

# The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Rare species of snakes

**Guwahati, February 4:** An environment enthusiast in south Assam's Silchar has rescued five rare species of snake from the possession of a snake charmer. Sumit Nath recovered the five serpents from a snake charmer who was found to be demonstrating the trade at a local market in Irongmara near Assam University on Sunday. "When I was going from my CTET examination, I saw a crowd gazing at the demonstration by the snake charmer. A closer look into the baskets revealed that the charmer had brought species of short-nosed vine snake, ornate flying snake, brown vine snake, red sand boa and spectacled cobra," Nath said. "The charmer was caught napping regarding the rules under the Wildlife Act as he fled the spot in no time," he said.

### Carcass of tigress found

**Guwahati, February 4:** The carcass of a tigress was recovered in the forest under the Tajeng camp of Kohora range of Kaziranga National Park on Tuesday morning. The news of the recovery of the dead tigress was immediately intimated to the forest department authorities in the national park by the forest guards on duty. Later, at the initiative of Kaziranga National Park director P Sivakumar and under the leadership of deputy conservators of forest, Pradip Verma, Khargaram Dekaraja, forest range officer Selim Ahmed, a team of the forest department including veterinarians Dr Biswajit Barua, Dr Arindam Pachoni and Dr Indranee Borgohain reached the spot.

### Rules under Citizenship (Amendment) Act

**New Delhi, February 4:** The rules for implementation of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 [CAA] are under preparation, Union minister of state for home Nityanand Rai told the Lok Sabha. In the written reply to a question by Assam's Congress MP Abdul Khaleque, MoS for home Rai said the CAA, 2019 was notified on December 12, 2019 and it has come into force from January 10, 2020. "The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 [CAA] has been notified on December 12, 2019 and has come into force w.e.f. January 10, 2020. The rules under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA) are under preparation."

## Sonowal visits Dhekiajuli; takes stock of the preparations of PM's programme

**Guwahati, February 4:** In view of the Prime Minister's visit to Dhekiajuli in Assam on 7 February, Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal today visited Dhekiajuli to take stock of the elaborate preparations put in place for the high-profile programme. Chief Minister Sonowal went straight to the

meeting venue from where the Prime Minister would ceremoniously launch the Assam Mala Project for the upgradation of State highways in the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi would also lay the foundation stones of two medical colleges of Biswanath and Charaideo from the

same venue. Chief Minister Sonowal who was accompanied by Industry and Commerce Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, Handloom and Textile Minister Ranjit Dutta, Panchayat and Rural Development Minister Naba Kumar Doley, MLA Dhekiajuli Ashok Singhal, MLA Sootea Padma Hazarika, MLA Promode Borthakur Biswanath and other high officials including Chief Secretary Jishnu Baruah and DGP Bhaskar Jyoti Mahanta inspected all the installations including pandals, dais and other ancillaries. The Chief Minister reviewed the preparedness for helipad which is adjacent to the meeting venue and took stock of the requirements put in place. Sonowal also took a look of all arrangements so that the large crowd who will be congregating at the meeting venue experience no hassle. Sonowal also took stock of the traffic

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## ASSTC signed MoU with NESAC for improvement of Land Record Management



**Guwahati, February 4:** Assam Survey and Settlement Training Centre (ASSTC) on Monday signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the North-East Space Application Centre (NESAC) for five years in presence of Jogen Mohan, Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Revenue and Disaster Management at the ASSTC Campus in Guwahati. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister hailed NESAC for coming forward in this connection. He informed the gathering about the three major components of the

MoU, which include, free of cost certificate and diploma courses by NESAC at ASSTC for producing trained individuals in order to generate employment, updated GIS based technology usage for better land management and conducting research projects, seminars, workshops etc., in the field of modern land management. The Minister also reiterated that the Government is committed to turning ASSTC into a centre of excellence, which has long chequered history since its inception in 1882, and now stands as a Heritage Department. The signatories of the MoU were Principal of ASSTC

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## Assam hopes to reap benefits of big health outlay: Himanta Biswa Sarma

**Guwahati, February 4:** An extraordinary 137% increase in budget outlay for health and Rs 35,000 crore allocation for Covid-19 vaccine has ushered in a ray of hope for the health sector in Assam, where specialized healthcare in many district peripheries is still a distant dream. Health experts here said it's now high time to build specialized treatment facilities in the rural areas with the enhanced budgetary allocation for health. While state health minister Himanta Biswa Sarma thanked PM and FM for the health allocations, the Indian Medical Association's (IMA) Assam chapter has pressed the government for covering more



workers from the non-government healthcare institutions under vaccination drive. "My compliments to Hon PM Sri @narendramodi and FM Smt @nsitharaman for a generous booster dose for health," Himanta tweeted. The ongoing first phase Covid vaccination drive is mostly benefiting the government health staff, though the government of late has given some

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**New Delhi, February 4:** The Indian Army has ordered a court of inquiry (CoI) into a case relating to differences between a top army commander and his second-in-command, officials familiar with the matter said on Tuesday. A CoI at this level is rare. The development comes months after army chief General Manoj Mukund Naravane nominated a senior lieutenant general to iron out the

rift between the two senior officers in September. Central Army commander Lieutenant General IS Ghuman will conduct the CoI, the officials said. Ghuman, who was commissioned in 1981, is senior to both the officers. The differences -- rare in the army's top echelons -- between the head of the Jaipur-based South Western Command and his chief of staff relate to roles and responsibilities of various offices in the command headquarters. The South Western Command is headed by Lieutenant General Alok Kler, an armoured corps

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## BJP turning Parliament into a venue for releasing state election manifestos: Assam Congress

**Guwahati, February 4:** Opposition in poll-bound Assam, lashed out at the government after Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman tabled the first ever digital Union Budget on Monday. Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president and Rajya Sabha MP, Ripun Bora, blamed the BJP-led government for allegedly turning Parliament into a venue for releasing state election manifestos. "This Budget is nothing but an election manifesto full of jumlas!" said Bora. Other Opposition parties are sceptical of the mega infrastructure projects for Assam and other poll-bound states and said the burning issues



of communities cannot be resolved by the Budget. Congress deputy leader in Lok Sabha Gaurav Gogoi accused BJP of failing to address the main demands of the states which have got a special mention. "For Assam, the Union Budget mentioned the tea community but there were no steps

to ensure a revised minimum daily wage for them (Rs 351)," said Gogoi. Sitharaman announced Rs 1,000 crore for tea garden workers, especially for those from Assam and West Bengal. But leader of Opposition in state assembly, Debabrata Saikia, said many primary schools in the

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## Home ministry has time till July 2021 to frame and notify rules for CAA implementation



**Guwahati, February 4:** The Ministry of Home Affairs informed the Lok Sabha Tuesday that it has been given extra time till July 2021 to frame and notify the rules to implement the Citizenship (Amendment) Act. Until the rules are not notified, the Act cannot be implemented. The

additional time has been granted by committees of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. Minister of State Nityanand Rai said in response to a parliamentary question. The CAA was passed by the Lok Sabha on 9 December 2019 and by the Rajya Sabha on 11 Decem-

ber 2019. It came into force on 10 January, but the rules for implementation are still being drawn up. The Act proposes that people from six religions - Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian - from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan will be granted citizenship if they arrived in India before 31 December 2014. The upcoming assembly elections in West Bengal and Assam have put the ruling BJP in a bind over the implementation of the CAA. In Bengal, where the BJP is hoping to win elections for the first time, the Matua community and others have been waiting for the

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## Ex-diplomat in AJP advisory panel to devise poll strategy



**Guwahati, February 4:** Aasu-backed AJP has constituted an Economic Planning Advisory Council under the chairmanship of renowned financial economist and former diplomat Jaimini Bhagwati. While former bureaucrat CK Das, retired additional chief secretary of Assam, is the vice-chairman

of the council, it has several subject experts from India and abroad as members. The new regional party borne out of the anti-CAA movement has already resolved to provide an earning source to at least one member of a family, if they come to power in the upcoming Assam elections. AJP is committed to estab-

lishing economic and social uplift for all legitimate residents of Assam. This is equally important for the safety and security of the people of Assam. We are taking an initiative to develop a financial and economic roadmap with practical short, medium and long-term steps to strengthen Assam's economy through government and self-help steps, so that in future, Assam's government can help provide adequate employment and create the infrastructure and environment wherein entrepreneurship can flourish," said AJP president

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## NE business bodies hail no new taxes, focus on infra boost



**Guwahati, February 4:** Federation of Industry and Commerce of North Eastern Region (FINER) and Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Ficci), hailed the Budget, saying the government had not raised any new taxes despite the pandemic, which is commendable, and shows that it was focused on growth. FINER president Pabitra Buragohain said, "The government has not raised spending by tax collection. The government has chalked out a spending programme, which is focused on capital expenditure, which will spur growth. An

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## 'Aatmanirbharta' named Oxford Hindi word of 2020, in boost to PM Narendra Modi's call for self-reliant India

**washington, February 4:** In a statement, Oxford Languages said in the early months of the pandemic when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's COVID-19 recovery package, he emphasised the need to become self-reliant as a country, as an economy, as a society and as individuals, in a bid to navigate the perils of the pandemic. Oxford Languages said in the early months of the pandemic when PM Narendra Modi emphasised the need to become self-reliant as a country, there was a massive increase in the usage of

'aatmanirbharta' following the prime minister's address. 'Aatmanirbharta' implying self-reliance has been named by Oxford Languages as its Hindi word of the year 2020 as it "validated the day-to-day achievements of the countless Indians who dealt with and survived the perils of a pandemic". The word was chosen by an advisory panel of language experts Kritika Agrawal, Poonam Nigam Sahay and Imogen Foxell. The Oxford Hindi word of the year is a word or expression that is chosen to reflect the ethos, mood, or preoccupations of the passing

year, and have lasting potential as a term of cultural significance. In a statement, Oxford Languages said in the early months of the pandemic when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's COVID-19 recovery package, he emphasised the need to become self-reliant as a country, as an economy, as a society and as indi-



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## Celebrating World Cancer Day 2021

**World Cancer Day observed at State cancer Institute, GMCH organised by India Tourism, an initiative by Byatikram MASDO**



**Guwahati, Feb 04 :** On the occasion of 'World Cancer day 2021', Indiatourism North East in association with Byatikram MASDO celebrated the day by visiting the cancer patients of the State Cancer Institute, GMCH. To uplift the spirit of the cancer patients the entire team celebrated the day with great enthusiasm. The program was attended by Shri Sankha Subhra Devbarman, Regional Director, India Tourism North East; Dr. Bibhash Chandra Goswami, Director, State Cancer Institute; Dr. Devajit Choudhury, Superintendent, State Cancer Institute; Dr. Neelakshi Mahanta, Professor Medical Oncology, Dr. NK Kalita, Professor & Consultant of Oncology, State Cancer Institute; Dr. Saumen Bharatiya, President of Byatikram MASDO, the faculty members and staffs of the State Cancer Institute and many others. The program started from 11:30 AM onwards with the felicitation of the eminent guests followed by the auspicious lamp lighting ceremony. The Director of the State Cancer Institute, Dr. Bibhash Chandra Goswami delivering his speech said that "PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE", so to live a healthy life we should eat healthy, and to fight against a disease like cancer one must be careful in the early detection and proper treatment". Marking the occasion Shri Sankha Subhra Devbarman delivered his valuable speech to support and encourage the cancer patients. He put forward a question, 'How tourism got involved with World Cancer Day?' In which there were a few responses to which he answered saying that Govt. of India along with tourism is involved in medical and wellness tourism getting popularized and India billions of people are getting treatment at an affordable price. He ended up his speech saying, 'We are proud of our doctors'. After that Dr. Saumen Bharatiya delivered his speech saying that Byatikram MASDO will keep on engaging in such activities raising awareness among all the people. The same was followed upon by our other eminent guests with a message to prevent early diagnosis, taking proper treatment and to spread the message to break some myths and superstitions related to cancer to the world as well as in the scientific society. After sharing their valuable speeches, the program was proceeded by the cake cutting ceremony beautifully baked with the "I am and I Will" theme by Jabin Akhtar, Cake Owner of the Baking Tale in order to celebrate the occasion. The State Cancer Hospital has a dedicated team of Surgical, Medical and Radiation Oncologist, Pain & Palliative care, Anaesthesia and Critical care specialists who are rendering services to cancer patients of Assam as well as neighbouring state. In the end of the program, foods were distributed among the cancer patients and a few essential items were also contributed to the patients. The program was concluded on a positive note.

## AREIDA Welcomes the Union budget 2021-2022

**Guwahati, Feb 04 :** AREIDA welcomes the union budget 2021. AREIDA President P.K. Sharma, said that the budget is clearly aimed at post pandemic economic revival. For the Real Estate sector it aims to boost housing demand thereby creating economic activity and job creation. Extension of tax holiday for affordable housing projects for one more year is most welcome and the industry acknowledges with gratitude this core demand of the real estate industry. Deduction of interest on home loans has also been extended which will boost the housing sector. Setting up of developmental financial institution with 20,000 crore will increase liquidity

and access to required funding for the real estate sector. Announcement of Asset Reconstruction Company to help banks tackle bad loans will reduce the pressure on banking sector as NPA's will now be handled by these entities. Proposed amendments to allow debt funding through REIT, InvITs shall help in attracting more investment in the real estate sector. The proposal to make dividend payment from REIT, and InvITs exempt from TDS shall attract retail investors to RIET. The Union Government has clearly acknowledged the importance of the real estate sector in the economy of the country.

## Arms, Ammunition Recovered in Kokrajhar, 6 Detained



**Kokrajhar, Feb 04 :** Basis of a source information, that some miscreants equipped with arms/ammunitions and explosive are moving in a Scorpio vehicle at village Nasraibil area under Saraibil BOP of Gossaigaon PS, IC Saraibil SI Mithun Taye and his team stopped the vehicle bearing registration No. AS16A4165 which was roaming there and on search the vehicle, the following items have been recovered.

- 1) AK 56 = 5 (five) Nos.
- 2) AK 56 magazine = 8 (eight) Nos.
- 3) HK 33E = 1(one) No.
- 4) HK 33E magazine = 1(one) No.
- 5) UBGL = 1(One) No.
- 6) UBGL Cell = 11(eleven) Nos.
- 7) Chinese Hand Grenade = 8 (eight) Nos. &

8) AK 56 ammunition = 300 (three hundred) Nos. along with BP Pouch, Mobile handset 5 nos, Blankets, Plastics, tooth brushes etc. In this connection 6 (six) persons have been apprehended who were carrying these Arms and ammunitions. Interrogation is on. The below noted persons have been apprehended :-

- 1) Snmanjay Basumatary @ Bogla (35 yrs) S/O Bijen Basumatary, vill- West Bismuri, OP- Bishmuri, PS & Dsit- Kokrajhar.
- 2) Rabinath Narzary @ Ganda (25 yrs) S/O Tabin Narzary, Vill- No-1 Mahendrapur, PS- Kachugaon, Dist- Kokrajhar.
- 3) Pungka Basumatary @ Langkhu S/O Serga Basumatary, Vill- Jaoliapara, PS & Dist- Kokrajhar.
- 4) Mwktag Basumatary @ Mamo S/O Lt. Nagendra Basumatary Vill- No-2 Pakhriguri PS & Dsit- Kokrajhar.
- 5) Manipal Mushahary (34 yrs) S/O Lt. Maheswar Mushahary Vill- Gopalgaoon-PS- Dotma Dist- Kokrajhar.
- 6) Swmkwr Basumatary (26 yrs) S/O Dharen Basumatary, Vill- No -2 Taraibari, PS- Dhekiajoli, Dist- Sonitpur.

