat burn victims because it supports "the skin healing process" and softens the skin. Omega-7 is very rare to find naturally in a single plant and sea buckthorn happens to have the highest concentration," Sea Buckthorn assists in normal process of healthy inflammatory response and relieves sore joints. Its Carotenoids and Beta carotenoids assist in slowing aging process and lycopene - maintains prostate and colon cell health. Its Anti-oxidants fight cell damaging free radicals, provides anti-aging benefits and supports healthy cell reproduction. Its flavonoids helps fight cell damaging free radicals, assist in the process of healthy cellular rejuvenation, promotes healthy immune system function.

## Vehicle Scrappage Policy to be implemented from April 2022: State Govt approvals pending



**New Delhi, January 31 :** The Indian Government is ready to implement a vehicle scrappage policy. The central government is awaiting approval from respective state governments to begin implementing from 2022. The Indian Government has been working on a vehicle scrapping policy for some time. It is being done to help remove old and unsafe vehicles which are still plying on Indian roads. In addition to curbing tailpipe emission causing air pollution by their engines and also reduce gross fuel consumption. Nitin Gadkari, minister of road transport and highways, has approved a new "Vehicle Scrappage Policy" to incentivise user to scrap old vehicles and buy new ones. The ministry released a statement; "The Minister approved the policy of deregistration and scrapping of vehicles owned by Government department and PSU, which are above 15 years in age. It is to be notified and will come into effect from April 1 2022." The policy is to scrap vehicles which are over 15-years on the road. They are not only to include private vehicles but also vehicles owned by government departments and PSU. The Policy notification is expected to be announced soon before being implemented from April 1, 2022. Back in July 2019, the Motor Vehicles Act was amended to include the

scrappage policy. It was done to remove older vehicles from the road and encourage the uptake of modern safer and less polluting vehicles as well as electric vehicles. This would not only curb air pollution levels in India. But will in return help in posting demand for new vehicles thus helping the ailing automotive industry in India. Additionally, older vehicles with outdated safety features would be phased out allowing for more people to be travelling in safer modern vehicles. But more importantly, the Indian government is also trying to reduce its oil import bill. Pushing for the use of electric vehicles is believed to help in reducing the amount of oil India is importing. Additionally, the Indian Government has also announced a new Green Tax policy. Vehicles over a set of years (depending on the vehicle) would be subject to a new "Green Tax" on vehicle registration renewal. Under the new Green Tax structure, transport vehicles older than 8 years could be charged at the rate of 10 to 25 % of road tax at the time of renewal of fitness certificate. Personal vehicles will also be charged Green Tax at the time of renewal of Registration Certification after 15 years. While city buses and public transport vehicles would attract a lower rate of Green Tax; electric vehicles, full hybrid vehicles along with CNG, ethanol, LPG powered vehicles along with farm equipment would be exempt from the Green Tax entirely. The tax rate would differ between petrol and diesel-powered vehicles. The tax money collected is said to be used to monitor and tackle air pollution and emission control. However, like the scrappage policy, it is also awaiting approval from the state governments.



star safety rating by 6NCAP at launch, making it the safest in its segment. With more than 3.25 lakh happy customers on the road, the Tiago has evidently received tremendous market response. We are confident that through

the introduction of this limited period variant and in alignment with our New Forever philosophy, we will continue to bring excitement in this space while catering to the ever evolving demand of our consumers."



Contd. From Page 1

## 17 Cr Children To Get Polio

from the Health ministry read.Healthcare workers will be visiting as many as 2 crore households to ensure that no child is left without the protection of the polio vaccine, it added.Dr. Harsh Vardhan said, “Before the start of the program, India had 60 per cent caseload of Polio worldwide. With the last case of Polio reported in Howrah on January 13, 2011, the country has been free of Polio for a decade now”.The drive was earlier scheduled from January 17, however was postponed due to the nationwide rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination drive.An estimated 17 crore children in the country were on Sunday given polio vaccines as part of the government’s ambitious National Polio Immunisation campaign.“We are hoping that during this campaign we have covered around 17 crore children between the age group of 0-5 years,” a official of the National Polio Programme said in New Delhi.President APJ Abdul Kalam had launched the campaign in New Delhi on Saturday.The country has reported 641 polio cases in 2006, as compared to 66 in 2005.The entire state machinery was activated to make the campaign a success. It was launched to control the virus from circulating during its peak season of September-November, he said.Out of the total 641 cases reported so far, 90 per cent of the cases are in Uttar Pradesh, where senior officials monitored the campaign, the official added.The state has reported 519 polio cases, followed by Bihar where 57 children have been afflicted with the paralytic disease. Delhi has reported six cases.The other cases were reported from Haryana (18), Uttaranchal (13), Punjab (8), Maharashtra (5), Gujarat (4), Madhya Pradesh (3), Assam (2), and one each reported from Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Rajasthan and Jharkhand.

## Mann Ki Baat ; Country very

in the field of medicines.“The same thought underpins the Atmanirbhar Bharat Campaign. The more India is capable, the more will it serve humanity; and the world will benefit more,” Mr. Modi said.Noting that the country is approaching its 75th year of Independence, the Prime Minister urged people, especially young people to write about freedom fighters and incidents associated with their struggle.“Write books about the saga of valour during the period of freedom struggle in your area. Now, as India will celebrate 75 years of her freedom, your writings will be the best tribute to those heroes of our freedom. An initiative has been taken for young writers for the purpose of India Seventy-Five. This will encourage young writers of all States and of all languages,” he said.Reading out the comments of a resident from Munger in Bihar, the Prime Minister mentioned about the ‘Tarapur Martyr Day’, when the British had mercilessly killed several of a group of brave young patriots on February 15, 1932. The incident didn’t not received as much publicity as it should have, he said.Speaking of the recent announcement of Padma award winners, he said the tradition of conferring the honour on unsung heroes that was started a few years ago has been maintained this time too.“I urge all of you to know more about these people and their contribution,” he said, recalling the contribution of several individuals who continue to make immense individual contribution to society.Mr. Modi said his monthly broadcast was an opportunity to learn many new things and mentioned a vegetable market (Bowenpally) in Hyderabad which was generating electricity from vegetable waste; a gram panchayat in Panchkula (Haryana) which used waste water to irrigate fields, the people of Tawang (Arunachal Pradesh) making Mon Shugu, a form of eco-friendly paper; a young woman entrepreneur growing strawberries in Bundelkhand region, women in Jabalpur successfully running a rice mill after taking over the reins and the all women crew of Air India commandeering the longest flight from San Francisco to Bengaluru.Speaking about the importance of India’s culture, the Prime Minister highlighted yoga’s popularity in the South American country of Chile with 30 yoga institutes adding that the Vice-President of the Chilean Senate is Rabindranath Quinteros, whose name was inspired by India’s poet-philosopher Rabindranath Tagore.With the country observing Road Safety month between January 18 and February 17, the Prime Minister said road accidents are a matter of concern not just in India country but the world over.

