

The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

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French soldiers accuse government of trying to ...

03

Lewis Hamilton rallies to edge out Max Verstappen to win Spanish...

07

NEWS IN BRIEF

Principal Secretary To CM

Guwahati, May 10: Principal Secretary of Health and Family Welfare Department, Government of Assam, Samir Sinha has been appointed as the Principal Secretary of the new Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Sinha has replaced former Principal Secretary Paban Borthakur. Meanwhile, Paban Borthakur has been appointed as the Additional Chief Secretary of the Cultural Affairs department.

HS 1st year exams cancelled

Guwahati, May 10: In the wake of rising COVID-19 cases in the state, the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (AHSEC) cancelled Higher Secondary (HS) first year examinations. All the students who filled-up online application forms for first year have been promoted to second year, said a notification issued by the council on Monday. Earlier, the exams, scheduled to be held from May 4 were postponed due to steep rise in COVID-19 cases. "...the Higher Secondary First Year Examination, 2021 scheduled to be held from 04/05/2021 which was postponed has now been cancelled and all the students, who have filled up online applications for the same are hereby declared to have been promoted to the HS 2nd Year Class for the academic session 2021-2022," read the order issued by AHSEC controller of examinations Pankaj Borthakur.

Several Chief Ministers

Guwahati, May 10: Several Chief Ministers of northeastern states attended the swearing-in ceremony of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his cabinet in Guwahati on Monday. Those present included Chief Minister of Tripura Biplab Deb, Meghalaya's Conrad Sangma, Manipur's M N Biren Singh, and Nagaland's Neiphiu Rio. Apart from that, the former state Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal along with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) national President JP Nadda were also present. Sarma was sworn in as the 15th Chief Minister of Assam today. He was administered the oath in presence of state Governor Jagdish Mukhi, and other leaders.

600 journalists vaccinated

Guwahati, May 10: Almost 600 journalists have been vaccinated since the first day of the vaccination drive held at Gauhati Press Club in Guwahati. Journalists from the 18 to 44 age group are being vaccinated at Gauhati Press Club from Wednesday. "Nearly 600 journalists vaccinated for COVID 19 in last 4 days at Gauhati Press Club ! The drive continues," Sanjoy Ray, General Secretary, Gauhati Press Club posted on Facebook.

Himanta Biswa Sarma Takes Oath As Assam Chief Minister



Guwahati: Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn in as the new Chief Minister of Assam, along with 13 members of his cabinet, by Governor Jagdish Mukhi this afternoon. The swearing-in ceremony was at-

tended by BJP National President JP Nadda and many other leaders of the party as well as opposition parties. Urkhao Gwra Brahma, a senior leader of BJP ally United People's Party Liberal, also took oath in

the simple ceremony - amid restrictions in place due to the pandemic - at Srimanta Sankaradeva Kalakshetra in Guwahati. Sarbananda Sonowal, who himself had proposed Mr Sarma to succeed him in a legislator's meeting yesterday, however has confined himself to the roles of a legislator. Though Mr Sonowal remained out of the cabinet, at least seven ministers from the former chief minister's 17-member cabinet have been retained. These include ally AGP's Bokakhat legislator Atul Bora, Kaliabor legislator Keshab Mahanta, BJP's Dhalai MLA Parimal Sulkabaidya, D h a r m a p u r M L A Chandramohan Patowary,

Tinsukia MLA Sanjay Kishan, Mahmara MLA Jogen Mohan and Jagiroad MLA Pijush Hazarika. Assam BJP's president Ranjit Dass, who had contested from Patacharkuchi constituency and won with a whopping margin of over 60 thousand votes, is among the six new leaders in the Himanta Sarma's cabinet. Shortly after the ceremony, Mr Sarma told the media that his newly-formed cabinet will meet tomorrow to discuss ways to curb the Covid surge in the state. "Covid situation in Assam is alarming. We've seen that our daily cases have crossed almost 5,000. Tomorrow when we meet for the first time in the cabinet,

Contd...Page 6

PM Modi Extends Wishes To Sarbananda Sonowal

Guwahati, May 10: Prime Minister on Monday lauded the governance of outgoing Assam chief minister Sarbananda Sonowal in the last five years through a tweet. The tweet came in as Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma took oath as the 15th chief minister of the state. The prime minister said his valued colleague Sarbananda Sonowal contribution in strengthening the party and Assam's progress has been immense. "My valued colleague @sarbanandsonowal Ji was at the helm of a pro-people and pro-development administration over the last five years. His contribution towards Assam's progress and strengthening the



party in the state is immense," Prime Minister Narendra Modi tweeted. Sarbananda Sonowal was the first Chief Minister elected under the reign of BJP in 2016.

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma appeals to ULFA chief Paresh Baruah to join peace talks

Guwahati, May 10: Addressing the first media briefing after his oath-taking ceremony on Monday, Assam chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma appealed to United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I) commander-in-chief to come forward for peace talks. "I appeal to ULFA leader Paresh Baruah to give up the path of armed struggle and join hands in bringing permanent peace to Assam. We have to solve the problems through dialogues. Killings

and abductions do not solve problems," Sarma said. The chief minister also stated

Contd...Page 6



Delhi preparing for third COVID-19 wave, needs more vaccines: Arvind Kejriwal

New Delhi, May 10: Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said that his government is preparing for the third



wave of the deadly coronavirus and said that he has requested

more vaccines from the Centre. "We're increasing oxygen beds... We must prepare for the third wave. In this wave, Delhi recorded maximum 28,000 cases in a day. The scale at which we're creating infrastructure, we'll be able to deal even if 30,000 daily cases are reported in the next wave," Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal said while talking to reporters. Raising the issue of vaccine shortage, the AAP chief said, "We're left with vaccine stock for 3-4 days. We have placed orders with companies

but I think the Central govt is allocating the vaccines because we get a letter from the Central govt about the stock that we would get in a month. We request the Centre to give us more vaccines." Earlier today, Kejriwal along with Health Minister Satyendar Jain inspected a COVID care centre near GTB hospital. Delhi on Monday reported 319 more COVID-19 fatalities and 12,651 new infections, the lowest in four weeks, with positivity rate of 19.10 per cent, the Health Department

said. The dip in new cases, the lowest since April 12, can also be ascribed to a smaller number of tests (66,234) conducted on Sunday. At 19.10 per cent, the positivity rate is the lowest since April 16, when it stood at 19.7 per cent, according to government data. The positivity rate has remained

Contd...Page 6

Mamata Banerjee allows religious programmes ahead of Eid, permits gathering of 50 people in Bengal

Kolkata, May 10: West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Monday (May 10) allowed religious and

Contd...Page 6



Election for new Congress chief postponed due to COVID-19 surge: Sources

New Delhi, May 10: Amid the rising cases of the coronavirus, the Congress Working Committee on Monday decided to postpone the election for a new party president, sources said. "Election for Congress president has been further postponed. Due to the COVID-19 situation, it has been decided in the CWC meeting to postpone it as it won't be correct to hold elections in this scenario," news

Contd...Page 6

PM Narendra Modi must atone for his mistakes: CWC passes resolution on COVID-19 crisis

New Delhi, May 10: The Congress Working Committee on Monday (May 10) hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over

his handling of the coronavirus crisis, saying he must atone for his mistakes and serve the people

Contd...Page 6



Coronavirus second wave : States that have imposed restrictions, curfew and lockdowns

New Delhi, May 10: The Union government has left it to the States to impose restrictions in order to curb the rising COVID-19 cases. The Union government has left it to the States to impose restrictions in order to curb the rising COVID-19 cases. In his address to the nation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi told States to consider lockdowns as a last resort to plateau the rising virus cases. However,

many have already enforced complete State-wide shutdowns while others have only implemented partial curbs on public places and the movement of people. Here is a list of States that have imposed total lockdown or COVID-19 regulations: Tamil Nadu The Tamil Nadu government on May 8 imposed a complete lockdown (with few relaxations) for two weeks

Contd...Page 6



Rasna Launches syrup concentrates with unique immunity boosters

Guwahati, May 10: Childhood Brand, Rasna has recently launch a new line of syrup concentrates with unique immunity boosters. As a key measure to combat the Corona virus, Rasna as a Make in India and Atmanirbhar Brand has launch a Rs.2/- a glass immunity fruit based drink. The new line of products comprises of a combination of five key immunity boosters, Vitamin E, B12, B6, Selenium and Zinc offering round the clock immunity. The products are further fortified with glucose and fruit extracts and also provide instant rejuvenation and energy. They are available in popular flavours of Nagpur Orange, Alphonso Mango, Nimbupani, American Pineapple, Shahi Gulab, Kool Khush, Kesar Elaichi and Kala Khatta. Given a steep rise in the current demand for immunity boosting products, the global market has witnessed tremendous growth and is expected to cross \$ 17 billion by 2025. With an initial investment of Rs. 400 million in this new category, Rasna is working towards capturing 2-

3% of this global market with its presence spread across India and other export markets. Commenting on the launch Khambatta, Chairman, Rasna Pvt Ltd., said, "Rasna is very proud to have launched such a value for money and immunity boosting product, especially with immunity being the need of the hour. Rasna believes in the dictum of Rasna for everybody and that is why these products have been launched in formats so that even the poorest of poor people can afford an immunity booster at just Rs.2/-. This is Rasna's commitment as part of Atmanirbhar Bharat campaign." Rasna has also taken India's favourite cricketer Rohit Sharma as the brand ambassador to promote immunity boosting products. Commenting on his association Rohit Sharma said, "I am very proud to be part of Rasna's campaign to provide affordable immunity, energy and nutritional products to the masses and I am sure our association has overall helped in our campaign for a healthy India."

20 Covid Care Coaches placed at Dibrugarh for treatment of corona patients

N. F. Railway to assist the states with Covid Care Coaches

Guwahati, May 10 : In the relentless fight against Covid19, Railway officials and teams continue their momentum to reach-out to State Health Authorities and Administrations through timely and co-ordinated action. Through focused monitoring and detailed workflow protocols, the Railway were able to move Isolation Coaches to diverse parts of the country as per States' demand. NFR is also ready to assist all states within its jurisdiction with provision of Covid Care Coaches as and when request is received from respective state governments to cope with the rising need of hospitalization owing to COVID-19 pandemic situation. \Yesterday, 20 Covid Care Isolation Coaches have been placed at the Dibrugarh Town station and handed over to the local administration for utilization. These coaches are equipped with essential medical facilities like oxygen cylinders for patients and will cater to the Covid-19 patients with mild symptoms in the state. In the latest update, with demands from the State of Assam, Railway has swiftly moved 21 isolation coaches to Guwahati and 20 Isolation Coaches to Badarpur near Silchar. Earlier in the week, Isolation Coaches were deployed at Sabarmati, Chandlodiya and Dimapur respectively. The Isolation Coaches are now deployed at 17 stations in 7 states of the country and catering to Covid Care patients. At present, 298 coaches have been handed over



to various states for covid care with a bed-capacity of more than 4700 beds. The Isolation Coaches which are stationed on platforms have been duly barricaded, make-shifts tents provided and every endeavour is being taken for facilitation of the medical personnel on duty there. RPF Staff are posted

at these health care facilities round the clock. The Railway has also made provision of oxygen cylinders and fire extinguishers in each coach to meet emergencies. Among other things, the Railways have also enabled directional guidance, ramp facility for patient transport at these coaches.

Fine Arts Teacher, Sculptor Santosh Bora Died of Covid



Golaghat, May 10 : A well known teacher of Fine Arts and a very talented artist and sculptor from Golaghat Santosh Bora lost his life due to Covid. He was 54. Santosh Bora who hailed from Old Amolapatty in Golaghat became unwell a few days ago. When taken to hospital he was tested Covid positive. He was admitted at Covid Hospital in Golaghat. But there his condition became critical and then he was referred to Jorhat Medical College and Hospital last night and today he died. His death is deeply mourned by many individuals and organisations. He left behind his wife, two daughters and a son.