## Infant Jesus Church at Shantiniketan installs Stations of The Cross; draws people of all faiths

**Kolkata, February 04 :** The Infant Jesus Church of Makrampur at Shantiniketan has installed a Station of The Cross - depicting the crucifixion of Christ - and a grotto in the shape of a conch shell dedicated to the Lady of Lourdes. "The Church, which is drawing a lot of visitors, has become a pilgrim centre in Birbhum district for people of all faiths since the Jubilee Year of Mercy declared by the Pope. It is an added attraction in Shantiniketan where people come to seek peace, tranquility and also appreciate the unique spiritual atmosphere. We shall celebrate a Feast on February 2, 2021, for the first time this year," said Bolpur parish priest, Father Anthony Raj, who belongs to the Asansol diocese. "This year the patronal feast was held on 2nd February 2021 with the inauguration of open air Stations of the Cross with some 54 life-size statues depicting the incidents in the final journey of Jesus carrying his cross to be Crucified on Calvary hill. It was during these pandemic times that our Parish Pastoral Council decided to put up the Stations of the Cross and a Grotto dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes," Fr Raj said. The Sta-



tions of The Cross, also known as The Way of the Cross, is a depiction of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and accompanying prayers. The resurrection of Christ from the dead is celebrated as Easter - the oldest of Christian festivals. The Infant Jesus Church has a statue of Jesus under an imposing banyan tree seated in a lotus position imparting his teaching and blessings to all. This is in accordance with the popular tradition of open air classes started by Kabi Guru Rabindranath Tagore. The Church also has local Santhal tribal motifs and reliefs have been incorporated in the facade of the church designed and curated by Subrata Ganguly of Church Art of Kolkata - an art & design fabrication firm

specializing in inculturation of local cultures in keeping with the canon laws and Christian traditions and conventions. The same local tribal art forms have also been incorporated in the stained glasses adorning the church. There is also a statue of a mother holding a child and a lamb which is symbolic of all-caring mother who is at the very centre of our community and social life. "The Stations of The Cross has 54 life-size statues and the grotto, in the shape of a conch shell, is influenced by Indian tradition. We have incorporated the local traditions of Shantiniketan while trying to integrate the church decor with the artistic style and philosophy of Kabi Guru Rabindranath Tagore and also popular traditions like the

open air classrooms which he had started," said Subrata Ganguly, founder-director of Church Art. Christian presence and influence was felt from the birth of Shantiniketan. Tagore had invited Bramhabanday Upadhyaya the founding father of Indian Catholic theology, who spearheaded the Hinduisation of Christianity on the basis of his Thomistic reading of Saccid?nanda. From May 1981, Salesians from Joypur, Suri parish, looked after the Bolpur mission and Salesian Fr Cyriac Manianchira purchased a plot of land to develop the Bolpur mission. In 1993, Salesians handed over Bolpur subdivision to the Archdiocese of Calcutta and Fr. Valerian Fernandes was appointed first Priest-in-Charge.

## A year ago on Reddit I suggested investing in GameStop. But I never expected this



Just over a year ago, I published some thoughts on r/WallStreetBets (WSB), a Reddit forum that I like to check out every now and again. The post is called GameStop Investment Thesis. My idea was that the US retailer GameStop - a bricks-and-mortar shop that sells video games, consoles, Funko Pop! toys

and other miscellanea to enthusiasts, or nerds, like myself - might be worth investing in. The business, I suggested, had a substantial amount of cash on its balance sheet, which could be translated into value, and generally had a bit more promise than met the eye. I was wrong. In fact, in their classically abrasive way, one Reddit pointed this out at the time: "The only theory supporting your \$GME long is about your mother's alcohol consumption during pregnancy." The Covid-19 pandemic proved doubly that investing in a high-street store probably wasn't a good idea. But, just as a butterfly flapping its wings in Brazil can lead to a hurricane on the other side of the world, my thoughts may well have been the catalyst for what would this week become one of, if not the, largest "short squeezes" in

history. My post has been cited in Bloomberg and the Verge as one of early signs of Reddit's interest in the store. After the post, the investor Michael Burry - who was depicted in the book and film The Big Short - subsequently made it public that he was buying GameStop. The rest is history. In case you've managed to avoid the story so far: over the past several weeks, the stock price of GameStop has gone, in Reddit-speak, "to the moon", from \$19.94 a share as of market close on

### Desmund Delaney

Monday 11 January to a peak of \$347.51 on Thursday 27 January. A company that had made a net loss in the previous 12 months of \$275m was briefly considered, in the eyes of the stock market, to be worth \$25bn. This wasn't anything to do with the company's underlying business decisions or "fundamentals". There were no announcements of future partnerships; no decelerating pre-owned sales declines; no improving same-store sales - none of the news that would traditionally signal to the investment community that the company's business performance was improving and that investors should buy the stock. It was all down to, essentially, a digital movement of ordinary people - acting with what they see as a keen sense of right and wrong. Because of continued declines in GameStop's operating income and the announcement that the next generation of gaming consoles would allow consumers to purchase new games directly online, institutional investors began to short the company, making bets that GameStop would continue to underperform. Aware of the large amount of GameStop shares that were being shorted, r/WallStreetBets decided

to collectively buy shares (and options) in the company hoping that the flood of buying activity would cause the stock price to rise and, subsequently, force the big hedge funds to buy more shares to cover their positions, driving the price even higher. To the chagrin of the financial news media, the hedge fund manager Leon Cooperman and Melvin Capital, a firm whose very solvency was reportedly in question due to its large short position on GameStop, it worked. Many posts were shared on r/WallStreetBets detailing the huge sums of money - some of them life-changing - made by members of the community. There are members who say they made enough to pay off student debt, afford an operation for a family member, and even buy a yacht, all thanks to their fresh delivery of "tendies" - WSB jargon for money (it's an allusion to tender fried chicken). Since then, GameStop's valuation has come tumbling down. To some, the events were emblematic of broader anti-establishment sentiment; the result of what was perceived to be an inadequate response to the pandemic and the inability of lawmakers to provide adequate stimulus to those in dire financial situations. WSB members saw this as an opportunity to stick it to the man. One open letter that was widely shared on the forum detailed the user's bruising experience of the 2008 financial crisis: they claimed to have put their life savings into GameStop stock and were keeping it there, not cashing out, "to make it as painful as [they] can" for the hedge funds. As for my own balance, at the time I wrote that post a year ago, I owned 1,500 shares in GameStop - but I sold them before recent events. I guess not everyone gets to go to the moon.

### Senior Journalist Hridayananda Gogoi appointed as NCP state General Secretary in charge of Press, Publicity & Organization

**Guwahati, February 04:** Keeping mind the coming assembly election and to strengthen the party activities in ground levels throughout the state the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has appointed senior journalist Hridayananda Gogoi today, as the NCP state General Secretary in charge of Press, Publicity & Organization with immediate effect. Few days back the National Youth President of NCP Dheraj Sharma declared in Guwahati that the party would contest nearly 100 seats all over the state. Meanwhile the state election committee of the party has also been formed to do scrutiny of the possibilities of the aspirant candidates. It is mentionable that in a special state level party meeting of Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) held on 25th December last year correlating the Former Chief Minister Sarat Chandra Sinha statue and gate opening function at Siddhinath Sarma Bhawan the senior journalist Hridayananda Gogoi formally joined the party. Speaking after the joining Mr. Gogoi said that he was inspired by the humanistic approaches and ideals of former Chief Minister Sarat Chandra Sinha whom he met long ago and thereafter decided to work for the people and own land to materialize his objectives. Mentionable that Mr. Gogoi has tremendously contributed a lot in resolving many language implementation problems during the last several years. Mr. Gogoi has started his career as a journalist in the early 90's. His stature as critic, poet and editor of reputed figures prominently in the field of Assamese literature. His poems and fictions have been translated into several Indian languages. He has written a good number of essays, both in Assamese and English. His in-depth study and analytical perspectives always bothers in a different way and helps readers to follow and understand different features and outlook of the great Indian writers. He has published all together 40 books so far and participated in several National and International Conferences in USA, UK, South Africa, Thailand, India and other countries. His scholarly works include Study of Ramayana, World Peace Initiatives and Humanities. He held the post of Member of the Language Advisory Board of Sahitya Akademi for a period of ten years and presently a member of Birla Foundation, New Delhi.

## The government must pay the farmers and fishers struggling with its bad Brexit deal

There is little doubt what is currently the angriest programme on air: Radio 4's Farming Today. Every morning, enraged farmers and despairing fishers fume as their food rots in lorries and warehouses, unable to export to Europe or even Northern Ireland because of Brexit. Fishing boats lie idle. Meat cannot be moved. The talk is of animal product bans, faulty vet certificates, 50-page customs forms and impossible bureaucracy. Engineering and manufacturing body Make UK says six out of 10 trading companies now suffer "significant border disruption". Northern Irish eels suddenly can't be sold in London. More than 100,000 British pigs are stranded. Families and firms slide towards bankruptcy. Where now the promised frictionless Brexit? Tut-tut says the occasional government minister, with talk of teething troubles or mere bumps in the road. Liz Truss, the trade secretary, says: "We haven't seen those predictions of Armaged-

don come true." Cue explosions of frustration and anger from the frontline of the food, retail and haulage industries. Why were we never warned? The difference between an act of God and an act of government is a fine one. The government is now

### Simon Jenkins

compensating individuals and firms extensively for its enforced lockdown of the economy due to coronavirus. The lockdown is rightly seen as an act of policy, even if occasioned by an act of God. The government should pay. To the best of my knowledge, God was not involved in Brexit. In particular, implementing it by leaving the customs union was specifically a choice of Boris Johnson and his government. Politicians maintain that it was the public who, as Tory MP Neil Parish told



the BBC, "voted to come out of the single market and customs union". It did not. It voted to come out of the EU and was never asked if it wanted also to leave the customs union, let alone told what leaving might mean. It was told a lie - that leaving the customs union would be "frictionless". Other countries such as Norway are outside the EU but enjoy free trade within the customs union. The UK may have tariff-free trade but it is not frictionless. How much of the current trauma is temporary remains to be seen, but that is not an issue.



# Elon Musk's SpaceX launches world's first all-civilian astronaut mission



**Florida, February 04 :** This multi-day journey, orbiting Earth every 90 minutes along a customized flight path, will be carefully monitored at every step by the mission control. Upon conclusion of the mission, Dragon, the spacecraft, will re-enter Earth's atmosphere for a soft water landing off the coast of Florida. The occupant of the fourth seat will be determined by a competition starting this month among users of Isaacson's platform.SpaceX announced on Monday that it will launch four private individuals on a Crew Dragon capsule into orbit around the Earth, dubbed as 'the world's first all-civilian mission'. It is scheduled to launch in the fourth quarter of 2021. The company's spacecraft would be commanded by Jared Isaacman, the founder and CEO of Shift4 Payments, who

also a trained pilot. The mission, known as Inspiration4, seeks to raise support for St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. "Jared Isaacman, founder and CEO of Shift4 Payments, is donating the three seats alongside him aboard Dragon to individuals from the general public who will be announced in the weeks ahead," the statement read. "The Inspiration4 crew will receive commercial astronaut training by SpaceX on the Falcon 9 launch vehicle and Dragon spacecraft, orbital mechanics, operating in microgravity, zero gravity, and other forms of stress testing. They will go through emergency preparedness training, spacesuit and spacecraft ingress and egress exercises, as well as partial and full mission simulations," it added. One is going to be a yet-to-be-named health-care worker at the hospital. The other seat would be raffled off in an attempt to raise at least \$200 million for St. Jude. This multi-day journey, orbiting Earth every 90 minutes along a customized flight path, will be carefully monitored at every step by the mission control. Upon conclusion of the mission, Dragon, the spacecraft, will re-enter Earth's atmosphere for a soft water landing off the coast of Florida. The occupant of the fourth seat will be determined by a competition starting this month among users of Isaacson's platform. The company plans to air an ad during Sunday's Super Bowl to raise awareness about the mission and the opportunity to fly on it.

## Sea level rise could be worse than feared, warn researchers

**Washington, February 04 :**

The rise in the sea level is likely to be faster and greater than previously thought, according to researchers who say recent predictions are inconsistent with historical data. In its most recent assessment, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said the sea level was unlikely to rise beyond 1.1 metre (3.6ft) by 2100. But climate researchers from the University of Copenhagen's Niels Bohr Institute believe levels could rise as much as 1.35 metres by 2100, under a worst-case warming scenario. When they used historical data on sea level rise to validate various models relied on by the IPCC to make its assessment, they

found a discrepancy of about 25cm, they said in a paper published in the journal *Ocean Science*. The researchers said the models used by the IPCC were not sensitive enough, based on what they described as a "reality check" test. "It's not great news that we believe the former predictions are too low," said the climate change scientist Aslak Grinsted, a co-author and an associate professor at the Niels Bohr Institute. "The models used to base predictions of sea level rise on presently are not sensitive enough," he said. "To put it plainly, they don't hit the mark when we compare them to the rate of

sea level rise we see when comparing future scenarios with observations going back in time.