## Greta Thunberg, Donald Trump

activists Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Maria Kolesnikova and Veronika Tsepkalova for their "fight for a fair election and inspiration for peaceful resistance", one nominator, Geir Sigbjørn Toskedal told.Freedom of information is a recurring theme with nominees including the US-based Committee to Protect Journalists; former Charlie Hebdo journalist Zineb el Rhazoui, news website Hong Kong Free Press, the US-based International Fact-Checking Network and Paris-based Reporters without Borders (RSF).Other nominees include NATO and the UN refugee agency (UNHCR).

## "Will Protest Till..."

by all parties on the first day of the budget session, Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday reached out to the opposition saying the government was still willing to talk to farmers. He said the earlier offer of suspending the three farm laws for 18 months also still stood.Farmers have been protesting at different borders of the national capital since November 26, 2020, against the Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, and the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.

## AMMK mouthpiece slams

put up by AIADMK functionaries, who were then expelled by the party, the paper stated that traitors like Edappadi Palaniswami cannot stop Jayalalithaa’s followers despite any number of bans and orders they put and that the followers will arrive in hordes to welcome Sasikala. “Nobody can stop our party (AIADMK) being redeemed by Sasikala,” the paper said. Namadhu MGR also said that Sasikala will show the people who the real traitors are and that people will come to know the truth, thanks to her. Taking a dig at allies who ‘cannot even save their election deposit if they contest alone’, Namadhu MGR said that how much ever they tried, they cannot ascend the throne.

## Over 100 Punjab farmers

Sangathan too offered legal aid to the farmers. “We are scrutinising the FIRs. Most farmers were booked under the Damage to Public Property Act, Epidemic Diseases Act and Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act,” an advocate said.Akal Takht officiating Jathedar Giani Harpreet Singh said: “Nishan Sahib is the symbol of the Sikh identity. Hoisting the flag does not constitute an offence.”A report from Moga said 12 farmers of Tatarie Wala village in Moga district were among those missing. The village panchayat identified them as: Amritpal Singh, Gurpreet Singh, Daljinder Singh, Jagdeep Singh, Jagdish Singh, Navdeep Singh, Balvir Singh, Bhag Singh, Harjinder Singh, Ranjit Singh, Ramandeep Singh and Jaswant Singh. The panchayat appealed to the Punjab CM to secure their release.

## A total of 699 minor to big

eight injured in 63 road accidents. In March, 13 people were killed and 61 injured in six road accidents before the lockdown.9 killed, 12 injured in 16 road accidents in April11 killed and 20 injured in 30 road accidents in May14 killed and 26 injured in 48 road accidents in June10 killed in 25 road accidents in July and 12 were injuredDuring the extended period of lockdown in August, 12 killed and 20 injured in 36 road accidents22 killed and 42 injured in 65 road accidents in September28 killed and 44 injured in 60 road accidents in October42 killed and 42 injured in November At least 26 people were killed and 54 others were injured in 64 road accidents in the month of December last year.A report suggests that more than 41% deaths in road accidents in Assam take place with two-wheelers due to over-speeding or careless driving.

## CM attends Me-Dam-Me-Phi

great Ahom Swargadeos and maintain unity and harmony among all sections of the society. MoS of Labour and Tea Tribes Welfare Department Sanjay Kishan also spoke in today’s programme and highlighted the achievements of Chaolung Siu-Ka-Pha in shaping the identity of a greater Assamese Society. Sadiya MLA Balin Chetia, social worker Pulak Gohain, Commissioner of Pranam Ayog Jugabala Burhagohain also delivered speeches in today’s programme which was attended by several MLAs and many other dignitaries.

## High Voltage Campaigning ON for PPMYM Provicinal President elections to be held in February



**Hojai, January 31:** High Voltage Campaigning for the post of Provincial President of Purvottar Pradeshhiya Marwari Yuva Manch is undergoing in the North-east. Notably, the elections for the post of Provincial President is scheduled on February 26 at the three days Provincial Convention namely., ‘Dharohar’ of PPMYM in Guwahati.In the same line, one of the strong candidate for the post and current VP of PPMYM (Headquater) viz., Pankaj Jalan along with his team visited Hojai Unit on Sunday, it was his 50th branch visit in the northeast within these fifteen days of the campaigning tour. Jalan was here to seek support from the Hojai unit in the upcoming elections.On this occasion, a meeting was organised which was presided by VP Hojai Unit namely Sanjay Murarka. Addressing the members, Jalan explained in the detail, Why the Hojai Unit should vote in favour of him? He further led emphasis on his future vision regarding PPMYM.Meanwhile, many other guests spoke in favour of Jalan and said the Unit should cast the Vote in favour of appropriate candidate who can work for the upliftment of society as whole . The meeting was attended by many former president of the unit and present members.The meeting ended with the votes of thanks by General Secretary Subham Kejriwal.