Oxygen Expresses deliver record 831 MT of LMO in One Single day

Guwahati, May 10 : Overcoming all hurdles and finding new solutions, Indian Railways is continuing its journey of bringing relief by delivering Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) to various states across the country. So far, Indian Railways has delivered nearly 4700 MT of LMO in more than 295 tankers to various states across the country. Yesterday Oxygen Expresses delivered record 831 MT of LMO, a record for One Single day. 75 Oxygen Expresses have already completed their journey so far. It is Indian Railways endeavour to deliver as much LMO as possible in the shortest time

possible to the requesting states. Till the time of this release, 293 MT of LMO has been offloaded in Maharashtra, 1334 MT in UP, 306 MT in MP, 598 MT in Haryana, 123 MT in Telangana, 40 MT in Rajasthan and 2011 MT in Delhi. First Oxygen Express to Karnataka has also started its journey from Tatanagar in Jharkhand and is on the way to Bengaluru with 120 MT of Oxygen. Running of new Oxygen is a very dynamic exercise and figures keep getting updated all the time. More loaded Oxygen Expresses are expected to start their journeys later in the night.

Two succumbed Covid death at Sootea

COVID scene worsening at Sootea-Jamugurihat

Biswanath Chariali, May 10: The second wave of Covid pandemic has hit the normal life of people. The number of Covid casualties has been rising. Sootea and Jamugurihat areas too have been badly affected by the second wave of Covid like other parts of the state. Two persons from the same family from Jamugurihat area had already succumbed Covid death. Similarly, one person from Balijuri area under Sootea area had breathed her last due to Covid 19 recently. The medical team has been working round the clock to check the

pandemic. The medical teams have been organizing RAT and RTPCR tests frequently. Similarly, the number of Covid positive cases is on the rise at Sootea-Jamugurihat. Almost every village of Sootea-Jamuguri has Covid positive cases at present. In this chaotic situation, two Covid positive patients from Sootea had breathed their last due to COVID 19 in two days. According to the information, One Purna Kanta Nath (42), a resident of Jaisiddhi under Sootea PS who suffered from respiratory problems was admitted to

TMCH on May 6. He tested Covid positive at Biswanath Civil Hospital and was referred to TMCH for further treatment but breathed his last on Sunday night. On the contrary, one Mohan Baruah (57), a resident of Baruah Chook, Sootea breathed his last at TMCH today. He tested Covid positive at New Nagsankar PHC on May 3. According to the information, late Baruah reported breathing problems to his family members on May 7 and was immediately admitted to TMCH but succumbed to Covid death today.

Two more people died of COVID 19, other 92 people tested positive

NAGAON, May 10: Two more COVID positive patients succumbed to the virus today here at Nagaon while they were undergoing treatment in hospital. Besides, other 92 people tested positive for COVID 19 today, taking the total active COVID positive cases

in the district to 1745, sources added. Meanwhile around 109 people who were undergoing treatment in hospital as well as being isolated at home, have been recovered from the infection of the virus today. Sources claimed that among those who tested

positive today, four were immediately admitted to COVID hospital while the rest were put in home quarantine. Rapid Antigen Test was conducted only on 727 people while RTPCR was conducted on 38 swab samples, sources added further.

Three Covid Deaths in a Single Day in Golaghat

Golaghat, May 10: Today three new cases of Covid death reported in Golaghat. With these three cases Covid death toll rises to thirteen in the district. Today 180 new positive cases were reported. From April 1 till today total number of Covid positive cases in Golaghat are 1882. Presently Active Cases are 932. Today 122 patients were discharged. Today Chandan Basak (41) from Mission Road area, Abdul Mozid (70) from Chandmari and Robin Nath (54) from Uriamghat lost their lives due to Covid. Meanwhile in view of large number of positive cases at Hautley Tea Estate, Golaghat District administration today declared the Tea Estate as Containment Zone.

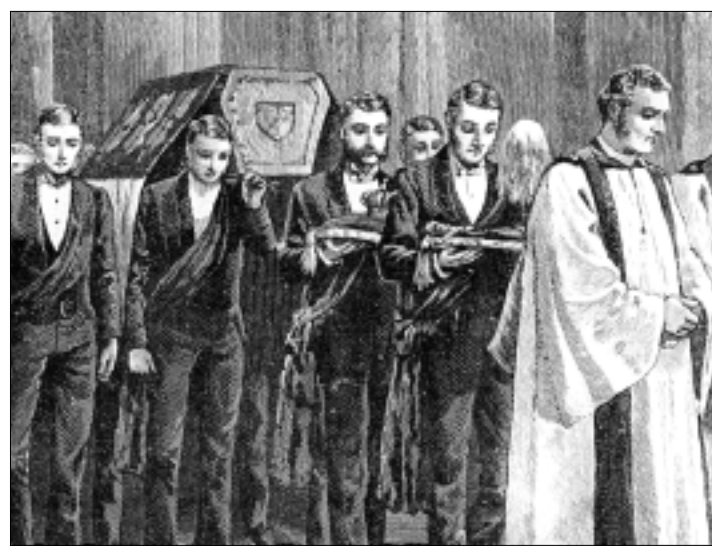
How I learned that by trying to avoid sadness, I was only making it worse

Propped up by pillows and turned at intervals, like a pork chop on a grill, I endured a period of enforced bed rest a few years back when my world shrank to four walls. During what doctors termed a "high-risk geriatric pregnancy" I was incapacitated, developing sores on my hips and tailbone (despite the flipping) and an overwhelming melancholy. I reminded myself that this was temporary and that in the history of the world, for many people, things had been far grimmer. And then I proved it to myself by embarking on a study of the history of sadness. This was less miserable than it sounds and excellent for putting things into perspective, heightening compassion, and encouraging the groundswell of change. History is roughly divided into two camps - those who thought sadness was OK and those who thought it was terrible. Early Egyptian, Chinese and Babylonian civilisations viewed sadness as a form of demonic possession and used corporal punishment and starvation in their attempts to drive out the demons. In ancient Greek and Roman times, doctors prescribed an Insta-friendly regime of gymnastics, massage, special diets and regular baths to alleviate symptoms. Melancholia emerges as an illness in the writings of Hippocrates, and was thought to be brought on by an imbalance of the bodily "humours", or fluids. Any sickness or disease in the body was the result of an excess of one of these fluids, and the doctor's job was to bring the humours back into balance by purging or bloodletting. "At least

no one's doing that to me ..." was an initial thought. By the middle ages, feeling sad essentially meant God hated you. For clerics in medieval Europe, melancholy was a sign that you were living in sin and in need of repentance. But being sad meant that you were considered closer to God in the minds of many a Renaissance man (let's face it, no one was listening to women), marking the first shift toward embracing sadness. In 1590, the poet Edmund Spenser even went so far as to endorse sadness as a marker of spiritual commitment. There was now an idea that if you were happy, it was likely to be because you were getting your kicks from something not altogether holy - such as sex or alcohol. With advances in science and technology during the Enlightenment, thinkers began to consider our bodies from a mechanical point of view, seeing sadness as a malfunction of the human machine. The physician George Cheyne came up with the

theory that melancholy was caused by all the newly acquired comforts and luxuries made possible by mechanisation. Not enough toiling the land - and too much thinking. Here I became sidetracked by a passing crush on the 19th-century Danish thinker Søren Kierkegaard (I blame pregnancy hormones) who seemed to have sadness nailed in three key respects. He counselled us to feel all the feels, even the hard stuff, even when it hurts, writing: "Life is not a problem to be solved but a reality to be experienced." Sadness and despair are not only inevitable: they are bliss-inducing and necessary for change. Third, to help us figure life out, Kierkegaard urged walking. "I have walked myself into my best thoughts ... if one just keeps on walking, everything will be all right," he wrote. Bedridden, I believed him. I'd spent most of my life running from sadness until this point. Upbeat and happy

Helen Russell



were all I knew to aim for, no matter how things felt on the inside - which, having lost my sister and my dad within the same year growing up, often wasn't great. Sad, I'd gleaned, was bad. As a therapist would later tell me: "It's no surprise you spent eight years researching happiness: you were scared of sadness. Most people are." Kierkegaard wasn't. He was totally prepared to accept that life would feel bleak at times - this meant you were doing it right. But if the benefits of sadness were something Kierkegaard realised so long ago, why had so many of us forgotten how to be sad? To learn more, I returned to my studies. Also in the 19th century, in Britain, a population explosion and increased urbanisation meant that people were living cheek by jowl, often in unsanitary conditions. "Death was all around and became an open and ongoing conversation," Prof John Plunkett from Exeter University told me. To cope with the sadness, Victorians embraced grief with gusto - exemplified by Queen's Victoria's mourning of her husband. "But even by the time Albert died, culture was starting to shift," said Plunkett. At the tail-end of the century and into the next, London's cholera outbreaks, the first world war and then the Spanish flu pandemic brought an end to extravagant funerals and rituals, with the sheer scale of loss of life from these horrors making such mourning impossible. And then came the second world war. Widespread suffering meant that expressions of grief had little space and stoicism became

prized above all else. And so a generation grew up keeping calm and carrying on. Their kids, however, had other ideas. Baby boomers came of age as a generation more in touch with their emotions and prioritised self-esteem as a result of a shift in thinking. "This was the beginnings of an emphasis on protecting the ego," Prof Nathaniel Herr of American University explained. "We started striving for 'happy' above all else." So we were allowed to feel, but we'd better feel happy. Only, sometimes we're not happy. And this is a problem if we don't know how to handle sadness. Understanding this felt like a gamechanger. It wasn't just me; we'd forgotten how to handle sadness as a society. At this point, my curriculum was curtailed by a trip to the operating room for a long-awaited delivery, but an idea was also born in that most poignant of moments: the best thing I could do for myself, and my future family, would be to learn to be sad. Once I was back on my feet I continued my quest and discovered that avoiding sadness by burying it or ignoring it doesn't work, since suppressing so-called negative thoughts only exacerbates them. Experiencing temporary sadness on the other hand, can - counterintuitively - make us happier. And since sadness happens to all of us, we might as well do it right. Accepting sadness as a key part of our human experience makes us more compassionate to ourselves as well as others. And just as my 19th-century crush knew: sadness can act as a catalyst for much-needed change and ultimately a more fulfilling life.

Covid cases on the rise at Biswanath

Biswanath Chariali, May 10 : Despite several efforts made by the Biswanath district administration, the graph of Covid positive cases are on the rise in Biswanath district. To check the community spread of Covid 19, the district administration and the medical team have been working round the clock. But despite the laborious efforts, the situation seemed to go out of control. The district administration had declared many

containment zones to check the community spread of the Covid. According to the information received from Supritam Dey, the SDIPRO, till filing this report, the number of total positive cases is 642 out of these, the number of active cases is 467 and recovered cases are 175. Out of the active cases, 423 are advised for home isolation while 44 are under medical care at hospital.

33 KV Lines Becomes Dedicated Feeder for Lepparada Distric with Exclusion of two West Siang Villages

Aalo, May 10 : The 33 KV Lines of Basar Feeder has become a dedicated Feeder of Lepparada district after segregating two villages of West Siang district namely Angu and Doko to 11 KV feeder of Aalo with all out effort of the Aalo Power Division on 9th May last. These two villages were drawing power supply from 33 KV line Basar earlier and transformers have been installed in two villages. With this, 33 KV Basar feeder will be looked after by the Basar Electric Division separately and

formal handing and taking over of 33 KV lines in between Aalo and Basar divisions will be done shortly, disclosed Er. Dagyom Ango, SE cum EE Electrical Aalo. The Aalo Electrical Division has been working relentlessly to streamline the power scenario in the district for so many years. The department has already segregated Urban and rural lines to do away all complications and lastly accomplished all streamlining works after segregating the district feeder lines too.