# Raging Australian bushfire destroys dozens of homes

(25 miles) from the state capital of Perth. "Right now, Western Australia is battling two different kinds of emergencies - a dangerous fire emergency, and a COVID-19 lockdown emergency," said its premier, Mark McGowan. Perth has been locked down for five days after a coronavirus infection was detected on Sunday. But Tuesday was the state's second straight

day with no new infections, allaying fears of a fresh outbreak. The state issued an emergency fire warning for some suburbs and semi-rural areas near Perth, urging residents to take immediate action to ensure survival. "There is a threat to lives and homes," the fire department said on its website as authorities advised people they could leave their homes for the closest evacuation centre despite the virus lockdown. More than 200 firefighters were battling the flames, while officials warned climate conditions were unlikely to bring quick relief. Australia is still recovering from last season's record infernos, blamed largely on global warming. It has experienced nine of its 10 hottest years on record since 2005, prompting authorities to warn that fire risks will continue to grow.

the Rohingya and other populations in need." Almost all US aid to the country, budgeted as \$109m for this year, goes through civil society institutions, and not directly through the government. The US is also talking to regional partners with closer ties with Myanmar, like Japan and India, to discuss coordinated action, the official said. The military has claimed its actions are in line with Myanmar's constitution but has offered little response to the flood of foreign criticism. On Tuesday, hundreds of members of Myanmar's parliament remained confined inside their government housing in the capital. One unnamed lawmaker told Associated Press that he and about 400 others could speak to one another inside the compound and communicate with their constituencies by phone, but were not allowed to leave the complex in Naypyitaw. Police were inside the complex and soldiers were outside, he added. On the streets of Yangon, life seemed, on the surface, to be continuing as normal, and there did not appear to be a greater security presence. Many residents, however, were angry. "The military has already ruled us for five decades. It took so much effort for us to gain democracy and it's gone, just like that, overnight. We no longer expect anything good from this country," said Khin, a teacher. "As for the military, they don't have an ounce of empathy. They are willing to kill civilians for their own selfish benefit." She used to merely dislike the military, she said. "Now I am utterly disgusted by them. They're a bunch of monsters." Myae, 69, an exports trader who fled to Thailand during the 1988 pro-democracy uprisings, said he was in a state of denial. "I want our government back. It's either that, or interference from other countries." I really look down on these people [the military]. They are illegitimate and illiterate. They don't have the ability, or the right, to rule us.

release. Later on Tuesday, an official from the National League for Democracy said in a message on Facebook that Aung San Suu Kyi was in good health and that there was no plan to move her. It is not possible to verify such posts. The military's actions provoked widespread international condemnation, with the US president, Joe Biden, threatening sanctions and calling for governments to press for the military to release detainees. The UN security council will meet on Tuesday to discuss the matter. A US state department official said the US had officially designated the events in Myanmar as a coup, triggering an immediate review of sanctions, aimed at the generals and military-related



some five decades. Some lit candles on their balconies. A growing civil disobedience campaign has also emerged among doctors, with health workers from dozens of hospitals across Myanmar stating they will not work under the military, starting from Wednesday. A statement on the Facebook page of May Win Myint, an official with her National League for Democracy, said the party's executive committee urged the military to acknowledge the results of November's election and called for the parliamentary session due to start this week to go ahead. It also called for Aung San Suu Kyi's immediate

companies. The official pointed out that some of the country's military leaders were already under sanction, and the intent of the review was to make sure humanitarian relief was not affected. "We'll take action against those responsible, including through careful review of our current sanctions posture, as it relates to Burma's military leaders and companies associated with them", the official said. "The coup restrictions apply to US foreign assistance for the government of Burma, and we will continue programmes for the people of Burma that benefit them directly including humanitarian assistance to

## India invites Pakistani diplomats for COVID-19 vaccination as part of offer to diplomatic community

Bhawan.India began its mega vaccination drive on January 16 and so far over 41 lakh healthcare workers have been vaccinated against COVID-19. This even as India has gifted India-manufactured vaccines to more than 10 countries in the region and many West Asian countries.In the neighbourhood four countries--Nepal,

Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka began their vaccination drive in last two weeks using India-manufactured and India gifted vaccines. In contrast, Pakistan began its vaccination on Tuesday with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan thanking China for sending 50,000 doses of its covid vaccine-Sinopharm.

No.2PSC/Sty-9/2013-2014 (Vol-II),

## SHORT QUOTATION

Sealed short quotations are invited affixing court fee stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight and paise twenty five) only from local Govt. approved firms for repairing and renovation works of LED sign board(Multi Coloured) with required materials on the top of the office building of Assam Public Service Commission as per specification given below.

Sl. No.	Particulars	Quantity/Size	Specification
1.	LED light	38" X 4"	Good Quality
2.	ACP Board for 38" X 4" LED Board	-	Good Quality
3.	Complete new wiring LS	-	Good Quality
4.	Timer	1 Piece	Good Quality
5.	Power Supplier	3 Pieces	Good Quality
6.	Repairing and cleaning of all letters LS	-	Good Quality
7.	Painting and repairing on Iron structure	-	Good Quality

The intending firms must submit in details their experiences in this line with various organizations.

The quotations are to be submitted to the undersigned up to 3.00 PM of 11th Feb./2021.


The undersigned has reserved the right to accept or reject any/all the quotations without assigning any reasons thereof.

This authority is not under any binding to accept the lowest price quoted by the firms. The experienced firms will be considered on the basis of past performances in this line.

Prices of materials should be stated quoting inclusive/exclusive of all taxes or to be specified separately.

For details and spot verification intending firms may visit the office of the undersigned during office hours before submitting their quotations.

Janasanyog/C/11369/20	Sd/- Under Secretary, Assam Public Service Commission, Jawaharnagar, Khanapara, Guwahati-22.
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 <b>ASSAM CARBON PRODUCTS LIMITED</b> Regd. Office : Birkuchi, Guwahati - 781 026 <b>CIN : L23101AS1963PLC001206</b> Phone : 0361 - 2640262; Fax : 0361 - 2640368 E-mail : acplghy@asscarbon.com; Website : www.assamcarbon.in							
EXTRACT OF UN-AUDITED STANDALONE FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2020							
(Rs. in Lacs)							
Sl. No.	Particulars	3 Months ended <b>31.12.2020</b>	3 Months ended <b>30.09.2020</b>	3 Months ended <b>31.12.2019</b>	9 Months ended <b>31.12.2020</b>	9 Months ended <b>31.12.2019</b>	Year ended <b>31.03.2020</b> (Audited)
1.	Total Income from Operations	1,135	1,052	1,175	2,947	3,991	4,953
2.	Net Profit / (Loss) for the period before Tax, Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	208	206	307	455	935	1,080
3.	Net Profit /(Loss) for the period before Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	208	206	307	455	935	1,080
4.	Net Profit /(Loss) for the period after Tax (after Exceptional and/or Extraordinary items)	131	136	279	292	779	785
5.	Total Comprehensive Income for the period [Comprising Profit / (Loss) for the period (after tax) and other Comprehensive income (after tax)]	131	136	279	292	779	810
6.	Equity Share Capital	276	276	276	276	276	276
7.	Earning per Share (of Rs. 10/- each) Basic	4.76	4.93	10.15	10.60	28.27	28.48
	Diluted	4.76	4.93	10.15	10.60	28.27	28.48
<b>Notes :</b>							
1 The above results have been reviewed by the Audit Committee and approved by the Board of Directors at their respective meetings held on 4th February, 2021.							
2 The above is an extract of detailed format of Quarterly Financial Results filed with the Stock Exchange under Regulation 33 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations 2015. The full format of the Quarterly Financial Results are available on the website of the Company at <a href="http://www.assamcarbon.in">www.assamcarbon.in</a> and on the website of The Calcutta Stock Exchange Ltd at <a href="http://www.cse-india.com">www.cse-india.com</a> .							
3 Figures have been regrouped or rearranged wherever necessary. Further, the figures has been rounded off to the nearest Lacs rupees.							
4 These financials results have been prepared in accordance with the Companies (Indian Accounting Standard) Rules, 2015 (Ind AS) prescribed under section 133 of the Companies Act 2013.							
For Assam Carbon Products Limited Sd/- <b>K. K. Bhattacharya</b> Managing Director DIN : 07011241							
Kolkata 4th February, 2021							

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## THE ASSAM RISING

VOL. NO. V, ISSUE NO. 359 FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 05, 2021

## V-shaped recovery

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman pegged total government expenditure for the current fiscal year at 34.5 trillion rupees (\$472 billion). That's \$57 billion more than what analysts had forecast based on a muted April-to-November trend, extrapolated for a bump in December through March, the final four months of the accounting period. But not only is Sitharaman spending much more liberally than expected, she wants to loosen her purse strings by another \$5 billion in the next fiscal year. The equity market is happy for four main reasons. One, there was no major new tax - or an increase in tax rates - to meet the spending goal. Two, even as total outlay goes up by \$5 billion, the capital expenditure part, which could create new orders and profit for India Inc., is projected to rise by \$15 billion. Third, the finance minister's promise of a bad bank to take away commercial lenders' soured assets is giving the market hope that clogged-up credit will start to flow more freely. The government is also setting up a new "development" financial institution to meet the needs of the infrastructure sector. Finally, the decision to allow foreign insurers to boost their stakes in local joint ventures to 74% from 49% is a welcome reform. The bond investor, meanwhile, is nursing a rude sticker-price shock. The finance minister said the current fiscal year's budget deficit would be as wide as 9.5% of gross domestic product, about 2 percentage points more than the consensus estimate. In the coming year, she wants to trim the shortfall, but not too drastically. A targeted deficit of 6.8% of GDP will require New Delhi to borrow aggressively once again, both from the bond market and from citizens' small savings pool. All eyes are on the central bank. Given that the Reserve Bank also intends to buy the dollars flooding into India's stock market to keep the rupee from rising too much, there's a limit on how many government bonds it may purchase from banks. India wants to spend its way to a V-shaped recovery and hoping that getting there would also ease the resource crunch. For instance, next year's budget assumes a 17% jump in tax revenue and a more than five-fold jump in state asset sales. With the spread of the virus contained - and inoculation expected to gather pace - these targets may not be as daunting as they appear. Even then, a lot has to go right for financing issues to not raise their head during the year, especially if the U.S. Federal Reserve decides to start tapering its asset purchases, raising borrowing costs for emerging markets. This leaves India with very little time to steady an economy that was slowing precipitously even before Covid-19. Disturbingly, India's protectionist turn - under the garb of self-reliance - continued in the budget, with import tariffs going up on auto components and mobile-phone parts. This doesn't augur well for manufacturing, especially for smaller firms whose revival holds the key to employment. After they fled locked-down urban centers, 60 million migrant workers - equivalent to Italy's population - found a halfway house in India's rural job guarantee last June. While demand for publicly funded low-wage jobs has since ebbed to 34 million, a fifth of Indians who lost their services, manufacturing and construction jobs are still working as farmhands or are unemployed. Still, the pandemic has finally alerted India to some long-neglected priorities: Even after taking away the cost of vaccination, the \$30 billion earmarked for health and wellbeing is a doubling of the pre-Covid-19 spending level. What remains to be seen is whether this money can actually be spent. Overall, too, execution will determine the outcome of India's high-risk spending plan. It'll decide whether the bond investor turns more sanguine about financing, or the equity market turns more skeptical of V-shaped growth. Perhaps the initial reaction of both will be proved a little right, and wrong.

## The Changing Canvas of the Dairy Industry with Breed Improvement

India's journey from a milk deficit country to one of surplus has been momentous. Initiated in 1970, Operation Flood was arguably the world's most ambitious dairy development program that transformed India into one of the largest milk producers. India's milk production rate in the past few decades has, in many ways, been symbolic of the upward trajectory of the country's economy and influence. The per capita availability of milk in 2018-19 was 394 grams per day as against the world average of 302 grams. Between 2016 to 2019, the annual milk production in the country registered a Compound Annual Growth Rate of 6.4 percent. Today, with an annual production of 187.75 Million Tonnes (per 2018-19 data) India accounts for about twenty two percent of the world's milk production. However, India is yet to join the ranks of major milk exporting nations, as much of what we produce is directed towards meeting domestic demands. So, to unpack the issues facing our dairy sector, it is pertinent to dive deep and list out the factors that have been hampering the productivity levels of our cows. The dairy sector assumes a great deal of significance on account of multiple reasons - for one, it has to do with the socio-cultural affinity towards cows and dairy products in large parts of the country, and as an industry, it employs more than 70 million farmers. However, the crying need of the hour is for us to identify ways in which we can enhance the return on investment for our farmers. Recent data indicates that indigenous cows produce 3.01 kg of milk per cow per day while the yield of exotic crossbred cows is 7.95 kgs. This implies that, overall, the average productivity output of indigenous cattle (both non-descript and high yielding indigenous breeds) is only 1099 kg per animal per year, while for cross-bred cattle average productivity is 3073 kg per animal per year. So, the magic word is 'cross breeding'. Crossbreeding has taken off in a big way because of the advancements in reproductive technologies like In Vitro Fertilization (IVF), embryo transfer process, and artificial insemination. Out of these processes,

IVF and artificial insemination have proven to be the most popular and effective methods. The NAIP (Nationwide Artificial Insemination Programme) Phase-I was launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister, Narendra Modi - in Mathura on the 11th of September in 2019. Every animal in the programme was assigned a 12-digit unique identification number under the PashuAadhar scheme to ensure accuracy in tracking - the animal is monitored continuously from the period of artificial insemination till the birth of the calf. Building upon the first phase of the programme, NAIP Phase-II was initiated on the 1st of August 2020 with an allocation of Rs. 1090 crores in 604 districts covering 50,000 animals per district and is on track to be completed by the 31st of May 2021. Under the programme, 9.06 crore artificial inseminations will be performed in 604 districts and is expected to lead to the birth of 1.5 crore high yielding female calves. Consequently, 18 Million Metric Tonnes of additional milk will be produced, as average productivity will be enhanced from 1861 kg per animal per year to 3000 kg per animal per year. Until now, Artificial Insemination (AI) technology has been the most used method in India, but its success hinges upon accuracy in heat detection and timely insemination. And this is where In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) technology will prove to be more effective. IVF has become a helpful tool in crossbreeding as under this technology semen from different bulls can be used to fertilize each oocyte from a collection, that in turn enables greater genetic diversity from a single cow. Projects for the establishment of 30 IVF labs have already been sanctioned, and 15 labs have been made functional thus far. In the past six years, the Animal Husbandry and Dairying sector has received a great deal of impetus under the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of 'Make in India' and towards becoming an 'Atmanirbhar (self-reliant) Bharat'. In keeping with our ethos of 'Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan' the marriage of rural farming with the latest innovations in technology will usher in unprecedented transformations in our dairy industry.