## Results of Ganit Utkarsha Sadhan Exam Declared : VKV Golaghat and Kakodunga HS School Shine

**Golaghat, Jan 31:** The results of Ganit Utkarsha Sadhan Examination , 2020 organized by Assam Academy of Mathematics Golaghat Branch on January 3 were declared on January 29. Total 1673 students from 102 educational institutions appeared in the exam in seventeen different exam centres in the district. In the results Dikshanta Ballav Goswami from Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya Golaghat topped in the sixth standard category, Nitisha Kashyap from Delhi Public School, Numaligarh bagged the top position in the seventh standard category. In the eighth and ninth standard categories Rajveer Kunal and Raghav Saraogi from VKV Golaghat secured the top rank respectively. Sneha Bora from Marvel Minds Academy, Sarupathar became the topper in the tenth standard category while Nabangshu Nir Gogoi from DPS Numaligarh abled to secure the top position in the eleventh standard category. Assam Academy of Mathematics Golaghat Branch had organised this exam for the second time and this time total 277 students from 51 educational institutions were declared to be pass in this special examination of Mathematics. This year among the government educational institutions Kakodunga HS School shines with 16 students to pass this exam while Vivekananda Kendra Vidyalaya Golaghat is having the highest number of passing candidates among the private educational institutions with 46 students. It was stated in a press release by Sailendra Kumar Dutta Baruah , Secretary of Assam Academy of Mathematics Golaghat Branch.

## 5G Demonstration Goes Live in Hyderabad Ahead of Commercial Rollout

**New Delhi, Jan 31 :** Airtel on Thursday announced that it had become the first telco to successfully demonstrate live 5G service over a commercial network in Hyderabad. Taking on Reliance Jio, the New Delhi-based telco stated that it operated 5G and 4G concurrently over the existing liberalised spectrum in the 1800MHz band through the Non-Standalone (NSA) network technology. Airtel 5G is touted to deliver 10 times the speed of existing network technologies — allowing users to download a full-length movie in a matter of seconds on a 5G phone.Airtel worked with its equipment partner Ericsson to enable the new experience. The operator claimed that it had the capability to operate its 5G network over existing technology-neutral spectrum in mid-bands that are at 1800MHz, 2100MHz, and 2300MHz frequency alongside the sub-GHz bands available at 800MHz and 900MHz. The transition to 5G is available through software upgrades over the existing network infrastructure, the operator said.If permitted by the Department of Telecom (DoT), Airtel stated that it could operate its 5G and 4G networks dynamically within the same spectrum block and is ready to deploy 5G in a matter of months. However, the operator didn’t provide any specific timeline on the commercial rollout of its 5G network in the country.“The moment we receive government approvals, and we have the right spectrum bands and in adequate quantities, we’ll be able to roll this [5G] out immediately,” said Gopal Vittal, MD and CEO, Bharti Airtel, during a virtual media briefing.For the early demonstration, Airtel used Oppo Reno 5 Pro and Oppo Find X2 Pro smartphones. The operator, however, said that over 20 commercially available 5G phones in the country would be ready for Airtel 5G. Existing users will also not be required to upgrade their existing SIM cards to get the next-generation network experience on their compatible handsets.In December, Airtel archival and India’s biggest telecom network Jio announced that it would start rolling out its 5G service in the country in the second half of 2021. The operator also promised to test its 5G network at scale, though it is yet to demonstrate its offering to the public.Airtel’s 5G demonstration is live at select stores in Hyderabad. The operator is claiming to maintain social distancing norms to curb coronavirus spread while showcasing the new experience.

## Cm Sonowal Attends Me-Dam-Me-Phi Observance At Sadiya

**GUWAHATI, Jan 31 :** Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal on Sunday attended the Central Me-Dam-Me-Phi observance at Sadiya in Tinsukia district. The central Me-Dam-Me-Phi programme was organised by Assam government’s directorate of cultural affairs in association with Tinsukia district administration.Me-Dam-Me-Phi is celebrated by the Tai Ahom community on January 31 every year to pay tributes to their ancestors.Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister urged everyone to take inspiration from Swargadeo Chaolung Sukapha’s ideals and work towards taking Assam to new heights.He also presented awards to the winners of Swadesh Adhyayan Quiz organised by the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) and unveiled a souvenir.attended the Central Me-Dam-Me-Phi observance in Sadiya with Ministers ShriOn the other hand, health, finance and education minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma attended the Me-Dam-Me-Phi celebrations organised by All Tai Ahom Students’ Union at Nimaijan in Sivasagar district.“The civilisation against which Lachit Borphukan fought that engulfing our society. We have been fighting against such civilisation maintain democratic principles,” Dr. Sarma stated in his speech.North East Democratic Alliance (NEDA) convenor and Assam health, finance, education minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma attended Me-Dam-Me-Phi celebrations at Nimaijan in Sivasagar district on Sunday.Minister Sarma was accorded a grand welcome on his arrival at the venue of Me-Dam-Me-Phi celebrations organised by All Tai Ahom Students’ Union.Me-Dam-Me-Phi is celebrated by the Tai Ahom community on January 31 every year to pay tributes to their ancestors.Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sarma said, “The civilisation against which Lachit Borphukan fought that engulfing our society. We have been fighting against such civilisation maintain democratic principles.”