French soldiers accuse government of trying to 'silence' warnings of civil war



Paris, May 10

Serving members of the French military have fired a second salvo at Emmanuel Macron's government in an open letter

accusing it of "cowardice, deceit, perversion", just weeks after a first letter warned the country was heading for "civil war". Like the first letter, it appears in the rightwing magazine Valeurs Actuelles. It was reportedly signed anonymously "by active military personnel" and is appended with a petition on the magazine's website for others to sign. The letter's signatories refer to the seventh verse of La Marseillaise, the French national anthem, that refers to the "avenging" slain elders or following them to "their coffins". It was published in support of the first letter, published on 21 April, the 60th anniversary of a failed coup d'état against General Charles de Gaulle over his support for Algerian independence. Signed by a number of retired generals as well as at least 18 serving soldiers including four officers, it warned of the "disintegration" of France evoking what it called the "perils" of Islamic extremist and "the hordes from the banlieue". It also accused anti-racism groups of creating "hatred between communities" and cautioned that "lax" government policies could spark chaos requiring military action to "protect our civilisational values". Afterwards, furious ministers accused the signatories, who were supported by the far-right Rassemblement National party leader, Marine Le Pen, of breaking military rules and threatened legal action against them. The armed forces minister, Florence Parly, said: "The armies are not there to campaign but to defend France", while the interior minister, Gérard Darmanin, accused Le Pen of having her father Jean-Marie Le Pen's "taste" for the sound of marching boots. The second letter, published late on Sunday evening, batted off threats of punishment and launched an all-out attack on the government, accusing it of "trampling" on veterans' honour and "sully" their reputation "when their only fault is to love their country and mourn its visible decline".

Anger as Chinese safari park kept leopard breakout from the public for nearly a week

Beijing, May 10: A search for the last of three leopards that escaped from a safari park in eastern China was ongoing, authorities said Monday, as the park came under fire for concealing the breakout for nearly a week. The three leopards from the Hangzhou Safari Park were spotted by villagers as early as 1 May, according to the state-owned Global Times newspaper. However, the safari park only reported the missing leopards and alerted the

public on Saturday. Two of the leopards have already been captured, and were in good health, officials said. It is unclear how the leopards managed to escape. Efforts to capture the last leopard were ongoing as of Sunday night, according to a statement posted on Monday by the Hangzhou local government on its official WeChat account. Those searching for the animal were using equipment such as drones as well as hunting dogs.

Jerusalem, May 10: Israeli police have stormed a sacred Jerusalem site that holds the Dome of the Rock after all-night clashes with Palestinian protesters, before a planned parade by headline Israeli nationalists through the Old City in a provocative annual flag-waving march. The Palestine Red Crescent reported 180 people injured overnight, with 50 admitted to hospital, after officers in riot gear clashed with Palestinian demonstrators in East Jerusalem, extending Jerusalem's worst unrest in years. Confrontations continued until after dawn, when police moved in to an Old City compound housing the al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, and fired stun grenades at worshippers, who threw stones. Footage from the scene showed crowds of people running in front of the mosque through clouds of smoke. As fears mounted of Jerusalem descending further into chaos, police published dramatic CCTV video from a road near the Old City of a white car being pelted by Palestinians with stones, before the driver reverses and rams into one of them. The downed man gets up and limps away while an armed Israeli police officer runs in to protect the driver, believed to be Israeli, who faces more rock-throwing. Tensions have soared in recent days in advance of the now-delayed Israeli court ruling on whether

authorities were able to evict dozens of Palestinians from the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, just outside the Old City and give their homes to Jewish settlers. The late-night skirmishes raised fears about further clashes on Monday during the Jerusalem Day celebrations, which mark the anniversary of when Israeli troops captured the city in 1967. Israeli

militants in the Gaza Strip fired four rockets towards Israel, setting off air raid sirens in southern city of Ashkelon and nearby areas, the Israeli military said. One rocket was intercepted, while two others exploded inside Gaza, it added. There were no reports of damage or injuries. Earlier in the day, Israel carried out an airstrike on a Hamas

the al-Aqsa mosque. Israeli police said 20 officers had been injured in recent days. In East Jerusalem, which includes the Old City, Palestinians feel an increasing threat from settlers who have sought to expand the Jewish presence there through buying homes, constructing buildings, and court-ordered evictions, such as the case in Sheikh Jarrah. Nabeel

Avichai Mandelblit, the supreme court agreed to delay the hearing. It said it should be held within a month. Still, the hiatus may not be enough to end the crisis. At previous Jerusalem Day marches, participants hve harassed Arab residents and banged on shuttered doors as they descended through the Muslim quarter. Palestinians have also complained of oppressive restrictions on gatherings during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. Nir Hasson, a writer for the left-leaning Israeli daily newspaper Haaretz, accused Israeli authorities of making a series of bad decisions recently, "including the unrestrained freedom given to police in [Jerusalem's] streets, where on Friday they acted as if they had been sent to fan the flames, not to extinguish them". He added: "In the end, half of Israel's capital city is occupied, and 40% of its residents are non-citizens who view Israel as a foreign, oppressive regime. The police and other authorities must recognise this and act to restore calm." Jerusalem has long been the centre of the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, with its holy sites revered by Jews and Muslims. The Old City's Western Wall forms part of the holiest site in Judaism – the Temple Mount. It is equally part of the al-Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, however, with the Dome of the Rock and al-Aqsa mosque above it. Palestinians have held nightly protests in Sheikh Jarrah. A reporter for Israeli public TV tweeted footage of a Jewish driver whose car was attacked with stones and windows shattered at the entrance to Sheikh Jarrah on Saturday. The Islamist movement Hamas, which is in power inside Gaza, urged Palestinians to remain at al-Aqsa until Ramadan ends, saying: "The resistance is ready to defend al-Aqsa at any cost."



police gave the go-ahead for the parade, despite days of unrest at a flashpoint holy site and in a nearby Arab neighbourhood where Jewish settlers have been trying to evict Palestinians from their homes. Addressing a special cabinet meeting before Jerusalem Day, the prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, said Israel "will not allow any extremists to destabilise the calm in Jerusalem. We will enforce law and order decisively and responsibly". "We will continue to maintain freedom of worship for all faiths, but we will not allow violent disturbances," he said, adding: "We emphatically reject the pressures not to build in Jerusalem." There were also signs the violence was spreading. Late on Sunday, Palestinian

military group post in response to another rocket attack. People in Gaza also launched incendiary balloons into southern Israel during the day, causing dozens of fires. Israel has faced mounting international criticism of its heavy police response and the planned evictions. Last week a UN rights body described the expulsion of Arabs from their homes as a possible war crime. On Sunday, Jordan, which has custodianship of Muslim and Christian sites in Jerusalem, called Israel's actions against worshippers at al-Aqsa "barbaric". On Saturday night, 120 people were injured, including a one-year-old child, and 14 were taken to hospital. The violence came a day after more than 200 Palestinians were wounded around

al-Kurd, a 77-year-old whose family faces losing their home, said the evictions were a racist attempt to "expel Palestinians and replace them with settlers". Under Israeli law, Jews who can prove a title from before the 1948 war that accompanied the country's creation can claim back their Jerusalem properties. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs were displaced in the same conflict but no similar law exists for Palestinians who lost their homes in the city. "This an attempt by the settlers, supported by the government, to seize our homes with force," Kurd told the Guardian. "Enough is enough." On Sunday afternoon, in light of the tensions and after a request from the attorney general,

Italy's birthrate is falling. Can the storks help?

Milan, May 10: As if having a baby wasn't expensive enough, fathers of newborns in the mountain hamlets that make up Italy's Val d'Ultimo have an additional cost. In a revival of an ancient myth that white storks deliver babies, carved wooden storks carrying a newborn child in a sling are a common feature outside homes in the valley. They are put there by friends of the father and there they remain until he stumps up for a round of drinks. "There has been a noticeable increase in storks and other symbols of birth being put outside someone's house, especially in recent years," said Stefan Schwarz, the mayor of Ultimo, home to almost 3,000 people spread over three hamlets. Ultimo welcomes about 40 newborns a year, Schwarz said. "We'll be needing more nurseries and will perhaps have to make the schools bigger," he added. It is a dilemma that mayors of other Italian towns look on with envy. Since the "baby boom" years of the 1960s, the annual number of births in Europe's fourth biggest economy has fallen by more than half. The decline gathered pace in 2010 and then, last year, Covid-19 struck, contributing to new records for both births and deaths. There were 404,104 babies born in Italy in 2020 - down by almost 16,000 from 2019, which was the lowest birth rate recorded since Italian unification in 1861. At the same time, the gap between births and deaths (there were 746,146 deaths) was the widest it has been since the Spanish flu of 1918. Istat, the national statistics agency, said last year's drop in population, by 384,000, was akin to a city the size of Florence being wiped off the map. All of this is a dramatic change for Italy, which has gone from being a country known for its large families to one with among the

lowest birth rates in the EU. However, the demographic situation differs wildly between the country's 20 regions, and even between provinces and towns within them. As the rest of Italy grapples with the drastic decline in the birth rate, Val d'Ultimo, along with its wider province of Bolzano in the semi-autonomous Alto Adige region, are somewhat bucking the trend. In 2019, Bolzano was the only area of Italy to register more births than deaths, and even though the province suffered a surplus of deaths over births last year due to Covid-19, it still recorded the highest number of births in the country, with 9.6 children born per 1,000 women. Compare this with the island of Sardinia, which registered the lowest birth rate in Italy, at 5.1 babies per 1,000 women. On average, women in Bolzano had 1.7 children in 2019 compared with the national average of 1.27, and just 1 in Sardinia. While Schwarz worries about how to accommodate the

new additions to his town, Debora Porrà, the mayor of Villamassargia, a town with a similar-sized population in south-western Sardinia, which has one of the lowest annual birth rates in the country, is fighting to keep the only maternity unit in the area open. The unit is located at the hospital in nearby Sulcis-Iglesiente and serves Villamassargia and Carbonia, the other main town in a province with a total population of 120,000. In Italy, there needs to be a minimum of 500 births per maternity unit a year in order for funding to be maintained. "This year, we managed to get the closure of the maternity unit postponed, even though we only had 300 births last year," said Porrà. "But others have closed in other towns, and we'll be next." Moreover, women in the province do not have access to pain-free births. The absence of epidural pain relief is not a rarity in Sardinia and parts of southern Italy. "The hospitals in

our area have never had analgesia services, so women are forced to either give birth in pain or travel to Cagliari [Sardinia's capital]," added Porrà. "I'm absolutely exhausted trying to fight these battles." It would be easy to surmise that Bolzano's success in increasing birth numbers is down to money. It is, after all, in the wealthy, Italian-German-speaking Alto Adige and regularly ranks in surveys as the best place to live in Italy. Schwarz joked that the reason for the uptick in procreation in Val d'Ultimo is because "the winters are long". Other residents concur, adding, "and our TVs don't work". But much more is at play. One of the main explanations has been a comprehensive political strategy, which began in 2005 with generous financial benefits for families, ranging from monthly child allowances and support towards buying a home, and coincided with the development of support services such as

nurseries. "Back then, we didn't really have a policy for families, it wasn't a theme," said Waltraud Deeg, the vice-president of Bolzano province and councillor for families. I feel secure enough to begin a family now. Some of my friends are thinking about children, too, but it all depends on work and stability." Now we have a very active policy. One important thing was to not only think about the city [of Bolzano] but the rural areas, and to have services in place for early childhood. "In the early 2000s, the Alto Adige region, which lies next to the Austrian border, was the first in Italy to adopt the system of Tagesmutter, or "mother for the day", a childcare concept that originated in northern Europe and involves a woman adapting her home as a nursery and taking care of up to five children a day, aged between three months and three years. After two years of training, Sonja Spitaler set up as a Tagesmutter in Laives, a town on the outskirts of Bolzano city, in 2006. "At the time, this wasn't exactly my dream job," said Spitaler. "I also have two children and it was the most convenient thing to do. I wanted some independence, to earn my own income." Not only has the childcare system allowed mothers to work and created jobs for others, Spitaler said that it has helped to dismantle the idea that women are "bad mothers" if they leave their children in nurseries. "This mentality has changed a lot over the last 10 years or so," she added. "Why should a woman have to give up her job? Especially if it's not guaranteed that her partner's income can cover all the costs." Across Bolzano province, there are 50 Tagesmütter and 93 so-called "microstructures" - which are basically daycare centres housed in larger spaces that can accommodate up to around 25