## Indian Army had a 'Ghost Regiment'. It spooked Pakistanis in 1971 and earned their praise



## LT GEN K.J. SINGH

Indian Army units strive for recognition and legacy, which come in the form of the Army Chief and Army Commander's citations. The most coveted are battle and theatre honours, awarded after campaigns. However, even rarer is earning the enemy's appreciation. Poona Horse, the regiment led by Lt Gen. Hanut Singh that fought bravely in the 1971 war, earned the honorific 'Fakhr-e-Hind' (Pride of India) from the Pakistan Army. Capt. Vikram Batra was honoured with the title of 'Sher Shah'. We are celebrating Swarnim Vijay Varsh or Golden Jubilee of the 1971 operations. It will be appropriate to recount the story of an armoured regiment that received the title of 'Ghost Regiment' from its adversaries. Pakistanis too so confused that they called it 'khalai makhlooq' (aliens or space creatures in Urdu) in sheer desperation and grudging admiration. East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), surrounded by India, lent itself to multi-pronged offensives. Hence, operations were designed on four thrust lines and spearheaded by tanks, appropriately termed as Blitzkrieg. From the west, 2 Corps

charge was led by 45 Cavalry equipped with amphibious PT-76 light tanks weighing just 12 tonne. In comparison, recently fielded Chinese Type-15, the so-called light tanks, weigh nearly three times, 34 tonne. Pakistan referred to PT-76 tanks disparagingly as 'pipa' (Punjabi for container). This prong was strengthened with a squadron of T-55 medium tanks of 63 Cavalry, inducted just before the operations. The offensive resulted in the capture of Jessore, after a bloody battle in the town of Dograi near Lahore. Interestingly, 2 Corps (Kharga Corps) was raised only for the 1971 offensive and was to be disbanded when the war ended. But it not only carried on, it is also now the main strike punch against Pakistan. In the north, 33 Corps prong was led by 63 Cavalry with two squadrons with T-55s, having loaned one squadron to the western thrust. The 69 Armoured regiment with PT-76s was also on this axis. They overcame very stiff resistance at Hilli and orchestrated

capitulation of Bogra. The 63 Cavalry had the rare privilege of having an independent armoured squadron, 5 IAS, as well. While converting from PT-76 to T-55, old tanks of the regiment were handed over to 5 IAS. The 5 IAS, in turn, created an ad-hoc, fifth squadron with armoured cars, its original equipment, giving the Indian Army yet another additional prong. It is sheer ingenuity of the regiment that it found crews for all its equipment with administrative personnel taking on combat roles. No soldier wanted to be left out of the battle, referred disparagingly as LOB. This squadron captured Akhuara and, pushed by legendary commander Lt Gen. Sagat Singh, exploited the amphibious capability to swim across the mighty Meghna. The so-called pipas raced to Dhaka. PT-76 tanks of 5 IAS were the only ones to reach, leading the advance of Indian forces. Surpassing all expectations, the ad-hoc squadron also assisted in the capture of many objectives. Radio and visual reports of sighting 63 Cavalry on multiple prongs and with three different types of platforms, from different directions, spooked the Pakistanis, who reportedly started referring to the regiment as 'Ghost Regiment'. This was largely in despair and frustration, but also with some degree of reluctant awe and admiration, hence the Khalai regiment. In the aftermath of Operation Vijay in 1999, when war clouds were looming large, concern about the vulnerability of tank columns at night, with their contour lights on turret, giving away their location was flagged. These lights are basically meant for safety to prevent collisions during pitch dark nights. In stark deserts, they

can be seen for miles. They are also identification aids with distinctive colours - green, red, amber and blue, consequently, are referred to as GRAB/RABG. Different regiments used different radio codes - Jugunu, RAB-Gi, RAG-Bajao - to operate them. The 'Ghost Regiment' was directed to undertake night manoeuvre, which was to be witnessed by the Corps Commander. We had trained ourselves to operate without lights and switch them on only in extreme emergencies. This was contrary to our Brigade Commander's caution, who had expressly instructed us to give safety paramount importance and keep the lights switched on. His favourite phrase was, "No night move without RAB-Gi." As Commanding Officer, I was confident of the training and skill of the crew, hence I decided otherwise and took a bit of panga. We crossed our designated vantage points, where senior commanders were sitting on grandstands, totally undetected. Wind direction, weather and limited availability of night vision devices aided us. We reported crossing the mandated report line, code-named 'Changa-Panga' (meaningful prank). This code name besides conveying our audacity, rhymed with 'Changa Manga' reserve forest, near Raiwind, where Pakistani armour normally hides. Naturally, the column was chided for losing its way. Our counter was simple radio transmission, 'Jugunu-Dikhao', to show our location. Those present on the grandstand just couldn't believe it, because we had gone past them like ghosts. Our Corps Commander christened our advance as ghost manoeuvre. He promptly ordered others to learn it. It was a panga well taken, keeping up the spooking legacy of the Ghost Regiment.

## Why it's far too early to start panicking over the EU's Covid vaccine shortages

It's "chaos." A "fiasco." A "disaster." Skimming the headlines, you'd be forgiven for the impression that the European Union has already failed in the most important counterattack against SARS-CoV-2: getting people vaccinated. Surely somebody, somewhere - Brussels? Berlin? Paris? - should resign. Let's all calm down instead. What's true is that the EU is currently trailing vaccination bellwethers like Israel and the U.K. and a few other rich countries such as the U.S. But please, it's February. The first shots

in Western countries were approved and administered in December. Covid-19 itself was only declared a "pandemic" less than a year ago. A bit of perspective is in order. An un-hysterical interpretation of the situation leads to the uplifting conclusion that some people have achieved astonishing feats and others are doing quite well in circumstances of bad or missing information, while a few are - understandably - confused and overwhelmed, but by no means beaten. It used to be assumed that producing vaccines of any type takes years, if not decades. So it's a huge success that we now, just over a year after Covid-19 appeared, have several on the market, with new ones joining every month. Some of these biotechnologies may eventually save us not only from Covid-19 but also from other killers including cancer. That success wasn't a foregone conclusion throughout most of 2020. Even as they placed their bets and funded different research efforts, policymakers didn't know which - if any - of these shots would work. What they did know and had to keep in mind, as I argued in July, was that whichever vaccines came to market first would face at least two big problems. One was, obviously, that the supply would start small before ramping up. So difficult decisions would have to be made about which countries, and which people within each country, would get dibs. This was never going to be fun, and somebody was going to complain in any scenario. The other big fear was that anti-vaxxers would start a movement to refuse jabs en masse, thus dooming the overall effort to achieve herd immunity. So governments and regulators faced a trade-off. Be thorough and careful - and be criticized for being slow. Or go faster but run the risk of discovering unacceptable side effects too late, thus feeding anti-vaxx conspiracy theories. On this spec-

trum, the U.S. and U.K. were slightly quicker than the EU with the first couple of vaccines. Encouragingly, though, they all seem to get the same answers in the end. Populations appear to be getting more confident about vaccina-



## ANDREAS KLUTH

This is itself a huge success. The supply problem currently looks harder. Because the scale of these rollouts is unprecedented, several companies have hit bottlenecks. On the whole, they seem to be coping admirably. One drugmaker, Sanofi, whose own vaccine effort was stalling, is even repurposing its factories to churn out vials for a rival. The biggest supply snafu besets the Anglo-Swedish firm AstraZeneca Plc. In a collaboration with Oxford University, it aims to supply rich and poor countries alike - and isn't even asking for a profit while the pandemic's raging. And last week it finally got approval from Europe's regulators. But making vaccines isn't like producing office furniture or breakfast cereals, as some Brussels officials seem to think. The output of factories depends on biological processes such as the growth of cell cultures. And the ones in AstraZeneca's Belgian plant didn't play along, even as their siblings at facilities in Britain and elsewhere kept sprouting. Because that Belgian factory was part of the supply chain intended to meet demand on the continent, the company had to downgrade its supply forecast for the EU, from a promised 80 million during the first quarter to 31 million, now re-upped to 40

million. The EU's politicians and media decided to be outraged. AstraZeneca is in breach of contract, they suggested. In fact, its agreement only says - and what else could it say? - that the firm will supply according to its "best efforts." Happily, its chief executive officer tried to explain the subtleties. But the politicians didn't want to hear them, proving once again, as my colleague Chris Hughes pointed out, that "no good deed goes unpunished." If there was a mistake made, it was the political blunder by the EU that came next. Feeling that it wasn't fair that AstraZeneca could keep supplying the Brits while slowing down the EU's rollout, Brussels contemplated export controls. Predictably, that sparked outrage in Britain, Canada, Japan and elsewhere, even in Ireland, cleft as it is nowadays by an EU border. The EU, which prides itself on being an antidote to "nationalism," risked looking hypocritical. Fortunately, Brussels seems to have called the whole plan off. And there we are. It's hardly surprising that tempers flare and people get impatient when folks are getting sick and dying. We're in a pandemic after all. Did anybody think this should be easy? But all involved appear to be doing their best, which in some cases is already better than anything we had reason to hope for. Some time this year, most Europeans who want shots will get them. How about being grateful for that?

## Why Modi govt's spending record in last 2 years dampens Budget 2021 hopes

Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's promise of delivering a budget like no other on Monday stoked hopes of a much-needed spending boost. But if the past is any guide, the reality may disappoint. The government has missed its total spending targets in the past two years, or even scaled them down, and has failed to meet goals for some of its flagship development programs, a review of budget documents shows. While increasing public expenditure is key to revive the economy from the pandemic-induced slump, falling tax revenues mean Sitharaman will have thin resources. Borrowing has already risen to a record 13.1 trillion rupees

(about \$180 billion) in the current financial year to March, widening the fiscal deficit and putting its sovereign rating under scrutiny. A program to improve roads in the hinterland, started in 2000 as part of a poverty reduction strategy, was widely lauded for connecting isolated hamlets and allowing small businesses to deliver faster. Spending has been scaled down even as India's budget increased over the years. Raising expenditures on rural infrastructure could be a boon as the government bets on rural communities to rescue the economy, while it also seeks to defuse sustained protests from farmers an-

gry over agricultural reforms. BharatNet, a program aimed at improving broadband access in rural India, has repeatedly fallen short and risks running behind schedule. While home to the world's second-largest pool of internet users, half of India's population lacks internet access - which could throw a spanner in the e-commerce works and slow investments from the likes of Amazon.com Inc. and Facebook Inc. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Clean India campaign, among his first after coming to power in 2014, promotes clean streets and building tens of millions of toilets to end "open defecation." While spending exceeded targets in the initial years, fund utilization has since underwhelmed.

## VRISHTI BENIWAL



## States' GST revenue shortfall to be lower due to better collections in last months: Finance Secy

**New Delhi, February 04:** January was the fourth straight month of over Rs 1 lakh crore GST collections, which is a sign of strong recovery. The GST revenue shortfall faced by the states is likely to come down with the improved collections in the last few months, Finance Secretary Ajay Bhushan Pandey said on Tuesday. He said the Budget proposal of taxing interest on employee contributions to provident fund over Rs 2.5 lakh per annum is aimed at correcting anomalies and is based on "principles of equity" and large depositors into the Employee Provident Fund (EPF) should pay tax on assured 8 per cent return. Union Budget 2021: A step towards Atmanirbhar Bharat Budget 2021: Finance Minister offers stability in tax regime even as India hunts for growth Budget 2021-22, Union Budget 2021 Slump Exchange or Slump sale? Union Budget brings clarity for the taxman to widen his net According to the Budget, interest on employee contributions to provident fund over Rs 2.5 lakh per annum would be taxed from April 1, 2021. Pandey said people with less than Rs 25 lakh annual income can

continue to deposit 12 per cent into the EPF without paying any tax. "There were anomalies in the system ... There are some cases which are depositing crores of ru-



pee into the fund and there you are getting 8 per cent assured tax-free return. This is a question of equity. This is against the Principles of Equity. If you have surplus money, you invest, but you have to pay tax," Pandey told. Less than 1 per cent of the total six crore EPFO subscribers actually contribute more than Rs 2.5 lakh in the fund. Pandey said the Budgeted 16.67 per cent

growth in tax revenue is realistic and the pre-filled income tax return forms with details on interest from bank and Post Office, capital gains on listed securities and dividend



income would be made available next fiscal. "In this year, even though we have shown some improvement in the last few months, but for 14 per cent y-o-y GST revenue growth there will be a compensation gap. Next year also there will be a compensation gap. But with the improved collection, compensation gap would be there but it would be lower than what was

being anticipated a few months back," he said. January was the fourth straight month of over Rs 1 lakh crore tax collections, which is a sign of strong recovery. The GST collections surged to an all-time high of about Rs 1.20 lakh crore in January, while the second-best was in December 2020 at over Rs 1.15 lakh crore. The collections, which directly reflect the state of economic activity, had plummeted to a record low of Rs 32,172 crore in April 2020, after the government imposed a nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus. The sharp decline in GST collections has led to Rs 1.80 lakh crore shortfall in GST revenues on states. This includes Rs 1.10 lakh crore revenue loss on account of GST implementation and Rs 70,000 crore on account of COVID-19 pandemic. The Centre had set up a special window to borrow funds and pass on to the states for meeting the Rs 1.10 lakh crore GST revenue loss. "This year a decision was taken to borrow a part of gap through the special window and pass it on to the states. Now for next year, let us see when a decision is taken," Pandey added.

## Cegura Technology Solutions Pvt Ltd set up new BPO/ITES centre at Siliguri

**Guwahati, February 4:** The India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS) from the Government of India has been instrumental in setting up BPO/ITES operations in a number of small cities across the country and thus creating employment opportunities for local youths. Kolkata-headquartered Cegura Technology Solutions Pvt Ltd has established a BPO/ITES centre at Siliguri under the aegis of IBPS. With a headcount of more than 100 employees, the Siliguri centre has generated employment opportunities for the local youth besides contributing to boost the local economy. Cegura Technology Solutions Pvt. Ltd. was allotted 100 seats at Siliguri under the IBPS. The centre commenced operations in 2018 and caters to BPO services in BFSI and retail segment. The IBPS scheme was notified by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) under the Digital India Programme. Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) is the executing agency of the scheme. With the motivation and support under IBPS for dispersal BPO/ITES industry to smaller cities, Cegura Technology Solutions Pvt Ltd. ventured out of Kolkata and setup a new operation at Siliguri. IBPS promotes higher women employment with special incentive and this has motivated Cegura Technology Solutions Pvt Ltd to employ more women. Dr. Omkar Rai, Director General, Software Technology Parks of India, said

"I would like to congratulate Cegura Technology Solutions Pvt Ltd for establishment of their BPO/ITES unit at Siliguri under IBPS. As envisaged under the scheme, the initiative has generated employment for the youth in the region and thus helping to prevent their exodus to metro cities besides transforming the local economy." Surmit De, Co-Founder & Director, Cegura Technology Solutions Pvt. Ltd., said: "The accessibility to Kolkata via road network and the availability of massive talent pool made us choose Siliguri for expansion. Siliguri is home to persevering youth who are proficient in English and are an asset to customer service. Moreover, the centre has a low attrition rate as the youth prefer jobs in the vicinity of their hometowns. We are grateful to STPI for providing us end-to-end support through IBPS." The objective of the scheme is to foster an IT ecosystem in Tier 2 and 3 cities through the establishment of 48,300 seats in respect of BPO/ITES operations across the country. The scheme provides financial assistance of up to 50% of the total admissible expenditure (Capital / Operational), with an upper ceiling of Rs. 1 lakh per BPO/ITES seat. There are certain special incentives in the scheme to promote employment to women and specially-enabled persons, the participation of local entrepreneurs, setting up operations at non-capital cities, etc.