## China may trigger fresh crisis along LAC

**New Delhi, Jan 31 :** Even as soldiers battle the winter conditions, the greater challenge for the Indian Army lies in anticipating events and preparing for contingencies in the coming summer months. The PLA military strategy appears to be focused on two objectives — strengthening control over the disputed areas along the LAC and overcoming their war-fighting weaknesses in Tibet.Former Northern Army CommanderThe standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh is set to continue through the winter. There is minimal possibility of any significant military moves during the winter months, and it has been reported that the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has already moved 10,000 soldiers from depth areas back to their permanent garrisons in Xinjiang and Tibet military regions. The Indian Army, even if it wishes to, will find it more difficult to pull out soldiers. With the roads to Ladakh closed, both the moving out of troops and their re-induction in an emergency, is extremely difficult.Even as soldiers battle the winter conditions, the greater challenge for the Indian Army lies in anticipating events and preparing for contingencies in the coming summer months. The overall political intent of the Chinese leadership in precipitating the crisis along the border is still open to differing interpretations, but eight months into the standoff, there is greater clarity to their military aims. The PLA military strategy appears to be focused on two objectives — strengthening control over the disputed areas along the LAC and overcoming their war-fighting weaknesses in Tibet.It is becoming increasingly evident that the primary element of the PLA’s military strategy is to change the nature of disputed areas to give permanence to their claims. In Ladakh, this is being attempted by physically occupying the disputed areas on the north bank of Pangong Tso or physically preventing the Indian patrols from going up to their claim lines at Depsang. Despite nine rounds of military-level talks, there has been no movement forward on disengagement from these two areas.The construction of a village in the disputed Longju sector of Arunachal Pradesh is another ploy to firm up China’s claims. While this area has been under Chinese control since 1959, the fact that India also has a claim to this area is well known to both sides. It had been an accepted norm that both countries should avoid any provocative move in the disputed areas. In 2014 and 2016, the PLA had objected to the construction of small irrigation projects at Demchok, claiming this was a disputed area. However, all protocols and norms have now lost their sanctity.In 2005, both countries signed an agreement on the ‘Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question’. Article VII of the agreement states, “In reaching a boundary settlement, the two sides shall safeguard due interests of their settled populations in the border areas.” By building villages and settling civilians in disputed areas, India could be presented with a fait accompli during the border negotiations.The second element of the PLA’s strategy is to overcome its war-fighting weaknesses in Tibet, and many of the steps undertaken by the PLA in this regard precede the Ladakh standoff. The most obvious disadvantage is faced by the PLA Air Force due to the rudimentary support facilities at the airfields and the problems in operating from high-altitude facilities, which limit the fuel and weapon payloads that can be carried by an aircraft. Some of these weaknesses are now being attempted to be overcome through the development of new military facilities. A September 2020 Stratfor report by Sim Tack pointed out that after the Doklam incident of 2017, China “started constructing at least 13 entirely new military positions near its borders with India.”The new constructions include three air bases, five permanent air defence positions, and five heliports. Four air defence positions are coming up within the existing airbases, along with other facilities such as additional runways and blast pens. The report states that the recent Chinese infrastructure developments are aimed at “strengthening its ability to project air power along the entire Indian border.”Another area where the PLA has a deficiency is its training standards and the ability to fight a high-altitude war. Here again, some attempts to improve standards are visible. In the last few years, the Chinese Army has attempted to introduce realism in training by setting up “blue forces” in the combined-arms training centres that act as an enemy to PLA units.Coming specifically to Tibet, the PLA Army and Air Force training exercises have steadily increased over the years. These details have been comprehensively covered in an Observer Research Foundation paper, “PLA joint exercises in Tibet: Implications for India.” What is noteworthy is that in 2018, 2019 and 2020, major PLA exercises were held in January and February, the coldest months of the year.

## Initiative of Mother’s Vision recovery club a team of ex drug users



**Aalo, Jan 31:** The NA recovery club a team of ex drug users, initiative of Mother’s Vision, took out a ‘Say no to drugs and alcohol’ parade all around the town with the theme ‘We do recover’ to create awareness as addition to be a disease in society and also to encourage and motivate those still struggling to come out of Alcoholism and substance abuse that reconnecting with life is possible and joining back into mainstream is not beyond reach if you determined to do so. The club not only provide proactive fellowship to its members in early stage but also help them in social integration



Wales defender Keith Pontin's death may be linked to heading ball

Australian Open tennis players leave quarantine as those remaining express frustration

**London, January 31** : The death of the former Wales and Cardiff defender Keith Pontin may have been linked to heading the ball during his football career, an inquest has heard.Pontin played for Cardiff between 1976 and 1983, winning two caps for Wales, but was diagnosed with dementia in 2015, at the age of 59.His family later said they believed his condition was linked to years of heading the football and multiple concussions during his career. Pontypridd coroner's court heard Pontin died at the Royal Glamorgan hospital on 2 August last year, aged 64.Graeme Hughes, the senior coroner for South Wales Central, opened and adjourned an inquest into Pontin's death. "I am content to hold an inquest touching on the death of the late Keith Pontin," Hughes said. "I do so because of the evidence I have received from my officers and from preliminary postmortem investigations."There is reason to suspect that Mr Pontin's death may have been unnatural in that his death may have been caused or contributed to by his work in that during his earlier life, he was a professional footballer."There is some evidence within the medical investigations that have been undertaken so far

which would suggest a causal or contributory link between his career in football and the development of his Alzheimer's disease and his cause of death as chronic traumatic encephalopathy. This is not the final inquest, I haven't heard all the evidence. The investigation will continue." Hughes said a full inquest into Pontin's death would not take place



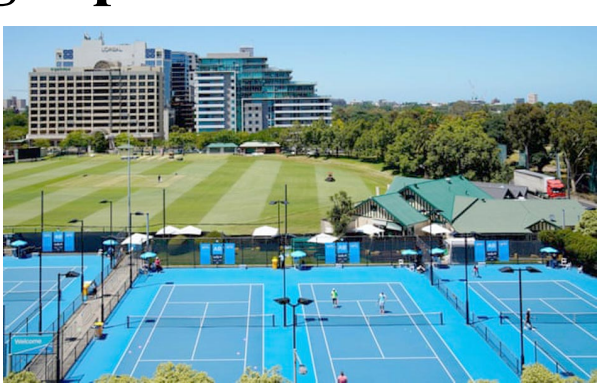
until 3 May 2022, due to the coronavirus pandemic.The news came on the day it was announced Gareth Southgate will take part in a study looking at the potential links between dementia and playing the game.The England manager has volunteered to be part of the Heading study at the London

School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, which is backed by the Football Association and funded by the Drake Foundation.The potential link between increased risk of neurodegenerative disorder and a career in the game has been highlighted again in recent months following confirmation of Sir Bobby Charlton's dementia diagnosis, along with the death of

his brother, Jack, and their 1966 England World Cup winning teammate Nobby Stiles, who had both been suffering with dementia when they died.Southgate said: "This is an incredibly important issue in our game and I'm very happy to play my part in supporting this research. Having

turned 50 last year, I am now eligible to take part in the heading study, which could provide crucial and valuable insight to help people who play the game now and in the future."I would encourage any former professional footballer who is willing and able to take part in the heading or the focus study to do so. Our involvement is absolutely essential if we are to have a greater understanding of this issue; and their support for the studies can be done from their home, either online or over the phone."The focus study is being conducted by the University of Nottingham and is funded by the FA and the Professional Footballers' Association with a selected group of former players and is not able to take further volunteers at this stage. Meanwhile, concussion substitutes will first be used in the Premier League from 6 February. A joint statement from the league and the FA set out the timetable for the new protocol, which will enable teams to make up to two additional permanent concussion substitutes in a match.The new rules will first come into force in the FA Cup from next month's fifth round, the FA confirmed, and will be used in the Women's Super League and Championship from 6 February.