children. The costs of the services are shared between the provincial council, local council and parents, according to their income. In addition, there are several privately-run nurseries. Aneta Ngucaj, originally from Albania, owns Baby Puffo, a "microstructure" nursery that is spread over three locations. She employs five assistants per nursery. "We have a lot of babies from three months old," she said. Mothers leave them willingly but throughout the day we keep in touch, sending them photos or videos, which helps to reassure them that their children are OK. "One of Baby Puffo's assistants is Sara Papasergio, who, at 25, is expecting her first child. "I wasn't planning to start a family," she said. "But I feel secure enough to begin one now. I'm lucky to work here and have a stable income. Some of my friends are thinking about children, too, but it all depends on work and stability." Bolzano stands out from the rest of Italy with a high number of women in the workforce, especially in the public sector, where 70% of women are employed. The advantage of a public-sector job means having a stable contract including benefits such as five months obligatory maternity leave. As elsewhere in Italy, women who are self-employed or working on short-term contracts are not entitled to such benefits. Pregnant women are often forced to leave the workforce or, in many cases, are laid off. "The fact that such a high percentage of women here work in public sector jobs provides stability," said Nadia Mazzardis, a political activist. "So long as the province can maintain this number, it will work." Nationally, less than 50% of women aged between 15 and 64 work, far below the EU average of 67.3%. Labour market inequalities have been

exacerbated by the pandemic, with 312,000 women losing their jobs in 2020 compared with 132,000 men. This is partly due to women being more likely to work in sectors badly affected by the pandemic, such as tourism, but also because a much higher percentage of women are in precarious employment. "Women lose jobs much more than men because they are on short-term contracts," said Giorgia Serughetti, a sociologist at the University of Milano-Bicocca. "This means that the moment something changes, such as becoming pregnant, there is no guarantee of keeping your job or, if you do manage to keep it, that job conditions will be flexible upon returning to work." Bolzano might be nicknamed "the happy island" but that doesn't mean to say its economy hasn't suffered in recent years, as well as from the consequences of the pandemic. And neither has it been immune from the exodus of young people moving abroad in search of better job opportunities. However, people generally have a positive outlook, according to Spitaler. "Covid-19 has changed things a bit for everyone but we tend to still look positively ahead," she added. The same cannot be said for Sardinia, which has a high unemployment rate. "There is lack of hope in the future, and those who get the opportunity to do so, leave," said Porrà. "So if you find work away from home, that's where you start a family. This also means we have an increasingly older population and nobody to look after them." Villamassargia, along with nearby Sulcis-Iglesiente and Carbonia, is among the most deprived areas of the island. But while poverty has contributed to the fall in births, Porrà blames more the absence of a political strategy.



THE ASSAM RISING

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State of emergency

Japan has extended a state of emergency in Tokyo and several other regions until the end of May as it struggles to contain a surge in Covid-19 cases fuelled by new, more contagious variants, with medical staff warning that health services in some areas are on the verge of collapse. The Olympics, which were delayed by a year due to the pandemic, are set to open on 23 July, with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and organisers insisting that measures will be put in place to ensure the safety of athletes and other visitors, as well as a nervous Japanese public. The survey, conducted between 7 and 9 May by the conservative Yomiuri Shimbun, showed 59% wanted the Games cancelled as opposed to 39% who said they should be held. "Postponement" – an option ruled out by the IOC – was not offered as a choice. Of those who said the Olympics should go ahead, 23% said they should take place without spectators. Foreign spectators have been banned but a final decision on domestic attendance will be made in June. Another poll conducted at the weekend by TBS News found 65% wanted the Games cancelled or postponed again, with 37% voting to scrap the event altogether and 28% calling for another delay. A similar poll in April conducted by Kyodo news agency found 70% wanted the Olympics cancelled or postponed. As public opposition holds firm just over 70 days before the opening ceremony, the IOC and the Japanese government appear to be sending mixed messages over who is ultimately responsible for deciding the Games' fate. The IOC's vice president, John Coates, said on Saturday that while Japanese sentiment about the Games "was a concern", he could foresee no scenario under which the sporting extravaganza would not go ahead. "The prime minister of Japan said that to the president of the United States two or three weeks ago. He continues to say that to the IOC," Coates said. But on Monday, Japan's prime minister, Yoshihide Suga, said the IOC would have the final say, insisting that his government had not prioritised the Games over public health. Asked in a parliamentary committee meeting whether the Games will continue even if Covid-19 infections spike, Suga replied: "I've never put the Olympics first". He added: "My priority has been to protect the lives and health of the Japanese population. We must first prevent the spread of the virus." Suga has repeatedly vowed to go ahead with the Olympics despite the spike in Covid-19 cases, but the TBS survey found his support rate at 40%, close to record lows marked earlier this year. A visit to Japan by the IOC president, Thomas Bach, originally expected to take place next week, is being arranged for June, Fuji News Network reported on Monday, citing multiple unidentified sources. Japanese media had reported that Bach would take part in a torch relay event in Hiroshima on 17 May, but Tokyo 2020 organisers said the visit had not been confirmed. A prerequisite for his visit would be the lifting of Japan's targeted states of emergency, the broadcaster said. While no prominent athlete has publicly opposed the Games being held this summer, the Japanese tennis star Naomi Osaka said the time had come to discuss the merits of holding the event in the middle of a pandemic. The world No 2 said staging the Games should be discussed as long as the issue was "making people very uncomfortable". "Of course I want the Olympics to happen, but I think there's so much important stuff going on, especially the past year," she told a news conference ahead of the Italian Open. "A lot of unexpected things have happened. For me, I feel like if it's putting people at risk... then it definitely should be a discussion, which I think it is as of right now. At the end of the day I'm just an athlete, and there is a whole pandemic going on, so, yeah." The virus has brought disruption to the torch relay and to qualifying events. Last week, Gymnastics Canada said it would not be sending a team to a last-chance Olympic qualifier in Rio de Janeiro in June over coronavirus concerns, effectively denying men's artistic, women's artistic, and rhythmic gymnasts the chance to compete in Tokyo. Japan has recorded more than 600,000 coronavirus cases and more than 10,500 deaths – the highest in east Asia. On Saturday, it reported more than 7,000 infections – the highest since January. In addition, only about 2% of Japan's 126m people have received at least one vaccine dose since its rollout began in mid-February, while hospitals are struggling to secure beds for newly diagnosed people.

ICU for 70yr man or 30yr woman? Doctors, nurses are turning to psychiatrists in 2nd wave



I recently received a call from a senior anaesthesiologist, a family friend who works at a large private hospital in Mumbai. He said he was becoming abnormally aware of his heartbeat over the last two months. Then the anxiety kicked in - he could not intubate a severely ill Covid-19 patient in the critical care unit. In his 35-year career, this had never happened. He froze, and another doctor had to take over. A sense of guilt continued to loom over him, and that's when he called me, a psychiatrist. Following an initial assessment over Skype, I determined that he was having a form of clinical anxiety. I put him in touch with a therapist who handled the non-pharmacological part of the illness. I started him on a short-term, low-dose anxiolytic. With medication and therapy sessions, he was soon able to gain control of his debilitating anxiety. This is just one incident - I have lost count of the number of people who have been reaching out to our organisation for help lately. When I checked about this with other colleagues, they also had similar stories to tell. In India's second Covid wave, the toll on our healthcare professionals seems to be far worse. Especially when it comes to their mental health. This phenomenon was not seen to this extent in the first wave. In the second wave, along with Covid-19 patients, healthcare professionals are also feeling helpless. I recently read that a resident doctor at a private hospital in

Delhi died by suicide allegedly due to the frustrating situation he had to face on a daily basis. He had to deal with seven to eight critical patients every day in the Covid ward. He is survived by his two-month pregnant wife. Among most doctors, nurses and hospital staff, chronic exhaustion, pandemic fatigue, feelings of isolation, loneliness, lack of opportunity to grieve, and inadequate closures are setting in. More and more are reaching out for help. With barely a few months to recover after the first wave, the existing workforce has been stretched thin, and healthcare workers are having to shoulder additional responsibilities. Unless the frontline workers are adequately rested, we cannot expect them to discharge their duties to the best of their abilities. Healthcare workers are humans too, and cannot function on auto-pilot mode. The overarching theme that is increasingly being seen among healthcare workers is fear. We have had several nursing professionals reach out to our team and say that they fear going back to the Covid ward. Rekha (name changed), working at a Covid hospital in Karnataka's Hubli, sought an online appointment. "Doctor, I am in a catch-22 situation. My family and I can't make ends meet if I don't work. At the same time, I worry about stepping out into the Covid ward. I have this sense of

restlessness throughout the day, and can't wait to get back home. I am exhausted by the time I reach home. I then have to make dinner for my family. It is depressing," she told us. One question gnaws at every healthcare worker: "Am I inviting this untameable virus into my home?" Despite this being a very realistic fear, doctors and nursing personnel are left with little choice. They don't have the luxury of not working on weekends, or of working from home. If they stop going to work, there will be no bread on the table. The irony of the situation is cruel. While they are working for survival, their very survival can come to a halt should they get infected. Work is not easy either. A slight error in judgement can be fatal; we are talking about life and death situations. There is an acute shortage of beds, oxygen, and ventilators. This has forced doctors to make some hard choices - and that takes a mental toll of its own. A 70-year-old man who is on the brink of collapse needs the ventilator as much as a 30-year-old woman who is battling severe Covid-19. And there is only one ventilator available. Which guideline do we turn to in such a situation? Dr Ram (name changed), an interventional cardiologist in Maharashtra's Nashik, converted his state-of-the-art facility into a Covid hospital. He tells me that physicians at his hospital are under immense duress while making such hard choices. One of his physicians recently quit saying that he could no longer bear the mental fatigue accompanying such difficult choices. How are we to process the scale of this trauma? Are we supposed to carry on from one patient to another as though nothing has happened? My brother-in-law, a neurosurgeon, and my sister, an obstetrician, tell me some harsh details of the kind of pressure that frontline workers are facing. I see both of them being completely drained by the time they come back home. Their only respite is the family dinner that we all have together, and even then, the conversations veer towards the degree of emotional exhaustion that healthcare workers have to bear. India doesn't pay particular attention to mental health. But the second wave has exposed that denial

too. A study conducted by the Ohio State University College of Nursing has found that critical care nurses in poor physical and mental health committed more medical errors than nurses in better health. Approximately 40 per cent screened positive for depression symptoms, and more than 50 per cent screened positive for anxiety. The National Mental Health Survey 2015-16 conducted across 12 Indian states reveals that 1 in 20 Indians is clinically depressed. A part of the solution lies in incentivising healthcare workers. Compensation and work-related benefits should be attractive enough to invite more workforce. The existing pay scale is discouraging, to say the least. In the unfortunate event of a healthcare worker succumbing to the virus, the family of the said worker should be adequately compensated. Prescriptive practices such as doing yoga, exercising, engaging in mindfulness meditation are largely applicable to non-healthcare workers. In the middle of such a pandemic, it is impractical to expect healthcare workers to find the time to engage in such practices. Incentivisation will hopefully attract more workforce so that the existing professionals find it a bit more easy to manage the work pressure and a rest cycle can be initiated. Healthcare settings in India should take mental and emotional health seriously. In most medical colleges and hospitals, the department of psychiatry is relegated to a remote inaccessible corner, or may even be housed in a separate building, which is cut off from the main healthcare system. Integration of mental health into the general healthcare system should begin with easy access to mental healthcare. Psychiatry, as a subject, should be included in the undergraduate curriculum, and the final year curriculum should evaluate students with a separate theory and practical exam. This will serve to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health, and also make more doctors aware of the ground realities of mental healthcare in our country. Hopefully, once we emerge out of this pandemic, we as a country, will make more of an effort to facilitate conversations around mental health. Of doctors and hospital staff too.