## 20th International Leo Expo Begins

**Manisha Hazarika, Manoj Goswami Selected For Silpi, Sangbadik Sanman**

**Guwahati, February 4:** Renowned singer Manisha Hazarika and senior journalist, the editor of Amar Assom newspaper, Manoj Kumar Goswami have been respectively selected for this year's Leo Expo Silpi Sanman and Leo Expo Sangbadik Sanman. The announcement was made by the selection committee comprising of noted actor Moloya Goswami along with senior journalists Prashanta Rajguru and Pronoy Bordoloi at a function held on Friday. Earlier on the day, the 20th International Leo Expo got off to a sparkling start at the Maniram Dewan Trade Centre. It may be mentioned here that Manisha Hazarika was the first female music director of Assam who has not only created several memorable songs but has also sung an equal number of soulful songs. Popularly known as 'Mithu Bou', Mrs. Hazarika has also been

associated with several social works and has successfully carried out several projects aiding the society. Post the death of her husband, the legendary Jayanta Hazarika, she has been heading Sur Bahini - a mobile musical brigade which works selflessly for the welfare of the poor. Moreover, she is also the joint secretary of the Dr Bhupen Hazarika Cultural Trust. Meanwhile, journalist Manoj Kumar Goswami, over the years, has worked in several newspapers and news channels in Assam. His style of journalism has inspired several youngsters to take up journalism as a profession. Apart from being a fearless journalist, Goswami is also known for his gripping and interesting short stories. The awards carry cash of Rs 50,000, a plaque and a shawl. The awards would be given out in a glittering award ceremony to be held on February 12, 2021. The expo will remain open for visitors daily from 11 am to 9 pm and it will come to an end on February 22.

## New Vehicle Scrappage Policy : Indian Auto Industry reactions

**Mumbai, February 04:** The Indian automotive industry has welcomed the new proposal of the old vehicle scrapping provision to be included in the Union Budget 2021-22. The new vehicle scrappage policy is said to help boost demand for new vehicles after removing old unfit vehicles currently plying on Indian roads. Additionally, it is expected to help reduce air pollution caused by older vehicles. This is a compilation of how automotive component manufacturers, union bodies and other involved parties have reacted to the new announcements made by India's finance minister - Nirmala Sitharaman. Kenichi Ayukawa, President, Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) In a visionary budget, the government has adopted an expansionary stance with a thrust on infrastructure building with measures for efficiency improvement and increasing competitiveness. Good macroeconomic growth will translate to good auto sector demand. Specifically, the vehicle scrappage scheme has a good intent and the auto industry would be keen to work with the Government on suggestions for maximizing benefits to environment and society. Vinayak Gulati, President, Federation of Automotive Dealers Association (FADA) "FADA is happy to note that the Hon'ble Finance Minister has finally announced the much-awaited Scrappage Policy, though voluntary to phase out old vehicles. If we take 1990 as the base year, there are approximately 37L CVs and 52L PVs eligible for voluntary scrappage. As an estimate, 10% of CV and 5% of PV may still be plying on road. We still need to see the fine prints to access the kind of incentives which will be on offer and thus have a +ve effect on retail. The 6,575 km Highway works proposed in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal and Assam and another 19,500 km work for Bharat Mala project will definitely add fillip to a much-needed revival of Commer-



cial Vehicles especially M&HCV segment. Government's reduction of customs duty on steel products to 7.5% will benefit Auto OEMs. We hence expect the benefit to trickle down to end customers thus helping in boosting demand. While we expected disposable income for individuals to increase with enhancement of IT slabs and depreciation benefit on vehicles for individuals, the same has not been taken into consideration. Deepak Jain, President, Auto Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) "The vision of an Atma-nirbhar Bharat enshrined in the Union Budget, coupled with the 'Sankalp' of 'Nation-First' will be the bedrock to propel us further as we redefine our economy in a post-pandemic world. Significant outlay for vaccination in the country will add to the confidence of a resurgent India. Announcements with regards increased spend on road infrastructure, voluntary scrappage policy, Research & Development and PLI among others, augur well for the automotive sector. Further, continued focus on building rural and agricultural infrastructure and prioritizing agriculture credit growth will have long-term positive impact on rural demand for

vehicles. Increase in basic customs duty on select auto components will encourage local manufacturing of such items. It is also heartening that the budget outlay for the MSME sector has been doubled compared to last year. The auto component industry is dominated by MSME and this will provide them the necessary succor as the industry recovers. "We thank the Hon'ble Finance Minister for announcing the Scrappage policy, which would help in encouraging the adoption of greener vehicles. Though we are awaiting more details on the policy but hope that it would be designed in such a way that would automatically push the adoption of electric vehicles. For Clean Air, setting aside an amount of Rs 2,217 crores for 42 urban centres with a million-plus population is a good move. The fund could be utilized to spread awareness about the benefits of using e-ve-

hicles to the environment and its contribution to make the air clean. The government's plan for strengthening the public transport sector under PPP models with an outlay of Rs 18000 crores for operating 20000 buses is encouraging for the EV industry. The scheme could strengthen the EV industry if more number of e-buses could be supported through the scheme. We urge the government to mandate procurement of E-Buses under the scheme which would help us fight the issue of air pollution. Dr Raghupati Singhania, Vice-President JK Organisation, and, Chairman & Managing Director of JK Tyre & Industries Ltd. "The Hon'ble Finance Minister has presented a 'pro-growth' budget in these unprecedented times, which will give a boost to the Indian economy which is on path to recovery. Rightly, there is a huge emphasis on infrastructure, which will help revive economy as well as generate employment. Finally the much awaited scrappage policy has been announced, which is a welcome step. This will increase sale of new vehicles and in turn boost tyre demand. Refocus on healthcare and skill building are very critical for a healthy growth of Aspirant India. The key however is faster implementation of the various important measures announced, which will have a meaningful impact on economy" Tarun Mehta, Co-founder

No. PTDC/L/893/

### SHORT TENDER NOTICE

The Managing Director, APTDC Ltd., invites quotation affixing court fees stamp of Rs. 8.25 paise from reputed and experience NGO's for organizing workshop / seminar/ awareness campaigns under e-Marketing and Awareness of scheme of DC (Handicrafts) R&D Scheme.

The Bidder can collect the bid document from the office of the undersigned on or below 07-02-2021. Tender fees of Rs. 1000/- (Rupees one thousand) only non refundable in form of cash or DD in favour of Managing Director, Assam Plains Tribes Development Corporation Ltd. is to be submitted while collecting the bid document. The Tender should be submitted in office of undersigned by 10-02-2021

Sd/-  
Managing Director  
APTDC Ltd., Ghy-5

## Union Budget 2021: India's second 1991 moment?



**New Delhi, February 04:** It is remarkable for the FM to set enough legroom for boosting growth without increasing the tax incidence. Late president Kalam in his vision document, India 2020, envisioned India as a developed nation of 1.2 billion. Whenever history is written, FM Sitharaman has ensured, February 1 will get a star-studded recognition. Indeed, the economy required a massive course correction, and the fiscal deficit perspective was to be viewed liberally. The FM has made full use of the opportunity. It is remarkable for the FM to set enough legroom for boosting growth with-

out increasing the tax incidence. Another recognised mode of boosting government revenue is monetisation of non-core assets, owned by the government and PSEs that majorly consist of surplus land, either by way of direct sale or concession or by similar means. This shall largely help resource mobilisation. Budget 2021, individual tax rates, taxpayers, senior citizens, Provident Fund, What Budget 2021 had in store for individual taxpayers Economy India's budget shot in the arm for economy, fiscal consolidation takes a back seat: S&P The focus on thrusting employment generation was conspicuous concerning key emerging sectors like Mega Investment Textiles Parks (MITRA), augmentation of public bus transport services through the PPP model, etc. Decoding Finance

Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Union Budget 2021 One of the criticisms of past Budgets, is not only that outlays for agriculture have remained conservative but, more importantly, the expenditure has gone to unproductive avenues-interests and subsidies rather than capital investment. Under Pillar 3 which covered 'Inclusive Development for Aspirational India', a host of measures and enhanced government expenditure announced include increasing agricultural credit to farmers; enhanced allocation to Rural Infrastructure Development Fund and doubling the Micro Irrigation Fund. Further, the scope of 'Operation Green Scheme', presently applicable to tomatoes, onions, and potatoes, has been enlarged to include 22 perishable products. The customs duty on cotton has been raised from nil to 10% and on raw silk and silk yarn from 10% to 15%. Also, a new 'agriculture infrastructure & development cess' on certain items, earmarked cess for improving agricultural infrastructure, has been announced. Being sensitive in nature, the agricultural reforms shall hopefully provide some relief

to the farmers' current concerns. On health and well-being, the FM rightly recognised that there is room for public investment to establish a first-rate primary health care system. There is a stupendous outlay of ₹2,23,846 crores, a historic increase of 137%. Such expenses shall cover already initiatives-Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, National Digital Health, Ayushman Bharat and Mission COVID Suraksha. The adverse situation of migrants and the unorganised sectors caused by the pandemic will be addressed by nationwide implementation of One Nation One Ration Card. Moreover, a portal is being launched that will collect relevant information on gig, building, and construction workers, among others. Measures towards upgrading infrastructure and technology for efficiency and lowering financial losses has come as a relief to power discoms that have been suffering from revenue loss due to theft, poor transmission infrastructure, etc. The need for promoting competition to enable a greater choice to consumers to eliminate the monopoly of discoms is on the horizon.

No.SDM.497/2020-21/22/71803

### NOTICE INVITING RE-TENDER

Sealed Tender in prescribed form affixing Court Fee Stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight and paise twenty Five) only are invited from Intending Firm/Contractor for the work "Maintenance cost of Up-rooting, re-plantation in 10 Nos Mulberry Farms" under SOPD-G during the financial year 2020-21. The tender will be received up-to **1.00 P.M on 16-02-2021** in the office of the Director of Sericulture, Assam, Khanapara, Guwahati-22. The tender will be opened on the same date at **2:00 P.M.** in presence of the Contractors/Firms or their authorized representatives. If the last date of receiving Tender is notified as Govt. holiday, the Tender will be received in the next working day. The tender paper will be issued to the Contractors/Firms w.e.f. **05-02-2021 to 15-02-2021** on payment of Rs.100.00 (Rupees one hundred) only in the form of non-refundable DD pledged in favour of "Director of Sericulture, Assam, Guwahati-22".

Detailed Terms & Conditions, Estimate and tender papers, list of the 10 Mulberry Farms may be obtained from the office of the Directorate of Sericulture, Assam, Khanapara, Guwahati-22 during the office hours.

Sl. No	Name of works	Total Estimated Value (in Rs)	Earnest Money	Time of Completion
1	Up-rooting, re-plantation of 3 Acres of land in each Mulberry Farms (10 Nos Farms) Unit cost being Rs.48,382/ per acre			
	Specification:-			
	(i) Distance of plantation 0.9 mtrs x 0.9 mtrs (Row to row and plant to plant)		For General- 2%	45 (forty five) days from the date of issue of F.W.D.
	(ii) Up-rooting, jungle clearance, land preparation, ploughing and levelling.	Rs.14,00,000/-	For 57/50/06-1%	For 10 Nos Farms & centers as referred above.
	(iii) Pit digging- 0.25cm x 0.25cm x 30cm and application of organic manure and plantation with watering until the saplings sustains to a healthy plant.			

Janasanyog/C/11345/20

Sd/-Director,  
Sericulture, Assam, Guwahati-22



Contd. From Page 1

## BJP turning Parliament

tea gardens are still under the management of the garden and the government has not taken any steps to make them provincial. "Besides, in 52% of the company-owned gardens, there are no medical officers. Whether the government will do anything to improve the lot of women and children who lack medical aid, is to be seen," he said.It is an election-oriented budget, stressed Saikia, adding that the announcements have been made targeting election-bound states like Assam, West Bengal, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The 11-lakh strong tea plantation workers in the state plays a big role in the elections in Assam and the tea tribes have been promised scheduled tribe status by BJP, which is desperate to keep the tea votes intact in the upcoming polls.The AIUDF termed the budget "very disappointing" for the nation, Assam, minorities and weaker sections. "The common people battling Covid-19 were expecting some relief in the income tax slab but there was no relief. The finance minister claimed it was a budget for 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' but the fact is the budget failed to encourage domestic investors. On the contrary, it has given more incentives to foreign investors," said AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal.He added that the budget failed to present a road map for job creation as the number of jobless people is growing under this government. The AIUDF also alleged that the budget failed to give financial packages to the flood-affected people in Assam. "There was no announcement of a plan for controlling the floods that wreak havoc every year in the state. It also failed to announce funds for the revival of Cachar and Nagaon paper mills and announce industrial development for the northeast, especially Assam," he said.New regional party Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) also called the budget a 'futile' exercise. AJP general secretary Jagadish Bhuyan said this budget would again see an increase in the number of poor and the rich would become

## Sonowal visits Dhekiajuli

arrangements and route lining for the Prime Minister's programme. Sonowal also took stock of the security aspects and asked the DGP to have closer surveillance along with installations of CCTVs. Though the COVID 19 pandemic is on the wane with the resumption of all the regular activities, the Chief Minister asked DC, Sonitpur, Joint Director of Health and other stake holders to ensure compliance with the safety protocols of the pandemic. Later talking to the reporters at the venue, Chief Minister Sonowal said that people of Assam especially from Sonitpur and its adjoining districts are eagerly waiting for the Prime Minister's visit. He said that because of Prime Minister's love for the state, Assam since 2014 has been experiencing unprecedented development initiatives. He also said that a series of special packages have been announced as a result of which Assam is doing well not only in India but in the larger landscape of South East Asian Nations. Sonowal also said that Prime Minister Modi's love for the State has also eloquently translated in the budget announcements which allotted Rs. 34000 crore for the construction of 1300 km of highways and district roads, Rs. 300 crore for Kamakhya Devalaya and Rs. 1097 crore for the construction of roads and embankments for Majuli. He also thanked the Prime Minister for Rs. 1000 crore allocation for the welfare of tea communities especially mother and children. Sonowal also asked the journalists as well as other stake holders to make the Prime Minister's programme in the historic Dhekiajuli a success.