**Melbourn, January 31** : Australian Open tennis players have started to leave hotel quarantine after two weeks of isolation, but those still confined to their rooms are expressing frustration on social media.All players will be released between Thursday and Sunday as the clock runs down on each flight's 14-day quarantine period. But those players in "hard quarantine" have been told they will have to wait an extra day to leave their rooms.Players were notionally to be allowed out of their hotel rooms to practise and train for five hours a day, but the 72 players that arrived on three charter flights with positive Covid-19 cases on board have been forced to stay in their rooms for the full 14 days, making preparing for the championship extremely difficult.US world No 49 Tennys Sandgren expressed displeasure that his hard quarantine would



be extended until midnight Friday."I just found out we're not going to be able to leave the room until midnight tomorrow," Sandgren said on Instagram."That will put us at close to 15 days in this room. It's also another day we can't practice. We play Saturday, Sunday, Monday, play a match on Tuesday. A competitive tennis match ... [Including travel] 16 days off, three days hitting. Tennis match."My name's Tennis Australia and I'm sooooo cool."Sandgren went on to say he had been told that the first day players spent in hard quarantine counted as "day zero" rather than "day one"."So they started the count from zero?" he said.The charter flights have so far been connected to eight Covid-19 cases, including Spanish player Paula Badosa.Sandgren has already faced criticism after Australian authorities decided to allow him to board a plane to from the US to Melbourne despite testing positive to Covid-19. This was due to viral shedding after the player was infected in November, and he has since recovered.Thursday's Instagram video renewed online condemnation with many labelling Sandgren a "sook".The player criticised those who referenced the stark difference in Australian and US Covid-19 death rates."Comparing country's death rates as a diss is truly disgusting. Just call me a piece of shit like a normal person," he wrote on Twitter.Georgia's Oksana Kalashnikova has also expressed her displeasure at the delay.French player Richard Gasquet was one of the first players to leave the Pullman Hotel in Melbourne.The 34-year-old told the Age newspaper that his two week "soft quarantine" wasn't too gruelling."You know we could practise five hours a day, so it was no problem," he said."Two hours of tennis was enough, [plus] I could go to gym, I could see the physio. Everything was perfect "Gasquet said that, along with training, fine dining was on the top of his priority list."In France, there are no restaurants [open] at all, so very happy to be in Australia."A number of players in including grand slam champions Serena Williams and Rafael Nadal have been released in Adelaide where they will play an exhibition match before travelling to Melbourne ahead of the first day of the Open on 8 February.

Manchester United will lack fireworks of old, says Mikel Arteta

**Manchester, January 31** : Mikel Arteta accepts that meetings between Arsenal and Manchester United lack the fire of days past, with VAR contributing to a broader cooling of tempers in high-profile fixtures.Flashpoints were the norm when the two sides faced each other, as they will at the Emirates on Saturday evening, during the 1990s and 2000s. Both have fallen from grace since the days of dominating together at the top and the match-up has lost much of its old sting. Arteta sees it as part of a wider trend in which the intense scrutiny upon players encourages them to behave."I think it has calmed down, but not only with Arsenal and Man United fixtures," he said. "In general you see the way the derbies used to get played and it's not the same right now. The game is evolving, we are educating the players in a different way and for sure they are not allowed to do some of the things they used to. With VAR that's even less. So it's a different game to that time."A game at Old Trafford in 1990 saw a 21-man brawl that led to points deductions for both sides. There was further controversy in 2003 when Arsenal players' reactions to a late Ruud van Nistelrooy penalty miss landed the club a £175,000 fine. The infamous "pizzagate" followed a year later but Arteta thinks the chances of a repeat in the VAR era are slim."You are much more controlled and policed so you know you're not going to get away with certain things that you were used to before," he said. "It's the way the game is evolving. It's a natural thing."This time Arsenal, in ninth, will host second-placed United.

Thomas Tuchel vows 'not to be too stubborn' as Chelsea manager

**Berlin, January 31** : Thomas Tuchel has dismissed concerns about Chelsea's history of sacking managers and said he has worked on improving his stubborn streak after falling out with hierarchies at his former clubs.Tuchel was in an open mood as he was unveiled as Chelsea's manager on Thursday, revealing that he has received a supportive message from Frank Lampard, and he did not shy away from discussing his abrasive reputation. The German left Borussia Dortmund under a cloud in 2017 and was fired by Paris Saint-Germain last month after falling out with the sporting director, Leonardo.There have been suggestions that Tuchel could struggle with the politics at Chelsea, who appointed him on an 18-month deal after firing Lampard. Dortmund's chief executive, Hans-Joachim Watzke, has called the 47-year-old "a difficult guy". Yet Tuchel, who vowed to use Chelsea's academy players, defended himself and insisted he was not worried about working for Roman Abramovich."It's pure passion," Tuchel said. "Also some principles. Your word is your word and I trust the word of a man. There's always two sides to a story and I'm not here to blame anybody. I do also see this in myself. What I like now, why I am very positive, is that I am absolutely self-aware that this is a thing to improve and to be also more relaxed and maybe not to be too stubborn in my beliefs."The other thing is the structure that I find here is very clear and very easy. There are not many people who make the decisions and I can live with that. When things are clear, it is on me as the head coach to on one hand adapt and on the other hand make my opinion clear and give analysis of where I think we can improve. I hope this comes along in the right way."Tuchel had one training session before his first game, a 0-0 home draw with Wolves on Wednesday. Chelsea, who host Burnley on Sunday, lie eighth in the Premier League despite spending £220m last summer. Tuchel knows he must qualify for the Champions League this season and challenge for trophies as soon as possible."Maybe nobody expects me to be here long, maybe because of the history of coaches and Chelsea," Tuchel said. "Maybe I stay long. If I don't stay long, I don't stay long. I cannot lose my focus right now."Tuchel has not spoken to Abramovich. His discussions were with Marina Granovskaia, the influential director, and Petr Cech, the technical and performance adviser. "This was first of all confidential and then very trustful," Tuchel said. "Very honest and very clear. There was no moment of hesitation."Although Chelsea were drab against Wolves, Tuchel's favoured style is attacking, aggressive football. "I want to feel a certain level of energy," he said. "I want to feel a special bond between the players. I want to be entertained."Tuchel's first starting lineup was heavy on experience and contained one academy player, Callum Hudson-Odoi. Yet he made a point of praising Mason Mount, who was pivotal for Lampard, and indicated that Billy Gilmour might not leave on loan.The tone was positive. Tuchel laughed when asked whether he is a football nerd or a cool guy. "You want me to tell you how cool I am?" he said. "How uncool would that be? How nerdy would it be if I said now how cool I am! No, I am here as a manager. It is about football, football, football."I'm pretty normal. I like to spend time with my family. I learned that you need your time off. You cannot control everything. I am not the guy who thinks he can treat a player better than the physiotherapist, I am not the guy who thinks I can clean the boots better, or do the kit better than the kit guys or drive the bus better than the bus driver. I am the guy for the dressing room, for the tactics. I love to work in a nice environment where it is possible to smile and don't confuse it with not being competitive. I know that it's on me to live up to these principles."The only note of controversy came when Tuchel admitted to a childhood love of Tottenham, who host his side next Thursday. "Now I'm absolutely aware I work for their big rivals," he said. "You can be very, very sure we will do everything we can to beat them."