The ignorance that underpinned empire and slavery still has staunch defenders

It seems that the government's war on woke is box office gold, infinite spite fired at an endlessly replenished stream of targets, none of them moving very fast, since they totally weren't expecting culture secretary Oliver Dowden to even be aware of their work. But, ask anyone who uses it pejoratively to describe another person what "woke" actually means, and it turns out to have a specific usage. In an academic or museum trustee, it means anyone who talks about decolonising the curriculum,

as in the case of the academic whose reappointment to the board of the Museum of Greenwich was reportedly vetoed by Dowden. In the context of youth, it's the ones on Black Lives Matter protests, unless it's the ones posing a threat to a slave owner's statue. Its purpose is to reframe any anti-racist activism or intellectual inquiry as a threat to either public order or British heritage. It's tactically rather neat - if you're unwilling to say "racism is good, actually", then it's hard to lodge a heartfelt opposition



to anti-racists. Yet if **Zoe Williams** were there", Sanghera you can interpolate some other dearly held principle (history, public order and, oh go on then, freedom of speech), claim it is under attack and pledge to defend it with all your might, well, here's the emotional heft you were lacking. That argument, where it relates to history, rests on a parallel idea, that anti-racist revisionism is seeking to erase the past. If we take down a statue of Cecil Rhodes, we begin an act of conscious forgetting, which corrodes the national identity. The threat is actually coming from the opposite direction - by ignoring history we are unable to understand the shape of our nations. I'm thinking specifically of three recent works of popular history about colonialism and slavery: Nikole Hannah-Jones's 1619 Project for the New York Times, for which she won a Pulitzer last year (the podcast is incredible); Sathnam Sanghera's *Empireland*; and Alex Renton's *Blood Legacy*, which details his own family's slave ownership in late 18th-century Tobago. Each work is hauntingly original, and the perspectives different, but certain themes emerge. The first, forensically analysed by Hannah-Jones in the American context, is how slavery and exploitation as systems get into the fabric of all that is woven afterwards, whether that's modern-day healthcare or the economics of agriculture. "We're here because you

Supreme Court's flawed verdict on Maratha quota shows why factoring caste history is crucial

Marathas are a large agrarian Shudra community in Maharashtra, constituting nearly 30 per cent of the state's population. Maharashtra's economic development, to a large extent, depends on the well-being of this community, along with other Shudra agrarian communities. The five-judge bench of the Supreme Court while striking down the 16 per cent reservation given by the state government has said that the latter had not cited any extraordinary conditions before allowing this reservation over and above the 50 per cent quota stipulated in the Mandal judgment of 1992. The court did not take into account the caste-varna system, which still functions against the idea of equality even in the case of a major agrarian community such as the Marathas.

The Marathas seem to have realised that despite the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), whose ideological parent is the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), being in power since 2014, the community is still confined to the varna inequities. They could not compete with the Dwijas (the non-Shudra upper castes) in all-India services or in state services, one of the avenues available to them for their socio-economic upliftment. Many agrarian Shudra communities in India, like Marathas, Jats, Gujjars, Patels, Reddys, Kamms, Nairs among others, did not opt to be included in the Backward Class list in 1992. But some of them now realise that they cannot compete with the Dwijas (Brahmins, Banias, Kayasthas, Khatri and Ksatriyas) who had the historical

resource of education in Sanskrit, Persian and English for a long time. Also read: New backward class lists to be drawn, 50% ceiling stays - what SC Maratha quota verdict means Having played a mass-mobilisation role in the Hindutva movement in Maharashtra, the Marathas aspired to get their share in Delhi's power pie if the RSS/BJP combine formed the government. But that clearly did not happen - the Marathas seem to have realised that they are nowhere in Delhi and their power influence is limited to Maharashtra. Not just the Marathas but many other agrarian Shudra communities who remained outside the Mandal list have a similar realisation. From the

Kancha Ilaiah Shepherd

same state of Bombay, before its division into Maharashtra and Gujarat, Brahmins and Baniyas emerged as national leaders, top bureaucrats, scientists and intellectuals. But the Marathas did not get to share the Delhi power. Though among the Shudras, Sardar Patel did emerge as a national leader from the Patidar community, no Maratha could. The Marathas now feel that such a top man/woman was not allowed to emerge during the freedom struggle and even later, till now by the Dwijas. The RSS structure has shown them that control. Though many Brahmin Maharashtrians headed the RSS, not a single Maratha was allowed to reach at the top. They were confined to agrarian production, agribusiness and local power with a new definition of unified Hindu. Marathas were used mostly as muscle power against the mi-

norities by the RSS. After the exception of Mahatma Phule, who emerged as an early intellectual from the Kumbi Maratha community, India saw a stream of Brahmin leaders and intellectuals in the subsequent years from the Bombay province. While Mahadev Govind Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Mahatma Gandhi (of Banias background) emerged from one stream, V.D. Savarkar, K.B. Hedgewar, M.S. Golwalkar and now Mohan Bhagwat came from the Hindutva stream - all Maharashtrian Brahmins and powerful national leaders. The Marathas have not produced English-educated top national leaders and high intellectuals. This proves they were/are educationally backward. The Shudras, historically, were not supposed to learn, read or write Sanskrit. This historical limitation got carried to Persian learning as well during the Muslim rule. Even the modern English medium education eluded the Marathas - true of all the regional Shudra communities, except the Nairs of Kerala. The Supreme Court must consider the history of caste while formulating the idea of equality. How else could one explain the inability of the Shudra upper layer castes, who outnumber the Dwijas, in competing in the all India services. This is a limitation that history has placed on all Shudra communities - they are rural and have agrarian and artisanal backgrounds. How does the highest court not take this historical factor into account? One must know that the Marathas were spread over vast rural productive land.

Nifty tops 14,900, Sensex above 49,500 on positive global cues; HDFC, ICICI Bank top contributors

Mumbai, May 10 : Share Market News Today | Sensex, Nifty, Share Prices LIVE: Domestic equity market benchmarks BSE Sensex and Nifty 50 were trading over half a per cent higher on Monday, on the back of positive global cues. BSE Sensex was hovering around 49,500 while the broader Nifty 50 was ruling above 14,900. Dr Reddy's, ONGC, Housing Development Finance Corporation, Titan Company, Sun Pharma, Kotak Mahindra Bank among top Sensex gainers. UltraTech Cement, Infosys, Maruti Suzuki were among BSE Sensex laggards. All the Nifty sectoral indices were trading in the positive territory, lead by Nifty Metal index, which was up nearly 3 per cent. It was followed by Nifty Pharma index. In the previous week on Wall Street, the Dow Jones Industrial rallied nearly 3 per cent and the S&P 500 gained over 1 per cent. While tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite fell 1.5 per cent. After remaining net buyers in Indian share markets for the six consecutive months, FPIs turned net sellers in April. They have continued to pull out Rs 5,936 crore from the Indian equities in the first week of May amid worries over the intense second wave of coronavirus infection and its fallout on the economy. Foreign investors had pulled out Rs 9,659 crore in April after infusing money in the preceding six months, according to the depositories' data. The markets are trading well

above the resistance of 14700. If we maintain this today, we can scale up higher to 15200-15250. Since we have been able to cross 14700, this level has now become a good support for the Nifty. As long as this



holds, we can use any dip or intraday correction to buy into the markets for higher targets. If 14700 breaks on a closing basis, the index could slip to 14400. Manish Hathiramani, Proprietary Index Trader and Technical Analyst, Deen Dayal Deshpande, the manifold challenges present in the current scenario, the life industry has begun the current fiscal on a positive note. The growth is expected to be driven by the private sector who grew at a much faster pace compared to the public sector. The pandemic has created a rise in the demand for protection plans, even as

the market volatility continued to affect the demand for linked plans. In FY22, along with the increased awareness of insurance, a digital push for insurance and any increase in term plan premiums are

expected to drive the life premiums CARE Ratings. The forex traders are likely to remain in dilemma to take a call whether Rupee will appreciate on global risk-on bias or depreciate on deteriorating domestic sentiment. But one thing is sure that the volatility is likely to remain high for the near term. The risk to reward ratio for the pair seems in favor of the trader as the downside seems limited up to 73-73.10, whereas the upside is likely to take charge at least up to 74.50 in the near term. Amit Pabari, managing director, CR Forex Advisors. The Indian Rupee is expected to trade in the range of

73.20-73.60 with a mixed bias as dollar weakness after softer US job report erased safe-haven demand but domestic state-wise stricter lockdown is creating a pessimistic bias. The Indian equities are likely to track the US and Asian positive sentiments. But FII figures are not justifiable for the recent recovery. The daily case above 4 lac per day is surely a headwind in front of the economy and business. Amit Pabari, managing director, CR Forex Advisors. COMEX gold trades little changed near \$1832/oz after a 0.9% gain on Friday. Gold remains supported by disappointing US non-farm payroll data which has pressurized the US dollar and increased expectations that the Fed may keep interest rates low. Gold has also benefited from ETF inflows which showed pick up in investor buying. However, weighing on price is concerns about Indian demand and general improvement in virus situation in the US and Europe. Gold has been setting new highs indicating positive momentum and this may continue until US dollar is under pressure. Ravindra Rao, CMT, EPAT, VP-Head Commodity Research at Kotak Securities. All the Nifty sectoral indices were trading in the positive territory, lead by Nifty Metal index, which was up nearly 3 per cent. It was followed by Nifty Pharma index.

PR24x7 honored with COVID Heroes Award for Selfless Service

Mumbai, May 10 : The country's leading public relations company 'PR24x7' has been awarded the 'COVID Heroes Awards' by the international award winning media start-up Business Connect (BNC). The award has been organized to salute the selfless, outstanding performance of frontline warriors, communication professionals and corporates in the midst of extreme hardships that arose from the epidemic. PR 24x7 was honored with the Special Excellence Award among the contenders from over 70 cities. The award to PR 24x7 reflects a positive response to the lockdown, facilitating continuity in business through work from home, reaching out to affected communities, facilitating communication and helping people stay connected while distanced, promoting COVID awareness through unique initiatives, motivating industries with innovative business ideas and implementing ways to adapt during the lockdown period at home and outside. At the award, Atul Malikram, founder of PR 24x7, expressed his gratitude to Business Connect, saying, "It is the duty of not only corporates but every citizen to provide help in the best of one's abilities during the pandemic. We have always been adherent to our corporate responsibilities. And at a time when almost all of us need each other, to work selflessly should be a priority. And we have tried to achieve that extensively,



and intend to stay committed to continue our efforts towards the same." BN Kumar, Editor-in-Chief of The Connect series said that, the main objective behind starting a series of COVID Heroes Awards is to bring forth to the nation the inspiring stories of individuals or corporates who have put in special efforts and have made extraordinary contributions during the pandemic. This award can be seen as a small initiative to inspire other businessmen, businesses and citizens for the cause. It is noteworthy that PR 24 x7 has been trying to bring positive changes in the society through its various CSR activities over the course of several years. By connecting its employees with public welfare facilities, it has been effective in providing essential services to the backward and needy sections of the society. Biz News Connect has set itself up during lockdown to provide an independent news and opinions platform. It is noteworthy that, 6 of the 50 companies were independently selected by the BNC Jury, and PR 24x7 was one of them.