## Home ministry has time till July

the CAA."According to the Manual of Parliamentary Procedures, the ministry concerned has to frame rules within six months of the passage of an Act, for its "effective implementation". In case the ministry is unable to make those rules, it needs to seek an extension from the Committees on Subordinate Legislation, but cannot be given more than three months at a time.So far, the MHA has already taken two extensions - the one till July 2021 is the third, ThePrint has learnt. The Matua community of Hindu migrants from the erstwhile East Pakistan has been upset over the delay in implementation of the CAA in West Bengal. The community has been vocal about its demand for Indian citizenship, and the BJP has backed it, even getting an MP from the community - Santanu Thakur - elected in 2019.On 30 January, when Home Minister Amit Shah had to cancel his visit to Matua stronghold Thakurnagar in the North 24 Parganas district, senior BJP leaders Kailash Vijayvargiya and Mukul Roy rushed to meet prominent members of the community to assure them that Shah would soon conduct another meeting.The significance of the Matuas can be gauged by the fact that they make up close to 2 crore or 20 per cent of West Bengal's entire population. The community is spread out over five districts - North 24 Parganas, Nadia, Howrah, and North and South Dinajpur - and constitutes about 40-50 per cent of the population."The Matua community had played a significant role in BJP's success in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Their votes had helped the BJP get a number of seats, especially in Cooch Behar, North Malda, Burdwan-Durgapur, and other regions. They have been demanding the implementation of CAA for quite some time, and the delay is only leading to more discontent," said a senior BJP leader.However, in Assam, where the BJP has been in power for nearly five years now, indigenous communities have historically opposed immigrants from East Pakistan/Bangladesh regardless of whether they are Hindus or Muslims.Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Assam on 23 January was significant in this regard - while distributing land allotment certificates to people at Jerenga Pathar in Sivasagar district, he had repeatedly mentioned the indigenous Assamese communities, but did not make any mention of the CAA.The opposition in Assam has already made CAA a poll pitch, alleging that the BJP is trying to destroy Assamese culture and identity through it. In what may indicate further wait for operationalisation of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the home ministry on Tuesday informed the Lok Sabha that the committees on subordinate legislation for Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have granted extended time until April 9, 2021 and July 9, 2021 respectively to frame the rules under CAA.As per norms, rules to be made under a statute should be made as soon as possible and no later than six months from the date on which the statute comes into force. If it is not possible for the ministry to adhere to this timeline, it should state the reasons and seek an extension from the committee on subordinate legislation.

## ASSTC signed MoU with NESAC

Pankaj Chakravarty and Director of NESAC P.L.N Raju. Other dignitaries present at the occasion were, Nazrul Islam, Retired IAS officer and Mentor of ASSTC, M.S. Manivannan, Chief Executive Officer, Assam State Disaster Management Authority, Gitanjali Bhattacharyya, Additional Secretary, Revenue & Disaster Management Department along with a host of senior scientists from NESAC, stated a release.

## Ex-diplomat in AJP advisory

Lurinjyoti Gogoi.In the Indian federal system, AJP said there were two major responsibilities of a state with full statehood. "A fundamental one is to ensure security of the life and property of people and the next in importance is to lift the standard of living of people through social and economic development," Gogoi said."Since independence, various factions of Congress have ruled our state for 55 years, Janata Party for less than two years, AGP for 10 years, and BJP for five years. All along, insufficient attention of national parties to problems of Assam and lack of proper planning and adequate technical expertise of subsequent governments have failed to address Assam;s issues," he added.

## In a rare move, Indian Army

officer, and his second-in-command is Lieutenant General KK Repswal, who is from the Corps of Engineers.After receiving representations from both the three-star officers last year, Naravane nominated the army's then vice chief Lieutenant General SK Saini in September to look into the matter and submit a detailed report with measures to streamline the functioning of the command headquarters.Saini retired on January 31.The South Western Command has around 130,000 soldiers and is responsible for guarding India's border with Pakistan in Rajasthan and Punjab.

## Assam hopes to reap

priority to the private hospitals as well. "We are expecting a major boost to Assam's health sector from the increased budget outlay. Health infrastructure in the periphery hospitals, located away from the towns and cities, must be improved. Operation theatres, blood banks and equipment should be added for better healthcare there. Mere hospital buildings are not enough. Specialized doctors are finding it hard to operate from rural areas due to lack of hospital infrastructure and returning after two-four months of getting posted," said honorary state secretary of IMA, Assam, Dr Hemanga Baishya.

## 'Aatmanirbharta' named Oxford

address, highlighting its increased prominence as a phrase and concept in the public lexicon of India, it said. One of the standout successes of the entire Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign is the large-scale manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccine in India.During the Republic Day parade, the Department of Biotechnology highlighted the Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign and showcased the COVID-19 vaccine development process in its tableau at Rajpath. "In an unprecedented year, 'aatmanirbharta' found resonance with a wide cross-section of people as it is seen to be an answer to the revival of a COVID-impacted economy," said Oxford University Press India managing director Sivaramakrishnan Venkateswaran.Agrawal said amid a number of interesting and topical entries received, 'aatmanirbharta' stood out because it validated the day-to-day achievements of the countless Indians who dealt with and survived the perils of a pandemic. This word "gives a voice to the strength displayed by young and old alike in dealing with extended periods of isolation, lack of familial support, loss of livelihoods and other difficulties through sheer determination and self-reliance", she said.Previous Hindi words of the year are Aadhar (2017), Nari Shakti (2018) and Samvidhaan (2019). While the Hindi word of the year has great resonance for the year in which it was chosen, it doesn't mean that the word will automatically go into any Oxford dictionaries.

## NE business bodies hail no new

allocation of 7% of the budget on capex is a lot, and will ensure the government gets a good return on this expenditure going forward, which will speed up the dream of a \$5-trillion economy. Despite a pandemic," Buragohain said in a statement, adding that Budget will open up new avenues of employment in Assam, particularly in health, education, agriculture and logistics sectors.Abhijit Barooah, co-chairman, CII North East Council, also said the Budget was "excellent".Ficci said, despite ending the year with a 9.5% deficit, the fact that no significant new taxes have been announced, shows that the government has been prudent and is focused on growth.Cement barriers, barbed wire, spikes on roads and policemen in large numbers dominated farmers protest sites on the city's borders Tuesday as the opposition created a ruckus in Parliament over the three agri-marketing laws which the protesters want repealed. Parliament faced repeated adjournments as opposition members disrupted proceedings, demanding a discussion on Agri laws.Second extension granted to home ministry for framing CAA rulesThe home ministry on Tuesday informed the Lok Sabha that the committees on Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) legislation for Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have granted extended time until April 9, 2021, and July 9, 2021, respectively to frame the rules under CAA. As per sources, govt is waiting for the Supreme court to clarify certain provisions such as the religious persecution clause.Ranjit Barthakur, chairman, Ficci North East Advisory Council, welcomed the focus on infrastructure, particularly the decision to set up a Development Financial Institution with a projected lending portfolio of Rs 5 lakh crore, and the move to enable debt financing by foreign portfolio investors. "This has the potential to boost the infrastructure sector. We hope that the proposed infrastructure pipeline will include major requirements of the NE such as inland water transport, rail and air connectivity to remote areas," he said.

## NFR to run Kisan special trains Aiming to help farmers and transporters

**Guwahati, February 04** : NFR has decided to run Kisan Special trains from Agartala to Howrah and Sealdah w.e.f. 11th February 2021 for the benefit of the farmers and transporters of NE Region. Kisan Special Train bearing number 00320 will leave from Agartala at 19-15 hrs on Thursday, Friday and Saturday to reach Sealdah at 13-00 hrs on 3rd day. The train will have stoppages at stations like Dharmanagar, Badarpur, Lumding, guwahati, Kamakhya, Goalpara, New Bongaigaon, New Alipurduar, New Coochbehar, New Jalpaiguri, Malda Town, Khaltipur, Bardhaman and Bandel for loading/unloading. Kisan Special Train bearing number 00328 will leave from Agartala at 19-15 hrs on Friday, Saturday and Sunday to reach Howrah at 12-45 hrs on 3rd day. The train will have stoppages at stations like Dharmanagar, Badarpur, Lumding, guwahati, Kamakhya, Goalpara, New Bongaigaon, New Alipurduar, New Coochbehar, New Jalpaiguri, Malda Town, Khaltipur, Bardhaman, Bandel and Serampore for loading/unloading. It may be mentioned here that as per the announcement made in the Union Budget 2020-21, Indian Railways has started running Kisan Rail train services, to transport perishables and agri-product, including milk, meat and fish. The first Kisan Rail train was flagged-off on 07.08.2020 between Devlali (Maharashtra) and Danapur (Bihar). These Kisan Rail trains are run on time-tabled paths, and their punctuality is strictly being monitored to avoid any en-route detentions and delays. This is multi-commodity, multi-consignor/consignee, multi-loading/unloading transportation product which is aimed at providing wider market to our Kisans. Commodities which may be transported via Kisan Rail are Tea, Rubber, Turmeric, Black pepper, Mustard, Soyabin, Betel nut, Oranges, Pineapple, Ginger, Kiwi, Passion fruit, Chillies(green), Large Cardamon and other fruits & vegetables. A subsidy of 50% is being granted on the transportation of fruits and vegetables via Kisan Rail. The primary objective of running Kisan Rail trains is to increase the income in farm sector by connecting production centres to markets and consumption centres. It is expected that with the introduction of this

## Sonitpur district Assam Sahitya Sabha meeting held

**Biswanath Chariali, Feb 04:** The Sonitpur district Assam Sahitya Sabha in collaboration with its allied branches had organized an organizational meeting at Kumali Devi memorial library and freedom fighter Phanidhar Das memorial hall; Kaboimari on January 31. The meeting was held with Basudev Sarma; the president of Sonitpur district committee in the chair. Dulal Nath; the district secretary of the literary body briefed the objectives which were followed by reading of the proceedings of the previous meeting and observation of condolences. Gracing the meeting as an appointed speaker, Mahendra Kumar Nath; the central member of the literary body delivered a lecture on the duties and role of branch committees of Assam Sahitya Sabha in the meeting. Several proposals were taken in the meeting to strengthen the district committee. The meeting was attended by Biswajit Bodo; central executive member, Bipul Kumar Nath; vice president of the district committee, Dr. Bhupen Saikia, Dr. Shuka Dev Adhikari, Dhruva Bhushan Mahanta, Rabin Chandra Bora, Kiran Bora, along with others.

## Youth Congress leader Hadiul appointed to Barpeta District Congress spokesperson

**Barpeta, Feb 04:** Babita Sharma, the general secretary of the state Congress, head of the media department of the Assam Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) appointed Hadiul Islam - Raman), a dedicated Congress worker who has been serving in various capacities of NSUI, Youth Congress, as the spokesperson of Barpeta District Congress along with Dipul Patgiri, M Habibullah, Balovadra Das, Mizanur Rahman, Ayanal Haque, Aftab Uddin and Shahjahan Ali for 2021 election.

## FIR against Kamal Kumar Medhi

**Biswanath Chariali, Feb 4** : The Sonitpur district Brahman Samaj had registered an FIR at Jamuguri police station against the vice president of Rajior Dal Kamal Kumar Medhi for his alleged remarks on the Brahman Community on Tuesday. The co-ordination committee of Sonitpur district Brahman Samaj including its six regional committees had registered a case. Talking to the media persons here on Tuesday, Sailen Borkataky; the executive president of the coordination committee said, 'Kamal Kumar Medhi who tried to demoralize the value of the community and tried to create a chaotic situation of humiliation throughout the state. We, the Brahman Samaj condemn his statement and demand his immediate arrest'. After the objectionable remark of Medhi, Apurba Bhattacharya; the executive president of Sootea LAC Rajior Dal had resigned from his party portfolio and primary membership of the regional political party. Notably, Kamal Kumar Medi had made an objectionable remark against the Brahmin community while addressing a public gathering at Gouripur under Dhubri recently.

## Daughter Performs last rites of her Father in Hojai

**Hojai, February 04** : Defying the age-old tradition of performing last rites only by son, a daughter has set an example by performing the last rites of her father at Bhootnath in Hojai on Thursday evening. Shejal Ranka performed the last rite of 'mukhagni' and lit the funeral pyre of her father Pukraj Jain (52). Jain was sick from last fewdays and while undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Guwahati on Thursday morning he breathed his last. Soft-spoken, candid Jain was one of the Senior agent of Sahara India Pariwar, Hojai, a noted businessmen and dedicated social worker.His death was deeply mourned among his family members,relatives and well-wishers.On his demise Sahara India Pariwar's Regional Manager Arjun Prasad, Sector Manager Balram Debnath, Dilip Dey,Gopesh Dutta, Sarad Bora, Retired teacher Manikant Thakur,Marwari Panchayat President Dindayal Pansari, Marwari Samellan President Pradip Sureka, General Secretary Ramesh Mundra, Rajesh Kejriwal, Manoj Sarma, Mohan More, Ravi Surana, Prabhu Pansari,Kailash More and many other individuals have condoled and prayed almighty for the eternal peace of the departed soul. He has left behind his wife, two daughter and a host of relatives.

## Four Nepali college teacher's posts excluded

**Biswanath Chariali, Feb 4:** Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha (ANSS) is not happy over the exclusion of the four dropped college teachers from the final list which was published today. The college teachers who have been working in Gyanpeeth Academy; Nikashi, Baksa, two posts of Kalaguru Bishnu Rabha Degree College, Orang and one Nepali teachers post of Behali degree college were dropped in earlier list. And after the departmental proceeding, their names appeared in the provisional list published by the department of higher education recently. Ravi Chandra Adhikari- Gyanpeeth Degree College, Nikashi Baksa, Tirtha Raj Phayel, KBRD College, Orang, Narayan Upadhyaya, KBRD College, Orang and Rekha Devi, Behali College, Biswanath are the four college teachers whose names have been dropped this time also. But unfortunately, all the four posts didn't appear in the final list published today, stated Dr. Khagen Sarma, the education secretary of ANSS. The literary body of the state has appealed to the state government and the department of higher education to look into the matter urgently and demanded for a suitable solution for the same immediately.

## CM inaugurates State's first heliport at Majuli PM to visit Majuli soon: CM

### Ro-pax ferry services to be launched in February

**Guwahati, February 4:** Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal inaugurated the first heliport of the State at Kerelagaon in Majuli district today. The heliport having facility for simultaneous landing of three helicopters was constructed with an expenditure of Rs. 50 lakh under untied fund of the State government. The Chief Minister on the occasion also inaugurated a guest house built with Rs. 50 lakh at the heliport. Later talking to media persons, Chief Minister Sonowal said that the heliport was built with an aim to boost tourism in Majuli, which has a distinct identity as world's largest river island. He said that the Assam government made dedicated efforts to position Majuli as an important tourist destination of the world and expressed hope that the new heliport would significantly facilitate tourist flow to Majuli. The Chief Minister said that the State government undertook several projects to strengthen road infrastructure in Majuli along with steps for boosting the tourism sector. He informed that the government initiated sincere steps for construction of the bridge connecting Majuli with Jorhat. Already technical bid was opened and financial bid would be opened in next two days after which the construction process would start soon. The Chief Minister also said that two Ro-Pax ferry would be pressed into service within this month giving a new push to river transpiration in Majuli. Chief Minister Sonowal further said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi would visit Dhekiajuli on 7 th February and take part in a government meeting to ceremonially launch "Asom Mala" Programme with initial financial outlay of more than Rs. 5000 crores for improvement and upgradation of State Highways & Major District Roads and lay foundation stone for establishment of two new Medical College & Hospitals at Biswanath and Charaideo districts which would significantly strengthen connectivity network and health sector in Assam. He also said that the Prime Minister would visit Majuli soon and date for the visit would be finalized by the PMO. The Chief Minister also expressed anguish on the incident of food poison at Diphu, which claimed the life of a person. He also wished early recovery of those who fell ill in the incident. Chief Minister Sonowal also laid foundation stone for infrastructure improvement project of Sankarjyoti High School at Majuli today with financial outlay of Rs. 25 lakh under untied fund for 2019-20. CEM of Deuri Autonomous Council Madhav Deuri, deputy commissioner of Majuli Bikram Kairi, SP Aparna Natrajan, chairman of Assam Cricket Association Ramen Dutta, Satradhikar of Owa Satra Krishna Chandra Devagoswami were present among others at the foundation stone laying ceremony.