French Brexit travel rules raise fears over Six Nations matches

**Paris, January 31** : Fresh doubts over whether the Six Nations will go ahead as scheduled have emerged with Brexit red tape presenting a stumbling block to the tournament. Organisers have revealed they are still waiting on approval from the French government over travel exemptions - required with the UK no longer part of the EU - 10 days before the championship begins.After the French authorities updated their regulations this week, all travellers from non-EU countries are subject to mandatory seven-day quarantine, including French citizens. That threatens France following their match at Twickenham as well trips to Paris for Scotland and Wales.Six Nations organisers said on Wednesday they are confident of receiving exemption from the French government - but there have been recent examples of sports teams having to postpone games, including two European handball fixtures, due to tighter border controls.Despite their optimism, contingency plans for the tournament have been explored. Organisers are determined to avoid cancelling matches, favouring postponement instead, but using fallow weeks raises problems over player release and extending the tournament is fraught with difficulty. That France play England on 13 March and Wales seven days later on the tournament's final weekend could be a huge problem.The French government is increasingly concerned by the UK variant of Covid-19, and prevented clubs taking part in the latest rounds of two European competitions.The French sports minister, Roxana Maracineanu, has demanded further health guarantees before giving approval for Les Bleus to play against UK



countries and while Six Nations organisers are confident their reinforced protocols - including twice-weekly testing - will allay those concerns it remains to be seen whether they are sufficient to guarantee travel exemption."We are in constant dialogue with the French government through the [French federation]," the Six Nations chief executive, Ben Morel, said. "We've provided all our protocols, which have been considered extremely robust, and we are seeking some clarification on the specific rules on quarantine exemptions. That's on entry from the UK, whether it's re-entry for a French team or other unions."The one thing that needs to be clarified is precise travel exemption between the non-EU and French territory. That affects matches a bit further along in the schedule. But we are confident we will get the right authorisation to proceed. We are confident in our ability to stage the matches at the right time, it's more what logistical gymnastics we need to adapt to."Morel also confirmed the idea of hosting the tournament in one location has been briefly discussed,

but never seriously entertained. Last weekend the Racing 92 owner, Jacky Lorenzetti, offered the use of La Défense Arena in Paris, but Morel believes players and staff are safer in biosecure bubbles at their training bases.He said: "We think our protocols are better suited in keeping the unions where they are in their international training bases with charter flights and controlled travel. There are some stadium sponsor commitments relevant to each of the unions, which is also a consideration, but fundamentally our protocols are robust for the Six Nations to continue."Dates for the Women's Six Nations are expected to be confirmed next week, with a slot in early spring most likely. Morel said organisers have not found a title sponsor nor a UK broadcaster for the championship, but hope to resolve both issues. He also said the Women's Six Nations may take place at a different time of year to the men's on a permanent basis, as revealed by the Guardian last April. "I'm a strong believer that the specific window would enhance and give appropriate visibility."

Tanguy Ndombele holds key to Spurs' future but is held back by Mourinho

**London, January 31** : Earlier this week a video clip emerged from a recent Tottenham training session. In it, Tanguy Ndombele has the ball in a practice game. He feints to the left, then the right. Then he flicks the ball out of reach with a deft toe, leaving his hapless opponent - a certain Harry Kane - lunging awkwardly at thin air.Look. Maybe it was pure coincidence that just a couple of days after having his ankles humiliatingly twisted by one of his own teammates, Kane limped off at half-time against Liverpool with an ankle injury. Who can say? In any case, the reason for bringing this up here is to underline the silken, indiscriminate talent of Ndombele, a player who - even in defeat - seems to hold the key to

Tottenham's future."Some of them had a very positive performance, punished by individual mistakes," said José Mourinho of his players afterwards. Of course, Toby Alderweireld hadn't left himself on the bench. Matt Doherty hadn't autonomously decided to station himself at left-back. But the thrust of his analysis was correct: this was a performance of light and shade, particularly from Tottenham's midfield two, the restless Pierre-Emile Højbjerg and the ruthless Ndombele. Ultimately, the difference between the two sides here was not in terms of possession but penetration. Tottenham actually attempted more passes than Liverpool (586 to 584), but significantly fewer into the final

third (85 to 149) or the penalty area (5 to 18). There may be a lesson for Tottenham here, if only they are shrewd enough to learn it.Højbjerg may be the lungs of this team, Kane and Son Heung-min the ticking heart. But Ndombele, their bewitching £60m midfielder, has been the soul, and was in supreme form here, despite being hounded by what seemed at times like half a dozen red shirts. It was he who began the move for Son's early disallowed goal, and sending Thiago Alcántara for a Fanta and chips with an outrageous body feint.The phrase often used to describe Ndombele is "press-resistant": he picks up the ball in the most crowded area of the pitch and somehow manages to use it. In doing this,

he has the full bag of tricks: deft technical skills, the strength to hold off challenges and the vision to get rid at the right moment.As we saw against Sheffield United and Wolves, he also has an unerring eye for goal. A more ambitious club, with a clear commitment to attacking possession football, would surely look to build a team around his unique technical gifts.But this is Tottenham and, more pertinently, this is Mourinho's Tottenham, a team whose reactive tendencies already seem hard-wired, even in situations where you would expect them to take the



initiative. In recent weeks Fulham, Wolves, Crystal Palace and Stoke have all been allowed back into games that Spurs were comfortably shifting.