Q4 earnings: IT firms take lead as India Inc turns in good numbers

Mumbai, May 10 : At Bajaj Auto, motorcycle volumes in the export market increased by 24% y-o-y and the mix too improved. Demand in the home market, too, was reasonably strong. While sales have, no doubt, been strong, India Inc's bottom-line continues to be driven as much by cost cuts as it has been in the past three quarters. While sales have, no doubt, been strong, India Inc's bottom-line continues to be driven as much by cost cuts as it has been in the past three quarters. Corporate India's profits have surged in the three months to March driven up by strong top line growth and some hefty cost-cutting. Producers of commodities, especially metals like steel, have seen their sales boosted by rising prices and good demand; net sales at Tata Steel jumped 39% year-on-year, nudging Rs 50,000 crore. A big jump in exports and an increase in local realisations of two-wheeler companies have helped increased their sales. At Bajaj Auto, motorcycle volumes in the export market increased by 24% y-o-y and the mix too improved. Demand in the home market, too, was reasonably strong. SIS currently employs 2.2 lakh security guards deployed across India. SIS trains almost its entire staff via M-Trainer. Although COVID-19 did push back the Centre's plan, it has afforded time to undertake the much-needed preparatory groundwork for these transactions, including an exercise to identify monetisable assets and a disinvestment pipeline. Disinvestment: PSEs' sale important for NIP agenda. Revenues at Maruti Suzuki increased by 32% y-o-y led by a big jump in volumes and a 4.5% y-o-y increase in ASPs (average selling prices). Discounts on vehicles have come down significantly to Rs 16,600 per vehicle in Q4 FY21 versus Rs 19,051 a year ago as demand has picked up. Standalone revenues at Ultratech Cement increased a smart 35% y-o-y with sales volume up 30% y-o-y and capacity utilisation hitting 93% y-o-y. The stars of the fourth quarter earnings season have been the IT services firms which have turned in stellar

numbers. For a sample of 227 companies (excluding banks and financials) net sales were up a strong 18% y-o-y. FMCG firms fared well with supply chains largely restored post the lockdown and rural demand holding up; at Hindustan Unilever, underlying volumes jumped 16% y-o-y. Rural demand remains reasonably strong; at Maruti Suzuki, for example, rural volumes accounted for 41% of overall volumes in FY21 which is an increase of 200-250 bps y-o-y. While sales have, no doubt, been strong, India Inc's bottom-line continues to be driven as much by cost cuts as it has been in the past three quarters. For the sample, the total expenditure went up by only 8% y-o-y. At Gujarat Ambuja, for instance, costs declined to Rs 3,688/tonne, a drop of 4% y-o-y on the back of lower material costs, higher use of alternate fuels, better efficiencies in energy consumption and logistics and lower clinker factor. At Tata Steel, expenditure went up just 15% y-o-y while sales increased 39% y-o-y. Consequently, operating profit margins for the sample have expanded 650 points y-o-y pushing up the operating profit by a stunning 73%. While the management commentary from IT software services players has sounded confident and the guidance for FY22 has been encouraging, players catering for the home market, especially the consumer-facing firms have been circumspect. Sanjiv Mehta, MD&CEO, Hindustan Unilever, for instance, observed it would be hard to say how the business would fare in the current quarter given the several localised restrictions due to the ferocious second wave.



Mumbai, May 10 : After having gained 1% each last week, domestic benchmark equity indices might look to continue their upward march on Monday. S&P BSE Sensex now sits at 49,206 while the 50-stock NSE Nifty is at 14,823. Nifty futures on the Singapore Exchange were up more than 100 points, hint at a positive start for domestic equities. Technically, Nifty close above the resistance levels on Friday, which could see the index surge higher and reclaim 15,000 in the coming sessions. On the fundamental side, Dalal Street's movement is expected to be influenced by covid-19 and vaccination drive. Global watch: On Friday, Wall Street closed with

gains as bulls continued to assert control on US equity markets. NASDAQ soared 0.88% while S&P 500 was up 0.74% and Dow Jones zoomed 0.66%. Asia peers on Monday morning were trading mixed. Shanghai Composite was down in the negative while Hang Seng, TOPIX, Nikkei 225, KOSPI, and KOSDAQ were all sitting with gains. Share Market Today, Share Market LiveMarket LIVE: Nifty likely to test 15,000, Sensex may open in green; FPIs continue to sell in Indian markets. SebiSebi notifies special procedure for action on expulsion from exchange's membership. Technical take: On the weekly chart, Nifty formed a reason-

able bull candle, according to Nagaraj Shetti, Technical Research Analyst, HDFC Securities. He added that markets could move towards 15,000 in the coming sessions. Support and resistance levels: Although the trend is positive for Nifty, analysts believe that the index could face resistance near 15,000. "Nifty needs to break above 15,050-15,000 if the rally has to continue," said Manish Shah, Founder, Niftytriggers. "The consolidation in Nifty is significant and if break above 15,050-15,000 materialises we should see a sharp rally in the weeks to come. If Nifty slips below 14,650 expect some decline to the 14,300 zone," he added. FII and DII trades: On Friday, Foreign Institutional Investors (FII) were net sellers of domestic securities, pulling away Rs 1,142 crore. Meanwhile, Domestic Institutional Investors (DII) were net buyers of domestic equities, pumping in Rs 1,468 crore. Last week, FIIs were net sellers of domestic securities on four out of five days. Results today: Zydus Wellness, Chambal Fertilisers & Chemicals, Escorts Finance, Dai-ichi Kankaria, Ganges Securities, HFCL, HSIL, PPAP Automotive, Inspirisys Solutions, Intellect Design Arena, JMC Projects (India), Nutricircle, Oriental Aromatics, Onesource Ideas Venture, Paushak, Sangam Renewables, Satia Industries, and Suryalakshmi Cotton Mills are some of the firms that will report their quarterly results today.

Discoms taking longer to clear their dues



stance, they cleared bills worth Rs 30,438 crore. The discoms seem to be taking full advantage of the Electricity Late Payment Surcharge Rules, 2021, by which penalty for late payments was reduced to a "base rate" which is 500 basis points more than SBI's marginal cost of funds-based lending rate. State-run power distribution companies (discoms) are holding back payments to electricity generators for as long as one-and-a-half years, information available in the Union power ministry's 'Praapti' portal shows. Power generators usually raise bills between 5 to 15 days after the end of every month and discoms are supposed to pay them within 30 days or at best 60 days. But while discoms are clearing their bills - they are waiting for as long as they can to do so. In March, for instance, they cleared bills worth Rs 30,438 crore. Delaying payments to generators help cash-strapped discoms manage their working capital cycles and avoid costly working capital loans. But it is taking a toll on power generators which need to pay for coal in advance and service their debt obligations. Jagdish Fofandi, national president of the Seafood Exporters Association of India (SEAI) "We might see a further drop of 10 % in exports from the performance of FY21" Currently, domestic supplies and commercial imports of vaccines attract a 5 per cent Goods and Services Tax (GST), while it is 12 per cent in case of COVID drugs and oxygen concentrators

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Mumbai, May 10 : While it is ideal to have comprehensive health insurance, you can opt for standard health insurance policy or a short-term Covid specific cover. A health insurance policy, including short-term Covid specific covers-Corona Kavach and Corona Rakshak-will not only ensure financial protection in case of a medical emergency due to Covid but will also give peace of mind to the policyholder and his dependents. Given the severity of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is of utmost priority to buy a health insurance cover, renew and review the existing policy, take a top-up cover and keep in mind the fine print of the policy regarding waiting period, exclusions and rejection of claims. A health insurance policy, including short-term Covid specific covers-Corona Kavach and Corona Rakshak-will not only ensure financial protection in case of a medical emergency due to Covid but will also give peace of mind to the policyholder and his dependents. While it is ideal to have a comprehensive health insurance cover, one can opt for standard health insurance policy or a short-term Covid specific cover. The standard health insurance Arogya Sanjeevani is offered by

all general and standalone health insurance companies. The minimum entry age is 18 years and the maximum is 65 years and the policy can be renewed for life. In this policy, the maximum coverage is up to Rs 5 lakh and it has a sub-limit on the room rent. It covers hospitalisation costs for Covid treatment. insuranceMax Bupa settles over Rs 150 cr Covid claims so far; closely watching impact on premium: Official LIC relaxes claim settlement requirements; offices to work five days a week from May 10. Corona Kavach Policy, an indemnity-based plan, covers hospitalisation, pre-post hospitalisation, home care treatment expenses and Ayush treatment for Covid patients. All hospitalisation expenses such as personal protection equipment (PPE) kits, oxygen, ventilators, and consultation fees will be covered. It also covers home care expenses. Pre and post hospitalisation expenses-15 days before hospitalisation and up to 30 days after discharge- are also covered. One can buy it for a period of 3.5 months, 6.5 months or 9.5 months and can renew it. The sum insured is Rs 50,000-Rs 5 lakh. A policyholder can opt for cashless claim

at a network hospital or reimbursement claims at a non-network hospital. Corona Rakshak Health Insurance Plan, a benefit-based plan, offers a lump sum payout if you require hospitalisation for Covid. The lump sum payout can be used to meet the medical needs. The sum insured is Rs 50,000-Rs 2.5 lakh. The period of the coverage will be for 3.5 months, 6.6 months and 9.5 months. Experts say the lump sum received under Corona Rakshak can be used to pay for consumables such as PPE kits which are usually not covered in a standard health insurance plan. While Corona Rakshak Policy offers individual coverage, Corona Kavach Policy has a family floater plan. Given the increasing medical costs, go for a comprehensive health insurance cover, review the sum assured based on family's medical needs and buy a top-up cover. In any regular health insurance policy, look for any clause of sub-limits or co-payments as many insurers impose certain restrictions to keep the premium low. For instance, if there is a sub-limit of 1% of the sum insured on room rent in case of hospitalisation, then for a sum insured of Rs 10 lakh, you can claim a maximum of Rs 10,000 to-

wards room rent. Also look at plans with no such sub-limits. In a regular health insurance policy, Covid hospitalisation is covered after 30 days of the initial waiting period. For short-term Covid specific covers, waiting period is 15 days. So, no Covid claims made within the waiting period will be cleared. While Covid is not covered under day care treatment, you can claim money if hospitalised. One can even go for claims if quarantined and treated at home, provided it is payable under the policy's terms and conditions. As hospitalisation is not required for mild Covid, insurers can reject the

claim if hospitalisation was not done according to the ICMR/AIIMS clinical norms. Take consent from the insurance company through the third-party administrator for Covid-related hospitalisation in case of moderate to severe disease. While insurers have to communicate cashless approvals within 60 minutes of receipt of authorisation request along with other details from the hospital, for reimbursement claims one must ensure that the claims form include discharge summaries, test reports, bills, prescriptions, etc., for faster claims payment.



ILLUSTRATION : SHYAM KUMAR PRASAD

Contd. From Page 1

Himanta Biswa Sarma Takes

we'll discuss the situation from all perspectives and we'll take all measures required to contain COVID outbreak," he said. "Until and unless Covid situation in Assam is controlled, situation in northeast will never come under control. We've our responsibility towards our citizens & entire northeast. So, Assam govt will do its best & tomorrow after cabinet meet I'll elaborate our line of action," he added. Mr Sarma succeeds Sarbananda Sonowal as the 15th Chief Minister of the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Mr Sarma and said he was confident "this team will add momentum to the development journey of Assam". Congratulations to @himantabiswa Ji and the other Ministers who took oath today. I am confident this team will add momentum to the development journey of Assam and fulfil aspirations of the people. n another tweet, PM Modi thanked Mr Sonowal for his contribution towards Assam's progress and strengthening the party in the state. "My valued colleague @sarbandansonwal Ji was at the helm of a pro-people and pro-development administration over the last five years. His contribution towards Assam's progress and strengthening the party in the state is immense," PM tweeted. Himanta Sarma's name was proposed by Mr Sonowal at a party meeting held in Guwahati yesterday after PM Modi gave his approval for his elevation. It was seconded by the MLAs. Mr Sarma, 52, later met Governor Jagdish Mukhi to stake claim to form government. Earlier in the day, Mr Sonowal had submitted his resignation to the Governor. The BJP won a second straight term in the recently concluded assembly polls in the state. The party won 60 seats in the 126-member Assam assembly while its alliance partners AGP got nine seats and UPPL six seats. In the 2016 Assembly polls, the BJP had projected Mr Sonowal as its chief ministerial candidate and won, forming its first government in the northeast. This time, the party had maintained that it would decide who would be the next chief minister after the elections.

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma

that a dialogue is a two-way process. Willingness of both sides is needed to start a communication. "A dialogue with the ULFA is a two-way process. Paresh Baruah has to come forward. Similarly, we have to go to him. If both sides have the will, communication won't be difficult," Sarma said. Dr Sarma claimed over the past five years under the BJP-led government, the people of the state saw a process of peace and development in Assam. "Over the past five, people saw a process of peace and development in Assam. Peace returned to Bodo areas and Karbi Anglong. Our efforts now will be to bring the remaining rebel groups to the talks table for the establishment of permanent peace in the state," he added. Newly sworn-in Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday said the aim of his government is to make the state one of the top five in India in the next five years. "We will start working from tomorrow to achieve this objective," Sarma told reporters here after taking oath. The NEDA convenor said the prime focus of the second BJP government in Assam will be to control the COVID-19 pandemic, fulfil all poll promises and make the state free from the annual flood havoc. "The COVID-19 situation in Assam is alarming. Our daily cases have crossed the 5,000-mark. In our cabinet meeting tomorrow, we will discuss it from all perspectives, and take measures," Sarma said. Unless the pandemic is controlled in Assam, cases will not go down in other northeastern states, he said. Sarma also appealed to the insurgent groups, especially the ULFA (I), to lay down arms and be a part of the mainstream to establish peace in the state. "I request Paresh Barua to come to the discussion table and resolve issues. Kidnappings and killings complicate problems, not solve them. I hope we will be able to make the underground insurgents return to the mainstream in the next five years," the CM said. Asked about the contentious National Register of Citizens (NRC), the chief minister said his government wants reverification of 20 per cent names in the border districts of Assam, and 10 per cent in other areas. "If very negligible error is found, then we can proceed with the existing NRC. But, if there are huge anomalies, I hope the court will take note and do the needful with a new perspective," he said without elaborating. On BJP's assurance of bringing in a law against "love jihad", Sarma said: "Every promise was meant for implementation. We will do everything possible to fulfil them."