## Sanction letters distributed under Cha Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Mela Scheme in Hailakandi

**Hailakandi, Feb.04** : 517 beneficiaries were handed over sanction letters under the Cha Bagicha Dhan Puraskar Mela Scheme here on Tuesday. Chief Executive Officer, Hailakandi Zilla Parishad, Joydeep Shukla and other dignitaries gave away ceremonially sanctioned letters of third installment to beneficiaries of Koiya-Ramchandi tea estate under the scheme at a function held at Koiya-Ramchandi Gaon Panchayat under the Lala Development Block. Altogether 1,324 beneficiaries of 19 tea estates of the district will get sanctioned letters - third installment - under the scheme. Under the Cha Bagicha Dhan Puruskar Mela Scheme, each beneficiary is entitled to Rs.3,000. Speaking on the occasion, CEO, Shukla said the state government is working for the welfare of all sections of society, including the economically backward tea garden community. He said the government launched the Cha Bagicha Dhan Puruskar Mela Scheme to encourage tea garden workers to make transaction through bank accounts. Earlier, BDO, Lala, Amzad Hussain explained the objective of the scheme meant exclusively for the tea tribe community. The distribution function was attended by Circle Officer, Lala, Arpita Dutta, President, Hailakandi Zilla Parishad, Farhana Khanam Choudhury, BJP, District President, Swapon Bhattacharjee and other dignitaries.



# Women's Super League talking points from the weekend's action

**London, February 04 :** Another 4-0 win for Chelsea, their second in a week, with Tottenham the victims this time. Rehanne Skinner had transformed Spurs' outlook on the season since she joined as manager in November, and they had won three in a row before they headed to Chelsea but after a promising start it all fell apart. Ria Percival and Kit Graham both forced saves from Ann-Katrin Berger in the opening minutes before the Germany international Melanie Leupolz scored against the run of play from more than 25 yards to crush Tottenham's confidence. Another goal followed two minutes later, Fran Kirby picking off an attempted pass out of defence by the Spurs keeper, Aurora Mikalsen, and squaring to Pernille Harder, whose shot deflected into the net off the unfortunate Abbie McManus. The defender thus ended her debut since arriving on loan from Manchester United with an own goal to her name, and a feeling of inevitability about the result kicked in. Ji So-yun was again unplayable at times, and her ball to Harder led to the cross that Sam Kerr headed home for the third, and at half-time there could be no way back for Spurs. Chelsea might lead the table only on goal difference (with a game in hand on Manchester United in second) but are surely heading for the WSL title. The depth of squad they have at their disposal - by far the best squad Emma Hayes has created - makes me excited to see whether they can fulfil their potential in the Champions League. Everton were boosted by the return from injury of Valérie Gauvin, their French international striker, who was making her first start since sustaining a muscle injury in the FA Cup final on 1 November, as well as the arrival of Jill Scott, who made her debut after signing on loan from Manchester City and became only the second player to make 150 WSL appearances, and Alisha Lehmann, who came on in the second half to make her first

appearance since joining on loan from West Ham, and had beaten Manchester United when they last played in the Conti Cup in December. This looked an ideal opportunity for them to take points off a top-four side in the WSL for the first time. But for all the progress Everton have made since Willie Kirk's arrival they still came up short. The first half was one-way traffic as United pinned back Everton. Ella Toone scored an early goal, sweeping in the rebound after Sandy MacIver spilled Leah Galton's cross, and Christen Press added a second shortly before



half-time, cleverly holding her run and getting between the Everton defence before finishing well. There were too many errors from the home side and too much possession conceded, and though they improved to dominate the second half they couldn't breach a stubborn United defence. Casey Stoney's side see out games very effectively, and they fully deserve their position in the table. A top-three finish and a place in the Champions League has always been their target, and it looks like they are finally here to stay; Everton can learn a lot from what United have achieved in their three years in existence. With Arsenal's match at Aston Villa postponed because of a waterlogged pitch Manchester City had a chance to open up a bit of daylight between themselves in third and the Gunners just behind them, and against a West Ham side in

transition it was an opportunity they would not miss. City have not lost since they played Chelsea in October, and they have to keep the pressure on the league leaders. They handed a debut to their latest American signing, the centre-back Abby Dahlkemper, who played alongside Steph Houghton in a defence that was far too good for the Hammers - who managed one shot in the whole match, and that wasn't on target. The pick of the goals was probably the third, a beautiful Alex Greenwood delivery from a corner that was met by Ellen White with a flicked header that



looped in at the far post, her 54th WSL goal (second only to Vivianne Miedema); the fourth was a disaster, Maz Pacheco falling over to present Rose Lavelle with a free run into the area. West Ham appointed Olli Harder as manager in December and since then two of their most influential players have left on loan - Cho So-hyun to Spurs and Alisha Lehmann to Everton - and it seems strange the club wouldn't make it a priority to keep their best players. With Bristol City winning at the weekend they are perilously close to the single relegation spot and Harder has work to do to unify a beleaguered squad. A historic moment for Bristol City, who finally won their first game of the season against Brighton (who were also the first team Aston Villa beat). Everyone had written them off, but now Bristol are hot on the heels of West Ham and Villa and both of those

teams are in really poor form while Brighton themselves, having taken one point from their past six games, are certainly not safe. And it was not a narrow win, at 3-0 it was a significant victory. Bristol have gone through a tough time, their manager Tanya Oxtoby is on maternity leave, but agreeing to stand in for her Matt Beard has obviously made a huge impression. It is no coincidence this result came at the end of his first full week of training - this is a coach with great pedigree, both in this country and in the US, someone who has won trophies and is a great motivator. Things didn't work out for him at West Ham, but I don't think it was necessarily the coach that was the problem there. Yana Daniëls saw the keeper too far off her line and scored an excellent shot from 25 yards with just a few minutes played, and that really set the tone. Bristol like to play a passing game but what they showed on Saturday was that when the opportunity comes to go direct they will not be afraid to do that, and when you have a player of Ebony Salmon's qualities in attack it will be an option. Their second came from a long ball down the middle, and Salmon outpaced and outmuscled her marker before scoring with a cool finish, and her penalty again showed great composure for a 20-year-old. Kayleigh Green's red card for a second-half stamp compounded the misery for Brighton, and shows how frustrated the team were with their performance - though it was the kind of foul that is unacceptable however frustrated you are.

## André Villas-Boas sacked by Marseille after Ntcham signing criticism



**London, February 04 :** Marseille have sacked head coach André Villas-Boas after he criticised the club for signing Olivier Ntcham against his wishes. Villas-Boas told a press conference that he offered to resign following Ntcham's arrival on loan from Celtic on Monday. "I submitted my resignation saying that

**London, February 04 :** Gutekunst and LaFleur made the comments on Monday during season-ending Zoom sessions with reporters. After the Packers' 31-26 loss to the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in the NFC championship game, Rodgers had said, "there's a lot of guys' futures that are uncertain, myself included." "We're really excited not only for next year, but the years to come," Gutekunst said When asked specifically whether that meant keeping Rodgers beyond the 2021 season, Gutekunst replied, "Absolutely." Rodgers has three years remaining on a four-year, \$134m contract extension he signed in August 2018. LaFleur, meanwhile, left little room for doubt when he was asked if Rodgers has a future beyond 2021 in Green Bay. "Is that a trick question?" LaFleur said. "Absolutely. There's no doubt about it. You're talking about the guy that's going to win the MVP of the league. We're not in this position without him. I couldn't be happier with just not only his performance but how he led our football team, all the little things he does within that locker room to ensure that everybody is locked in, focused and ready to go. Absolutely he will be here for a long time. I know I've said that before, but a long time." Rodgers' long-term future has been a topic of league-wide speculation ever since the Packers traded up four picks to take Utah State quarterback Jordan Love with the 26th overall selection in the 2020 draft. Rodgers has said on multiple occasions that the Love selection complicated his own hopes of playing his entire career with Green Bay. The subject came up again when Rodgers discussed his future after the NFC championship game. The two-time MVP clarified his remarks two days later on SiriusXM Radio's The Pat McAfee Show by saying that "I don't think there's any reason why I wouldn't be back"



but added that "there's not many absolutes, as you guys know, in this business." Gutekunst said on Monday he views Love "as a very talented prospect that we're really excited about developing." Gutekunst noted the Packers have a history of giving young quarterbacks time to develop. Rodgers, a first-round pick in 2005, backed up Hall of Fame quarterback Brett Favre for three seasons before taking over as the starter. Gutekunst cited the examples of Matt Hasselbeck and Aaron Brooks, who also backed up Favre at Green Bay before starting multiple seasons elsewhere. "I'm really excited about the limited development that Jordan has been able to do in the short period of time that we've had him. ... There were some unforeseen challenges as far as offseason and no preseason games and things like that," Rodgers, 37, had one of the best seasons of his stellar career to earn All-Pro honors. He set franchise single-season records for completion percentage (.707) and touchdown passes (48) while throwing only five interceptions. He had five touchdown passes, one touchdown run and one interception in two playoff games. "You're talking about the guy that's going to win the MVP of the league," LaFleur said. "We're not in this position without him.

## Former Mets manager Callaway accused of requesting nude photos from reporter



**Los Angeles, February 04 :** Los Angeles Angels pitching coach Mickey Callaway, who is also a former manager of the New York Mets, "aggressively pursued" several women who work in sports media and sent three of them inappropriate photos, The Athletic reported on Monday night. Callaway sent uninvited and sometimes unanswered messages to the women via email, text or social media and asked one to send nude photos in return, according to the report. He often commented on their appearance in a way that made them uncomfortable and on one occasion "thrust his crotch near the face of a reporter" while she interviewed him, The Athletic said. Another time, he told one of the women he would share information about the Mets if she got drunk with him, the report said. More than one woman received a shirtless selfie from him, and one said he massaged her shoulders in the dugout when he thought nobody was watching, according to the report. Five women spoke to The Athletic on condition of anonymity and they indicated Callaway's actions spanned at least five years and three teams, the outlet reported. Two of the women said they had been warned about Callaway's behavior by fellow media members and others in baseball. The Athletic said Callaway was the Cleveland Indians' pitching coach for five years before managing the Mets from 2018-19. After he was fired by New York, he spent last season with the Angels as pitching coach. "Rather than rush to respond to these general allegations of which I have just been made aware, I look forward to an opportunity to provide more specific responses," the 45-year-old Callaway wrote to The Athletic in an email. "Any relationship in which I was engaged has been consensual, and my conduct was in no way intended to be disrespectful to any women involved. I am married and my wife has been made aware of these general allegations." The report came two weeks after ESPN detailed sexually explicit, uninvited text messages and images sent by former Mets general manager Jared Porter to a female reporter in 2016 when he was working for the Chicago Cubs in their front office. Porter was fired by the Mets the following morning, and Major League Baseball planned to investigate him. Mets president Sandy Alderson, who hired Porter, was GM of the team when Callaway was hired. According to the report, the Mets told The Athletic

the club learned in August 2018 about an incident that occurred before Callaway joined the team. A spokesperson said the club investigated, but "declined to reveal the nature of the incident, the outcome of that probe or whether Callaway was disciplined," The Athletic said. Callaway managed the Mets through the end of the 2019 season.

## 'Masks from sun up to sun down:' How to host a Super Bowl during a pandemic

**Washington, February 04 :** Terra Pinckley was six the last time the Tampa Bay Buccaneers made the Super Bowl. She remembers sitting with her parents - both longtime Bucs supporters - cheering the team to victory, then joining them at the championship parade, where she high-fived then-star fullback Mike Alstott, and shook All-Pro linebacker John Lynch's hand. It was a moment that cemented her fandom forever. In a perfect world, the St Petersburg native would watch this Sunday's Super Bowl among hordes of fellow Bucs fans, preferably at a sports bar. But the pandemic has muddled those plans. Her Super Bowl Sunday will take place from the comfort of her own couch. "I'm just still not comfortable with bars and restaurants, especially in that kind of crowd," Pinckley, 24, said. "Not that like football fans aren't safe, but it's just the emotions of the moment. I don't trust that too much." Pinckley's dilemma will be familiar to thousands of people across the Tampa area, from fans to hospitality workers to politicians: how exactly do you host - and cheer on - the biggest sporting event in America during a pandemic? This year's Super Bowl is the first time a team will play for the championship in its home stadium (the venue for each Super Bowl is decided years in advance.) Buccaneers fans planning on watching the game

outside of their homes will have different Super Bowl experiences than in years past. On Thursday, Tampa mayor Jane Castor issued an executive order mandating masks be worn outdoors at most of the city's most popular spots, including anywhere Super Bowl festivities occur, in addition to a previous order mandating face coverings indoors. Bars and restaurants in the city can seat up to 50% capacity indoors, but patrons must still wear masks (since publication venues can now operate at 100% capacity provided customers are seated). The mask ordinance, Castor said, will help ensure events surrounding the game are held as safely as possible. Volunteers will hand out masks all week, reminding people of the rules. And the city will work with local businesses to ensure that they are enforced. "What we're looking towards is education and encouragement," Castor, a Democrat, told the Guardian in a phone interview. "And we will communicate the requirement to wear masks outdoors." "On the Riverwalk, we're going to push them all in the river," Castor joked, before saying violators who don't comply will receive a citation. "People quite often look at government and private organizations to carry all of the responsibility. Something as simple as wearing a mask can

prevent the transmission and contracting of Covid-19." Despite the reduced number of spectators allowed in the stadium (Sunday's game will seat 24,700 in person out of a typical capacity closer to 75,000 for big games) and the fact that the Bucs are playing in their own backyard, Castor is expecting a large number of Kansas City Chiefs fans, as well as those without an allegiance to either squad, to travel to the area. NFL spokesman Brian McCarthy said that while hosting a Super Bowl during a pandemic brings challenges not common in other years, the league believes its protocols - such as mandatory face coverings, physical distancing in common areas, and temperature checks and PPE for all staff working the game - should be enough to keep fans safe. "We took a critical look at all of our functions to ensure a safe and responsible gameday experience for fans," McCarthy said. "And that begins with the parking lots where fans may get there four or five hours prior to [the game] ... We spent a lot of time with local, county, state, and federal officials, medical experts, and public health experts to go over our plans, and they provided feedback." Still, those precautions aren't enough for some fans to feel comfortable venturing to Raymond James Stadium. Kenneth Stewart, the chairman of a local security firm



and pastor at Tabernacle of Hope in Tampa, says he'll most likely watch the game with a handful of his congregation, though he would have absolutely purchased tickets if it not for the pandemic. "I'm excited for the first time in history for the host city to have their team playing a Super Bowl," Stewart said. "But you want it to be a Super Bowl and not a super spreader. I think people deserve some good news. But you see them celebrating without social distancing, and no mask. It's kind of concerning." John Currier, the general manager at Ferg's - a popular sports bar in St Pete - said that after "mobs of people" came by to celebrate Tampa's NFC championship victory last month, his staff implemented different rules for the Super Bowl. For starters, anyone hoping to watch the game from the bar will need to put down a deposit for a reservation. If someone isn't

wearing a mask indoors or on the back patio - they won't be served, and hired security will make sure Covid safety protocol is enforced. "This whole past season has been challenging to spread people out and make sure people have masks on and are following the rules. It's very frustrating," Currier said. "There's just people looking to celebrate, and I understand it, but we still are in the midst of a pandemic." A similar plan has been put in place across the Bay, at Hattricks Tavern. David Mangione, a partner at the bar who has served patrons during the area's two World Series, three Stanley Cup finals, and now two Bucs Super Bowls over the past 19 years, says that the energy people bring when they come to watch a game is electric. He hopes that will carry over on Sunday, when fans who have reserved tables in advance will be able to watch the Bucs.