# Katie Boulter: 'We're lucky to be here. I feel very grateful to be in this quarantine'

**London, January 31** : The British tennis player on her preparations for the Australian Open, her battle with injuries and life in lockdown "It's something that I struggle with a little," Katie Boulter says in her hotel room in Melbourne at the end of a long and draining day which began with yet another test for Covid before, finally, she will be free to play tennis in a warm-up tourna-

ment next week. "I'm tested every single day here but you just never know what might happen. I've taken lots of tests these past few weeks and it's pretty stressful. I've got a couple more to go until the



end of quarantine and then hopefully all these stresses can be relieved. "It's just after eight on Thursday night in Melbourne and Boulter and I are in the midst of a second interview after we spoke at length last month. The strain of the Covid blues are never far from our conversations even though Boulter is an upbeat 24-year-old who also talks happily about her beloved Leicester City and her re-

newed hope that she will soon be playing better tennis than she did when ranked world No 82 just before injury struck her down in April 2019. A week on Monday, the delayed Australian Open will begin

as Boulter resumes a career that has sometimes seemed blighted by bad luck. She had just started an encouraging return last March, after missing most of 2019 while battling a stress fracture in her back and chronic fatigue syndrome, when the first lockdown changed everything. Boulter now has a wildcard which guarantees her entry into the first major of the year but every Covid test casts a shadow of worry that all her hard work to get back on court will end suddenly. "We're doing PCR tests every single day and it normally takes 24 hours to get the result," she explains. "So each day you have to wait till the next day for the results – and then you take another test." Boulter has overcome so much adversity the past few years that she makes it plain she is not complaining. Some of her contemporaries on the men's and women's tour have moaned about their apparent hardship while cocooned in hotel rooms with all their expenses paid for by the tournament organisers. Boulter is different and, having worked as a volunteer for Age UK during the first lockdown, she is deeply aware that the anxieties and inconvenience of living in a bubble and daily Covid tests do not matter much when compared to the grief and distress suffered by millions of people around the world. Roberto Bautista Agut, the world No 13, said quarantine was "like being in jail, with wifi" but Boulter offers a more accurate response. "It's not easy but we have to keep reminding ourselves of how lucky we are to be here. I feel very grateful to be in this quarantine, to be in this country and given the chance to compete. There's a lot going on in the world that is far worse." She also acknowledges that she is among the more fortunate group who have not been confined to a hard lockdown. In contrast, 72 players have been locked inside their rooms for a fortnight and reduced to hitting balls against mattresses or the wall after they flew in on charter flights that carried people who then tested positive for Covid. "I was talking to Heather Watson [her British Fed Cup teammate who was unlucky enough to be on one of the contaminated flights] and some of the other girls in the same situation and it's really difficult for them. My heart goes out to them – but the main thing is that they're healthy

and hopefully after these 14 days are up they can still compete." Boulter has been through short spells of hard quarantine in Dubai and Melbourne this month but over the past week there have been brief bursts of comparative normality. "I actually had a really good day today," she says. "I'm a little tired but I'm feeling good. I had five hours out of my room. I got two hours on the court, an hour-and-a-half in the gym and the rest for food. I'm definitely going to sleep well tonight." She laughs, as she did last month when saying: "I've had enough adversity to last a long time." In April 2019, Boulter and Jo Konta gave so much as GB beat Kazakhstan in a play-off to clinch promotion to the elite group stages of the Fed Cup for the first time in 26 years. Boulter played two gruelling three-set matches and, after beating Zarina Diyas 6-7, 6-4, 6-1, she sealed the tie. But in the process she suffered the spinal stress fracture that would keep her out of the game the rest of the year. Boulter's rehabilitation was also made much more difficult by her chronic fatigue. It was a trial to which she had been long accustomed as she has endured this mysterious and sapping illness since her late teens. "I reached my highest ranking of 82 only practising once a day and doing zero gym," she says. "I'm still very careful with what I do. There are certain exercises I've categorically ruled out. But in terms of chronic fatigue I now feel like I've officially conquered it. I am as strong as I have ever been physically. And mentally I feel like I'm in a great place after that very difficult time [in 2019]. It gives me a lot of faith I can get back to being No 82 and then push on from there." Covid presented a new challenge because last March, while on the comeback trail in Indian Wells, she beat Anna Blinkova, who was then world No 60. "I felt I was back to my best as I'd been playing some very good tennis consistently, day in, day out. I struggled when I started again and had a tough time at the Australian [where she lost in the first round, 6-4, 7-5 to Elena Svitolina, the No 5 seed]. But it was all very good because I was practising with top players every single day. So I played really well going into Indian Wells and I felt confident.

## Rohan Bopanna awaits COVID-19 quarantine freedom, new doubles partner

**New Delhi, January 31** : Bopanna is appreciative of the reasons behind the strict local COVID-19 regulations and grateful for the daily contact from Tennis Australia and the Victorian health authorities. Bopanna will also have to look for a new men's doubles partner, however, after Joao Sousa was unable to travel to Australia on time after testing COVID-19 positive. Bopanna has kept himself busy during isolation by making videos to post on Instagram and completing units of an online course on international entertainment and sports marketing. Bopanna will play mixed doubles with China's Duan

need to stay positive no matter what. "You're surrounded by four walls. The view from my room is absolutely zero, I have a wall right in front of the window." Bopanna is appreciative of the reasons behind the strict local COVID-19 regulations and grateful for the daily contact from Tennis Australia and the Victorian health authorities. Unable to leave his room to train every day like most of the other players, Bopanna has been relying on exercise bands and mats to help try to stay fit. "Yes, it can get frustrating," he said in an interview from his hotel room. "At the end of the day, none of the players have experienced this. It's different. The closer it gets