Delhi preparing for third

above the 20 per cent mark since April 17. It was 21.67 per cent on Sunday, 23.34 per cent on Saturday, 24.92 per cent on Friday, 24.29 per cent on Thursday, 26.37 per cent on Wednesday, 26.73 per cent on Tuesday, 29.56 per cent on last Monday, 28.33 per cent on last Sunday and 31.6 per cent on last Saturday. On April 22, a positivity rate of 36.2 per cent, the highest so far, was recorded. Delhi had reported 13,336 cases on Sunday, 17,364 on Saturday, 19,832 on Friday, 19,133 on Thursday, 20,960 on Wednesday, 19,953 on Tuesday, 18,043 on last Monday, 20,394 cases on last Sunday and 25,219 on last Saturday. The city had witnessed 273 deaths on Sunday, 332 deaths on Saturday, 341 on Friday, 335 on Thursday, 311 on Wednesday, 338 on Tuesday, 448 on last Monday, the highest so far, 407 on last Sunday, 412 on last Saturday, and 375 on last Friday. The national capital conducted 66,234 tests, including 57,265 RTPCR/CBNAAT/True Nat tests on Sunday. Over 13,300 people recovered from the infection during the period, the health bulletin said. There are 85,258 active cases in the city and 52,451 of them are in home isolation, it said. The number of cumulative cases stands at 13,36,218 and the death toll at 19,663. Over 12.31 lakh people have either recovered, migrated out or have been discharged, according to a health bulletin. Of the 22,667 hospital beds for coronavirus patients in the city, 3,229 are vacant, it said.

Election for new Congress chief

agency ANI cited party sources as saying. During the last CWC meet, Central Election Authority had proposed 23rd June as the date for electing the new Congress chief. However, the next schedule will be decided by the party's Central Election Authority, the sources added. Earlier, while addressing the CWC meeting, Congress president Sonia Gandhi said the party has to take note of its serious setbacks in assembly polls in several states and face the reality to draw the right lessons. The UPA chairperson said she intends to set up a small group to look at every aspect that caused such reverses. "We have to take note of our serious setbacks. To say that we are deeply disappointed is to make an understatement. I intend to set up a small group to look at every aspect that caused such reverses and report back very quickly," she told the meeting in her inaugural address. Gandhi said the party needs to candidly understand "why in Kerala and Assam we failed to dislodge the incumbent governments, and why in West Bengal we drew a complete blank". "These will yield uncomfortable lessons, but if we do not face up to the reality, if we do not look the facts in the face, we will not draw the right lessons," she noted. The meeting of the top Congress body has been convened to deliberate and introspect on the party's poor performance in the just-concluded assembly elections. The Congress fared poorly, drawing a blank in West Bengal and failing to win back power in Kerala and Assam, besides losing Puducherry. The party only came to power with the help of its ally DMK in Tamil Nadu. She also hit out at the Narendra Modi government over the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mamata Banerjee allows

cultural programmes ahead of the upcoming festival of Eid. However, a cap has been placed on 50 people. Eid prayers and gathering at Red Road in Kolkata will also not be held this year amid the surge in coronavirus cases. "In this COVID-19 situation, we have allowed religious and cultural programs with a maximum of 50 people. No Eid prayers and gatherings will be there at Red Road as decided by Muslim leaders. I request that there should be no big gatherings as Azaan can be heard from home," the Chief Minister said. She also said that strict measures have been taken to control the spread of coronavirus in the state. "We have taken strict measures to curb the virus," she said while addressing a press conference at the state secretariat following the first cabinet meeting of her newly formed government. As many as 43 Trinamool Congress (TMC) leaders were sworn in as ministers in Mamata Banerjee's Cabinet today here at Raj Bhavan. Earlier on Wednesday, Mamata Banerjee took oath as the Chief Minister of West Bengal for the third consecutive term. Trinamool Congress won 213 seats in the recently concluded West Bengal Assembly elections. The Bharatiya Janata Party got 77 seats in the 294-seat state Assembly.

Kerala releases 560 prisoners

own taken cognisance of overcrowding of prisons across the country and said it is difficult for jail inmates to maintain social distancing to prevent the spread of coronavirus. State jail DGP, Rishiraj Singh said the high-powered committee, appointed by the apex court, has ordered 90 days parole for prisoners who have been convicted. Interim bail has been granted to the remand prisoners, who are not habitual offenders and have no criminal background and those punished for offences for which prescribed punishment is up to 7 years or less, with or without fine and those convicted for a lesser number of years than the maximum, he said. High Court judge, Justice C T Ravi Kumar, home secretary T K Jose and DGP Rishiraj Singh comprise the High-Powered Committee (HPC) in Kerala, set up as per directive of the top court. "Thus, over 1,500 prisoners, including 568 people released on parole the other day, will get temporary relief. Besides them, around 350 remand prisoners may also be released on interim bail," the Jail DGP said here, Singh directed various jail authorities to implement the HPC's order with immediate effect. He also directed the prisoners, who are released, to comply with the COVID protocol completely while going outside and stay safe at their homes. Over 6,000 prisoners are lodged in a total of 54 jails, including three central jails in Kerala.

Coronavirus second wave

across the State between 4 a.m. on May 10 and 4 a.m. on May 24 to combat the spread of COVID-19. The State government said there would be no restrictions across the State between 6 a.m. and 9 p.m. — shops will function during this period. Karnataka With the second wave of COVID-19 wreaking havoc in Karnataka, the State government decided to impose a total lockdown from 6 a.m. on May 10 to 6 a.m. on May 24. Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa announced the lockdown measures while allowing people to buy essential items from 6 a.m. to 10 a.m. during the two-week lockdown period. All shops selling fruits, milk, groceries, vegetables, meat and fish are allowed to open during the four-hour window in the morning. All industries, hotels, pubs and bars will remain closed. Inter-district movement of people would not be allowed, barring medical emergencies. Kerala The Kerala government has announced a State-wide lockdown from May 8 to 16. The directive was issued by the Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan taking into consideration the surge in COVID-19 cases in the State during the second wave of the coronavirus pandemic. Rajasthan The Rajasthan government has decided to implement a strict lockdown in the State from May 10 to May 24 to break the chain of coronavirus infection. During this period, there will be no marriage ceremony and all religious places will remain closed. The Mahatma Gandhi Employment Guarantee Scheme (MREGA) works in rural areas will also remain suspended during this period.

Bihar In view of a surge in COVID-19 cases, the Bihar government on May 4 announced a lockdown from May 5 till May 15, with guidelines that all offices, educational institutions, religious places and business establishments will be closed with the exception of essential services, including construction, agriculture and allied activities. Delhi

Delhi has been under lockdown since April 16. Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, in a digital statement, announced that the lockdown in the Capital that was due to end on May 10, would be extended till May 17. Delhi Metro services will also remain suspended from May 10 till May 17.

Maharashtra With Maharashtra reporting an average of 60,000 new COVID-19 cases and 500 deaths each day, the State government on April 29 decided to extend the Coronavirus lockdown till May 15 the lockdown-like restrictions in force under the 'Break the Chain' campaign. All groceries, vegetable and fruit shops, dairies, bakeries, confectioneries, as well as all other types of food shops (including chicken, mutton, fish and eggs) are kept open only between 7 a.m. and 11 a.m. The government also prohibited inter-district and inter-State travel and re-started the e-pass system for those in the non-essential services category who may be compelled to travel in case of emergencies.

Punjab Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh on May 7, directed the State Police Chief to strictly enforce the weekend lockdown in the state and deal stringently with any violations in view of the farmer unions deciding to protest the lockdown. The State government have imposed extensive COVID-19 curbs in addition to measures like a weekend lockdown and night curfew till May 15.

Uttar Pradesh The Uttar Pradesh govt. on May 8 had decided to extend the COVID-19 curfew instate till May 17. Previously on April 29, orders were issued to impose weekend lockdowns which will cover Mondays. On May 3, this was extended till May 6.

Madhya Pradesh Madhya Pradesh has imposed 'Janta curfew' till May 15 with only essential services allowed. Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan urged people to strictly adhere to the lockdown guidelines to help in combating COVID-19.

Haryana Haryana Health Minister Anil Vij announced the lockdown extension and said that stringent measures will be taken to contain the spread of coronavirus infections in the State. The State was previously under a seven-day long lockdown from May 3, has extended it till May 17.

Andhra Pradesh The State enforced an 18-hour curfew between 12 noon and 6 a.m. every day for two weeks (up to May 18) from May 5 as a measure to contain the spread of COVID-19.

Between 6 a.m. and 12 noon all the business activity, public movement and others would be allowed and Section 144 of the Cr.P.C. would be in force to prevent the gathering of five or more people at public places.

Telangana The State had previously imposed a night curfew from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m., starting May 1. Later the timings were extended till 5 a.m., as the lockdown is now set to be in force till May 15.

Puducherry With the union territory of Puducherry witnessing a surge in coronavirus cases, the territorial government on May 8 imposed a two-week lockdown starting from May 10, in a bid to curb its spread. During the period, beaches, parks, gardens would remain closed to the public, as also all places of worship and religious centres Petrol bunks, power service and water supply would function and banks would operate till 12 noon.

West Bengal West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on May 5 announced a number of restrictions to contain the COVID-19 surge in the State, including suspending all local train services and reducing metro services and State transport services by half. A complete State-wide lockdown has still not been imposed.

Gujarat Gujarat has imposed night curfew (from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m.) and other day-time restrictions in 36 cities till May 12.

Uttarakhand In a bid to check the coronavirus spread, the Uttarakhand government imposed a stricter curfew from May 11 to 18, reducing opening hours for shops dealing in essential services and restricting the number of people at social gatherings to 20. Shops selling essential items like milk, vegetables, fruits and meat will be allowed to open from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. daily. Grocery shops will be permitted to open on May 13 only. People have been advised to defer marriages if they can. Not more than 20 persons will be allowed to gather for marriages or funerals during the period.

PM Narendra Modi must atone

instead of carrying on with his personal agenda oblivious to the sufferings all around. The CWC, the Congress' highest decision-making body, in a resolution also questioned the government data on coronavirus cases and fatalities, and alleged non-reporting of deaths. The solution lies in facing challenge, not in concealing the truth, it said. The CWC also expressed deep concern over the government's coronavirus vaccination strategy, alleging the supply was grossly insufficient and the pricing policy opaque and discriminatory. Congress leaders K C Venugopal and Randee Surjewala said the CWC is of the firm belief that this is a time for showing an unwavering sense of national unity, purpose and resolve. "In order that it may become a reality, the Prime Minister must atone for his mistakes and commit to serving the people instead of carrying on with personal agenda, oblivious to the suffering all around," the CWC resolution said. The two leaders said the CWC noted with concern that the government data on COVID-19 deaths is "horribly wrong and afflicted by a massive non-reporting of deaths". "The solution lies in facing the challenge and stopping the casualties from COVID-19 and not in concealing the truth by burying the data on deaths and infections," the CWC said. The CWC said the second COVID-19 wave is nothing short of a grave calamity and is a direct consequence of the Modi government's "indifference, insensitivity and incompetence". On other issues in the resolution, the two leaders said that a committee proposed by Congress president Sonia Gandhi for assessing the party's losses in the recently concluded state polls would be set up within 48 hours and it would give its report very soon. Surjewala said the Congress Working Committee also expressed its revulsion at the "shocking expenditure" priorities of the Modi government. At a time when the nation's resources should be devoted to ensuring expansion of vaccination drive and the supply of essential medicines and oxygen, the Modi government is indulging in a 'criminal waste of money' by continuing with the 'personal vanity' project of the Prime Minister in the national capital, the CWC said, referring to the Central Vista revamp exercise. "This is the height of callousness and insensitivity, as also an insult to the people of the country," the CWC said.