## There's a lot of Satya in **Rahane**, and a bit of Satya in the Indian dressing room too

**New Delhi, February 4** : India's greatest Test triumph in Australia last month shares more than a mere thread with Bollywood's iconic gangster film of 1998, Satya. Common to the two epic sagas is the deadpan protagonist with glassy eyes, a heavy beard and cleverly-concealed ruthlessness. There's a lot of Satya in Rahane, and a bit of Satya in the Indian dressing room too. The uncanny mirroring of the two casts of characters is less of happenstance and more of life imitating art. Look for that trendsetting 90s hit on YouTube first and follow it up by revisiting the Gabba chase to marvel at the real-reel similarity. The frame of Ajinkya Rahane sit-

fall in love too. But Satya, while dealing with fear, anxiety and joy, would never break the good old mafia motto made popular by the Corleones - Never let anyone know what you're thinking. The other day during The Indian Express Idea Exchange interaction, Rahane was asked if hiding emotions was a habit he developed over the years and he said: "I think it comes naturally to me." It does and an oft-repeated maiden tale that gets repeated, spiced by the extra-masala sachet after every narration, proves it. Even as a teen, he was a boy of few words and fewer emotions. Tests While turning up for his first club, Dombivili's Young Star CC as a 13-

like to hear. Born in a middle-class family in a Mumbai suburb, Rahane continued to stay at his modest 650 square feet 2BHK even after playing IPL for years as an India player. Painfully shy and reluctant to be in the spotlight, he was very different from contemporaries like Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja. He wasn't a prodigy, didn't make it to the U-19 World Cup and his first international stint didn't go well. He was on drinks duty for 14 Test matches before getting into the playing XI again. From a three-format player, he now plays just Test matches. Till last year, he wasn't even a regular in the playing XI. Even in IPL, the once-upon-a-time captain these days can be warming the bench. He has been through cricket's tough grind. He is a hardened pro who is at peace with himself. Convinced about his own class, he doesn't allow setbacks or stray opinions to trigger self-doubts. The world said he was good but those selecting the squad of 15 or the playing XI didn't think so. But then he got his chance. He got Melbourne, Sydney and finally Brisbane. He grabbed the opportunity. Fear of failure was too familiar an emotion to bother him. Watch him bat on the final day at the Gabba. His 22-ball 24 had a lofted six off Nathan Lyon. At that stage, India could have even lost the Test and the series, but Rahane the batsman or the captain was unperturbed. He knew what he was doing. That day at Gabba, he showed that rare trait that every Bhai worth his salt aspires to avail. Like Satya, Rahane showed "daring". Satya's mentor and gang leader in the movie is Bhiku Mhatre - Manoj Bajpai giving a powerhouse performance. In the true tradition of mobster movies, the two have contrasting characters. Satya was Michael to Bhiku's Sonny. If Kohli was in the dugout that day at Brisbane, his face would have been a kaleidoscope of human emotions, his facial muscles realigning after every ball. Bajpai has said playing laughing-one-moment-maniac-the-next Don was a tightrope walk. The demand to operate at a high note and simultaneously maintain high intensity, pushes one dangerously close to every actor's ultimate

dread-hammering. Kohli, too, treads that fine line. As the stand-in skipper Rahane vacates the hot seat for Kohli for the England series, this cricketing parallel with Ram Gopal's masterful creation goes beyond the Rahane-Satya doppelganger. Many have said that Rahane's emergence as an inspirational captain could possibly trigger a leadership tussle. They are worried that Rahane, the leader, would become redundant once Kohli takes over. With their captaincy approach so diametrically different, they work on different templates. Maybe, this was true in the past but not now. After his Melbourne hundred and the Brisbane chase, Rahane's voice in the dressing room can't be ignored. The wise-captain-to-vice-captain switch is nothing more than a minor phonetic tweak. Will the sprouting of this new power centre in the Indian camp, that also has IPL's most winning skipper Rohit Sharma, result in an ego tussle? Not necessarily, Satya offers hope. It's well-etched characters and their specific usefulness to the gang points to a culture that encourages an ensemble and not a single-star system. It also shows that assorted men with mismatched temperaments can forge a sturdy partnership. Satya's restrained aggression balanced Bhiku's impulsive risk-taking. If the violence and deaths are weeded out from the script and the tragic end, dictated by crime-never-pays compulsion, changed, Satya could well be an enduring buddy movie. The film's most memorable scene shows the Kohli-Rahane partnership has potential to make the world nervous. So there is Bhiku perched on a cliff after wiping out all opposition talking to the Mumbai sea. After a bout of his maniacal laugh, he shouts: "Mumbai ka king kaun (Who is the king of Mumbai) ... Bhiku Mhatre". As for Satya, unmindful of the king's histrionics, he sits on another rock, at a lower height closer to the waves, plotting the gang's next move. Put the two in a stadium, make them wear whites and it could be Kohli letting out a war cry after the fall of a key wicket and Rahane somewhere in the background shining the ball, plotting the gang's next kill.



ting expressionless in the dugout, orchestrating the coup as an ever-fluctuating gripping drama unfolds around him, has gravitas. With better cinematic composition and some haunting background music thrown in for good measure, it could well be Satya sitting with Chander, Bapu, Kallu Mama in some run-down Mumbai chawl mentally moving the pieces to snatch some rival gang's citadel at Bhandup or Antop Hill. In Brisbane that day, next to Rahane sat Rohit Sharma, his deputy. The two men from Mumbai go back a long way. Though, it didn't matter during those tense hours. It was no time to recall their junior days or crack some in-joke. They seemed like strangers sharing a park bench. Once in a while, they would exchange glances or a few words. These fleeting interactions would end with Rahane breaking into an inscrutable smirk. If the Aussies were keeping an eye on the skipper, looking for clues to guess India's game plan, they were wasting their time. Rahane doesn't allow fear, anxiety or even joy to well out. Even when India eventually won, Rahane held his pose, and his poise. In his The Times, London column the next day, Michael Atherton would write: "Rahane stood calmly and received the moment like a man who had just accepted a pair of socks for his birthday". Ram Gopal Varma's Satya - the title role played by JD Chakravarthy - too was marble-faced. It's a story about the meteoric rise, and the sharp fall, of a young man who one fine day ventured into Mumbai but subsequently got waylaid deep inside the city's brutal underworld. During the 2-hour-40-something-minutes crime caper, the outsider-turned-insider would face humiliation, make friends, have fall-outs and

year-old, he once got hit on the helmet by a pacer with a nasty reputation. The helmet broke; the blow to the head would instantly open the tear ducts and moisten the eyes. If Mumbai's oral tradition of narrating cricketing yarns is to be believed, the young Rahane didn't heed the general concern of his teammates or the coach's suggestion to return to the tent. "Mai khelega (I'll play)" is what he is believed to have said with a straight face. He did, and how. The maiden Shoaib Akhtar was hit for five fours in that over. There was no sledging, no histrionics, not even a pumped fist. That permanent serene blank look didn't leave his face. It still hasn't. Meanwhile, grapevine has it that the bowler, a waiter at a nearby bar, still regales regular drunks with tales about hitting India's vice-captain on the helmet, conveniently skipping the bit about those five fours. Satya too had a bar connection. His first job in the city that never sleeps - Satya too couldn't avoid that cliché - was waiting tables at a dance bar. It would end with an ugly face-off with the local don's bag man. As the 'drink' that Satya made couldn't match the expectations of Bhai's sidekick, it would end on his face. Satya didn't blink, he merely stared. Later in the movie, he would pump multiple bullets in the chest of the man who insulted him. Ram Gopal Varma, in his book Guns and Thighs, says he was not sure about Satya, the lead whose back story isn't part of the movie. "All in all, every character in Satya had a reference point. But the chief protagonist's character was the most unclear in my head ... I was confused between whether he had a criminal streak or he was just a normal guy who became that way." Rahane has a back story. Maybe, the makers of Satya would

## CA move to not tour **South Africa** represents serious financial loss : CSA

**Johannesburg, February 4** : Cricket South Africa (CSA) on Tuesday slammed its Australian counterpart for postponing a Test tour of the country citing the COVID-19 pandemic, saying it is "extremely" disappointing and will lead to "serious financial loss". Australia postponed the tour next month owing to "unacceptable health and safety risk" in that country because of a fresh COVID-19 outbreak, a decision that virtually knocks them out of contention from the World Test Championship final later this year. "We are extremely disappointed by the decision of CA," CSA's director of cricket, Graeme Smith, stated in a press release. "CSA has been working tirelessly in recent weeks to ensure that we meet every single expectation of CA ANNOUNCEMENT: Cricket South Africa was informed by Cricket Australia that their scheduled tour to SA will not be going ahead due to Covid-19 fears. "This was set to be the longest tour in a BSE (bio-safety cabinet or biological safety cabinet) comprising a three-match Test series that was scheduled to begin with Australia's arrival later in the month. So to be informed about the CA decision at the eleventh hour is frustrating. "The Australian team was scheduled to play a three-Test series during the tour. However, with the host nation battling a second wave of COVID-19 and a new variant of the virus, Cricket Australia's (CA) interim chief executive Nick Hockley said travelling to South Africa is not possible given the current scenario. The move did not go down well with the South African cricket board. Pholetsi Moseki, CSA's acting chief executive officer said, "It is indeed sad that after all the engagements and effort made to ensure a secure visit by our Australian counterparts, the tour has been derailed. "CSA has incurred significant costs related to the planning stages and the cancellation of the tour represents a serious financial loss. "In this challenging period for cricket and its member countries, we believe the stance taken by

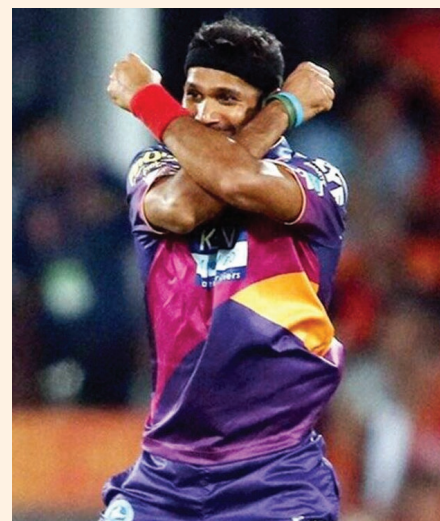
CA is regrettable and will have a serious impact on the sustainability of the less wealthy cricket playing nations. The announcement is a blow to Australia's chances of qualifying for the WTC final, scheduled to be played in June in England. The top two teams in the points table will make the final. Expressing his displeasure in the CSA release, its chief medical officer, Dr Shuaib Manjra, added that there was nothing more the host board could have done. "The protocols we had proposed to CA were unprecedented," he stated. "Firstly, we had agreed that our own Proteas team would enter the BSE 14 days prior to the arrival of the Australian team, thus altering their planning during the current tour of Pakistan," Manjra said. "Amongst some of the other key arrangements made were that all four areas (two hotels and two venues) had a protocol to implement a strict BSE with no contact with anybody outside this area." We subsequently agreed to two separate BSEs and had granted Australia full and exclusive use of the Irene Country Lodge, which we shared with Sri Lanka, with a minimum staff present on site. "This is the second series to be postponed in South Africa due to COVID-19. Last year, England had pulled out of their tour midway through an ODI series after there was an outbreak of cases in the team hotel. Manjra added, "In terms of the arrangements, the Proteas were to move to a separate hotel altogether. Furthermore, all hotel staff, match officials and even bus drivers were to enter the BSE 14 days prior to Australia's arrival. "In addition, CSA had also committed to importing an Australian tracking system at great cost to ensure proper tracking of close contacts in the event of a positive test.



## Ashok Dinda announces retirement from all forms of cricket

**New Delhi, February 4** : Ashok Dinda, one of the most consistent quick bowlers in Indian domestic cricket for the past one-and-a-half decade, brought down curtains on his career on Tuesday. Dinda, who has 420 first-class wickets in his bag, has also played 13 ODIs and nine T20s for India, taking 12 and 17 wickets respectively. He has also played in the Indian Premier League, turning out for teams like Kolkata Knight Riders and Pune Warriors. "Today, I am retiring from all formats of cricket. I have sent the mails to BCCI and GCA to this effect," Dinda said during a media interaction at Eden Gardens. Dinda thanked BCCI president and former India cap-

tain Sourav Ganguly for going out of his way and giving him a debut against Maharashtra at Pune in the 2005-06 season. "There have been several people who have helped me throughout my career whom I would like to thank beginning with my parents. Then it's Dada. It was because of him that I got to play for Bengal. I was not in the squad but he included me as a 16th member and handed me a debut," Dinda remembered. Calling himself a victim of politics, Dinda had announced last year that he will not play for Bengal, who had ended runners-up in the 2019-2020 season. It had been reported that he would be turning out for Goa for the following Ranji



season. This was after Dinda was dropped by Bengal after a fall-out with bowling coach Ranadeb Bose. The 36-year-old was accused of publicly abusing Bose and of creating a rift within the team. He was presented with a silver plaque and a bouquet and was thanked for his contribution by Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) president Avishek Dalmiya, secretary Snehashis Ganguly and joint secretary Debabrata Das. "The contribution of Dinda is enormous. He is one of the best fast bowlers we have produced. He will be remembered for his ability to take wickets and win matches, bowl long spells and his never-say-die spirit," Dalmiya said.

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