Yingying and will be on the lookout for a new partner for the men's before the draws are made on February 4. The Portuguese, world No. 92 in singles, returned a negative test subsequently and was without symptoms but the strict protocols forced him to withdraw from the tournament. Rohan Bopanna cannot wait to breathe fresh Melbourne air when his 14-day quarantine ends on Saturday but finding a partner for the Australian Open men's doubles will also be near the top of his list when he is finally granted his freedom. The 40-year-old Indian, a former doubles world number three, is one of 72 players who have been confined to their hotel rooms in Melbourne after fellow passengers on the flights that brought them to Australia tested positive for COVID-19. "I'd had a good two-and-a-half weeks of training back home in Bangalore at my academy," Bopanna, who won the 2017 French Open mixed doubles title and reached the final at Melbourne Park three years ago, told "I was really looking forward to coming and making use of a good programme. Suddenly when you are in lockdown for 14 days, there's only that much an athlete can do in this room. You lose strength in your muscles. Mentally it is challenging, you

to the finish line it's always better. I want to go out and practise, play tennis, that's what I've come all the way, this many miles, to do." Bopanna will also have to look for a new men's doubles partner, however, after Joao Sousa was unable to travel to Australia on time after testing COVID-19 positive. The Portuguese, world No. 92 in singles, returned a negative test subsequently and was without symptoms but the strict protocols forced him to withdraw from the tournament. Bopanna will play mixed doubles with China's Duan Yingying and will be on the lookout for a new partner for the men's before the draws are made on February 4. "I'm sure I will find someone. That's not a problem but I need to see who's available at the moment," said the Indian, who will play with Denmark's Frederik Nielsen in men's doubles in next week's ATP event at Melbourne Park. Bopanna has kept himself busy during isolation by making videos to post on Instagram and completing units of an online course on international entertainment and sports marketing. The end to his quarantine cannot come soon enough, though. "Just to walk outside and breathe the fresh air, I am breathing the same air in the room for 14 days, I don't think it is healthy," he said.

## Matthew Wade dropped for Australia's Test tour of South Africa

**London, January 31** : Matthew Wade has been dropped from Australia's Test squad to tour South Africa but will still be representing his country after being named vice-captain of the Twenty20 squad to tour New Zealand at the same time. Wade was the big omission in Wednesday's dual squad announcement for the simultaneous tours, with in-form South Australia wicketkeeper Alex Carey replacing him for the three-Test tour next month. Queensland fast bowler Mark Steketee is the other new face in the squad, earning his first tour nod after strong Sheffield Shield and Big Bash League form. Travis Head has been retained, despite Wade pipping him for the No 5 position for the final two Tests against India, while Tim Paine is expected to wear the gloves after being retained as captain. Wade was thrust into the unfamiliar role of opener to begin the Test series but earned criticism for some loose dismissals as he went 14 innings without a half-century as India shocked the hosts to win the series 2-1. Head will compete with Moises Henriques and Carey, who struck a BBL century last week and could play as a specialist batsman, for the vacant middle-order spot. Meanwhile Aaron Finch will captain the T20 side for the five-game series against the Black Caps. He will lead an 18-man squad that includes emerging spinner

Tanveer Sanga and fit-again fast bowler Jhye Richardson and will not change regardless of the status of the South African tour, which remains subject to suitable biosecurity arrangements. Test squad: Tim Paine (captain), Pat Cummins (vice-captain), Sean Abbott, Alex Carey, Cameron Green, Marcus Harris, Josh Hazlewood, Travis Head, Moises Henriques, Marcus Labuschagne, Nathan Lyon, Michael Neser, James Pattinson, Will Pucovski, Steve Smith, Mitchell Starc, Mark Steketee, Mitchell Swepson, David Warner. T20 squad: Aaron Finch (captain), Matthew Wade (vice-captain), Ashton Agar, Jason Behrendorff, Mitchell Marsh, Glenn Maxwell, Ben McDermott, Riley Meredith, Josh Philippe, Jhye Richardson, Kane Richardson, Daniel Sams, Tanveer Sangha, D'Arcy Short, Marcus Stoinis, Ashton Turner, Andrew Tye, Adam Zampa.



## Ristiano Ronaldo under investigation for breaching COVID-19 rules with girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez

**London, January 31** : Citing reports in Italy, Goal.com said Ronaldo took Rodriguez from the Piedmont region to Valle d'Aosta on Tuesday for an overnight stay in a resort hotel before returning to Turin the next day. If found guilty of breaking coronavirus rules, Ronaldo and Rodriguez could both face a fine. Juventus are currently preparing for the Serie A clash against Sampdoria, slated to take place on Saturday. Under current Italian coronavirus rules, the couple should not have left the town of Turin. They each risk a fine of 400 euros (\$485). Juventus' Cristiano Ronaldo is

under investigation for allegedly breaching COVID-19 rules after his girlfriend Georgina Rodriguez shared a video on social media of the couple riding a snowmobile at a mountain resort in Italy. According to Goal.com, the footage shared by Rodriguez, earlier this week, has sparked an inquest from Valle d'Aosta police as the Italian laws currently prohibit travelling between the 'orange zones' unless proceeding to a second home or receiving valid clearance for work reasons. However, the couple has been accused of flouting protocols to celebrate Rodriguez's 27th birthday. Cit-



ing reports in Italy, Goal.com said Ronaldo took Rodriguez from the Piedmont region to Valle d'Aosta on Tuesday for an overnight stay in a resort hotel before returning to Turin the next day. If found guilty of breaking coronavirus

rules, Ronaldo and Rodriguez could both face a fine. Ronaldo has previously tested positive for coronavirus. The player was diagnosed with the infection in October last year. Juventus are currently preparing for the Serie A clash against Sampdoria, slated to take place on Saturday. The Gazzetta dello Sport newspaper said Ronaldo and Rodriguez spent Tuesday night in a hotel and took a ride in the snow the next morning, before returning to Turin. Under current Italian coronavirus rules, the couple should not have left the town of Turin. They each risk a fine of 400 euros (\$485).

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