Funerals jump 166% but less than half listed as Covid deaths shows Delhi's real toll is higher

New Delhi, May 10 : In February, when India saw its Covid numbers drop to promising lows, Delhi recorded 7,111 funerals — 53 involving Covid patients and 7,058 for non-Covid deaths. In March, the number of funerals was 6,821 — 130 Covid, and 6,691 non-Covid — according to data from the three municipal corporations that manage civic affairs in the national capital (East, South, North). The next month, April, as the second wave took off and resulted in record infections and deaths, the number of funerals surged to 18,169, of which 8,693 involved Covid patients and 9,476 had other causes. Between March and April, the number of Covid funerals increased by over 6,500 per cent. But notably, there was also a significant rise — of over 42 per cent — in the number of non-Covid funerals. Moreover, while overall funerals jumped 166 per cent in April from March — to 18,169 from 6,821 — the Delhi government's official health bulletin records only 5,120 of this increase of 11,348 as Covid deaths. This raises questions about the cause of the remaining 6,228 deaths. This suggests that the second Covid wave has not only been marked by a spurt in coronavirus deaths, but also that many Covid patients are dying at home and are not being counted as deaths due to the pandemic, are dying at medical facilities before they are confirmed positive, and also that there is an increase in the number of fatalities attributed to other reasons. Officials in the civic agencies offer different reasons for the spurt in the latter category. The deaths classified as non-Covid at crematoria and burial sites include those who had coronavirus symptoms but were either not tested or received a false negative test result, they say. The relatives of some Covid patients trying to recover at home, after failing to find a hospital bed, deliberately hold back their infection status in order to beat the "cumbersome SoP" or standard operating procedure of coronavirus funerals, they add. Another possible reason they cite is the "truncated" healthcare access currently available for those with severe non-Covid medical conditions (like cancer, kidney failure), with much of the capital's health infrastructure dedicated to Covid patients. Reached for comment, Dr Nutan Mundeja, Delhi's Director General Health Services, said the "increase might have happened in the last two months and month-to-month variation can happen". "But what I can say is, annually, the total number deaths in 2020 (the first year of the pandemic) were less than the total number of deaths in 2019," she added. According to Delhi's official health bulletin, the city recorded 53 Covid deaths in February (data for Feb 8 and 28 not listed in official numbers), 114 in March, and 5,120 in April. There are discrepancies in the death data from the three civic agencies and the health bulletin for the three months as well (see graphic). However, officials in the Delhi government have earlier made light of such differences. When similar discrepancies in the Covid death data were reported last year, with the civic agency figures diverging from the health bulletin by at least 500 in July, a Delhi government official who didn't wish to be named told ThePrint that the process of updating data can often take days, and denied allegations of under-reporting. Delhi's three civic bodies — North Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC), East Delhi Municipal Corporation (EDMC), and South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) — oversee 21 crematoria and cemeteries, including those where Covid patients' funerals are allowed. The EDMC on average received 17 bodies a day in February, 9 in March, and 98 in April. The SDMC averaged 61 in February, 56 in March, and 206 in April. The NDMC received an average of 176 bodies a day in February, 155 in March, and 301 in April. The number was the highest at Nigambodh Ghat, Delhi's largest cremation facility that falls under the NDMC. A total of 1,649 Covid bodies and 2,433 non-Covid bodies were cremated at the ghat in April, according to monthly figures shared by the crematorium staff. In February and March, just 12 and 28 bodies, respectively, were cremated at the ghat, according to official data from NDMC. Speaking to ThePrint about the spurt in non-Covid deaths, a senior SDMC medical official said it may be because the Delhi government has reserved the bulk of Delhi's hospital beds for Covid-19 patients. "The Delhi government has gone overboard in marking hospitals for Covid patients," the officer said. "People having medical emergencies other than Covid-19 are finding it extremely difficult to get the medical care they need." According to the officer, many people suffering from stroke, kidney failure, cancer, diabetes, and lung infections fail to secure ICU beds and timely medical treatment. Categorising suspected Covid fatalities as normal deaths is another major reason for the steep rise in the non-Covid tally, said the official. "A large chunk of these suspected Covid deaths comes from homes, where people are resorting to treatment after they fail to get ICU beds in Covid-designated hospitals." Suspected Covid deaths refer to patients who exhibited coronavirus symptoms but either didn't get tested for Covid, or had a negative diagnosis in their RT-PCR test or CT scan. "Over the past few weeks, we have been getting an increasing number of home-based deaths. Around 20-25 bodies directly come from homes," said the senior medical official, adding that no bodies of Covid patients came from homes last year. The relatives of most of these suspected Covid patients don't cite the disease as the cause of death, in order to avoid the cumbersome process of a coronavirus cremation, the official added. The SoP for handling Covid-19 bodies, the medical official said, "requires the relatives of the patient to inform the Sub-District Magistrate, who then arranges an ambulance to take the body to a hospital where it will be sanitised and put in a body bag for transportation to a nearby cremation or burial ground". "The whole process takes almost 12-24 hours and even longer if more bodies come in," the officer added. "A few people may not be aware of how Covid bodies are cremated but many intentionally don't show Covid-positive reports because they don't want to get into this administration hurdle," the government official quoted above said. Delhi Monday registered a record 448 Covid-19 deaths in a day, the highest since the pandemic began. Nearly 18,800 people have died of the virus as of Friday since Covid hit the national capital last year.

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Real Madrid rescue point against Sevilla after VAR penalty drama

London, May 10 : There were still thirteen minutes and three more games to go but inside Valdebebas it felt like the entire season was all coming down to this one decision, the fate of four teams in the hands of a single man. The night after Barcelona and Atlético Madrid had drawn 0-0, leaving Real Madrid in control of their own destiny, it was 1-1 between Zinedine Zidane's side and Sevilla and there was a penalty at one end and a penalty at the other. Standing at the VAR screen, it was down to Juan Martínez Munuera to decide which to give. As Eder Militao had leapt to clear a Sevilla corner, the ball had struck his outstretched arm. There had been shouts but the referee had not seen it and suddenly Madrid were breaking through the pitch, wide space opening before them. Karim Benzema went round Yassine Bono, and was brought down. Racing up behind, Munuera pointed to the spot and a huge, relieved cheer went up from the stands. It had been a difficult night for Madrid but it seemed that at the end of a season of survival they were going to find a way again, clinching a victory that would take them top. The referee though halted everything, the title race put on hold as he put a finger in his ear. Called to the VAR screen, he watched as subs, staff and players piled on the pressure, shouting and trying to turn him. Eventually he stepped back, drew a square and pointed to the spot in the Madrid area, giving the handball that came first not the foul that came next. Ivan Rakitic stepped up and scored the goal that was set to give Sevilla a huge victory that would almost end Madrid's title



hopes and reawaken theirs. Instead, a late twist saw Toni Kroos score a deflected equaliser, via Eden Hazard, on 93.43 and Casemiro bent a shot agonisingly past the post in the 96th minute to leave every team where they were, just another week closer to the line, another set of hurdles cleared. The table reads: Atlético 77, Barcelona 75, Madrid 75, Sevilla 71 and ultimately all four of them will feel like this was a weekend of missed opportunity. Madrid most of all but Barcelona and Atlético too and even Sevilla who had impressed for so long here, were two minutes away from a victory that would have brought genuine hope that they might be allowed back into the race. Taking possession and control, Sevilla also took an early lead with a wonderfully worked free kick, Suso playing short to Jesús Navas who cut inside and crossed. Rakitic's header dropped the ball at the feet of Fernando

who cut back past Casemiro and scored the goal that took them into half time deservedly in the lead and in the league too. Madrid needed a reaction and they did. Sevilla, so calm until then, felt the pressure, but continued to play. Madrid played too, this game still capable of going either way. All the more so when Marco Asensio was sent on and within a minute he had levelled this, first time in at the near post from Kroos's measured pass. The move had begun with Benzema winning the ball in the centre circle. Madrid had twenty-five minutes to get another, to reach for top spot; soon they thought they had, Benzema brought down by Bono. But then came the moment that changed the game and might have changed everything - or perhaps nothing. Eventually the referee stepped from the screen, everyone waiting to see which way he would turn. He went right and as all about him people lost their heads, Rakitic kept his.

Outsider Third Realm first past the post in Lingfield Derby Trial

London, May 10 : When there has been plenty of rain overnight and Lingfield's Classic trials are both won by the outsider of the field, it would be easy to dismiss the results as offering few worthwhile clues to the Derby and Oaks at Epsom next month. The horses, though, control neither the weather nor the betting, and Third Realm earned serious consideration as a Derby

candidate here on Saturday with a convincing defeat of Adayar, the 6-5 favourite, in a race which was won by High-Rise, in the same yellow colours, before his Epsom success 23 years ago. Third Realm started the season as a maiden and just one among at least half a dozen colts in Roger Varian's stable, probably more, with the pedigree to be a Derby horse if or when they stepped up to middle-distances. He



was worth a punt in a novice and a trial, in other words, and having got off the mark on good-to-firm ground at Nottingham last month, further progress allowed Third Realm to put Saturday's race to bed with a strong surge into the lead a quarter of a mile from home. His 14-1 win came as a surprise to the punters but not entirely so to his trainer, who also took the Dee Stakes at Chester two days ago with El Drama. "The three-year-olds are showing themselves to be a nice bunch," Varian said. "He had quite a big setback in the June of his two-year-old career so we didn't really know too much about him [at the start of the season], but he was one that was in the Derby and was always going to try to win his novice in April and go for a trial if he deserved to. I'd be lying if I said I thought in March he was a definite Derby candidate, but he's a horse that we've always liked, if that

makes any sense."I was very pleased when he won at Nottingham, he got a bit lost in the straight but if you watch him over the line, he's taken off. If it was another 100 yards, he'd have won five lengths. He's not a big horse, he's neat and very well-balanced and athletic. He handled the track well here and I can see him handling Epsom, so I think he ticks a lot of the boxes."The bookmakers tend to agree and having been a 100-1 chance for the Derby on Saturday morning, Third Realm is now generally a 12-1 shot, with one bookmaker still offering 16-1 on Saturday evening. His success here could also increase the chance that El Drama will head to the French Derby, over 10 furlongs, rather than Epsom over 12, while Varian also retains high hopes for Royal Champion, a likely runner in the Dante Stakes at York next week.

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competitive car this season and in Verstappen a driver unafraid to take on Hamilton and beat him. Here, however, they were reminded that they will also have to out-think their rivals, who have seven years of winning championships under their belts and are operationally a fearsome unit. Hamilton acknowledged how tight the season was. "This is a period of time where I have to be at the best, weekend-in, weekend-out," he said. "Max is driving exceptionally well, as is Valtteri. It's so close between all of us it's going to take perfect delivery each weekend." If the opening three races were decided in toe-to toe battles between Hamilton and Verstappen, this one was the first where the pit wall proved decisive. It was telling in how much it meant that there was a chorus of pleasure across the team. Immediately after Hamilton took the flag he was thanked by his engineer Pete Bonnington, who

him in for his decisive second stop. "I was about to get a shot to get past him as I pitted," said Hamilton. "I was really conflicted, do I come in or ignore the call? I did what the team asked because there is a great trust between us. Remarkable job by everyone in this team. What a day." Verstappen conceded that they simply did not have enough pace. "I tried everything," he said. "Managed it as good as I could but it's not enough when they are pushing you and they have clearly more pace." Verstappen had appeared to hold all the cards. The Dutchman, starting in second place, drew alongside Hamilton on the long drag to turn one and threw his car up the inside, squeezing Hamilton just wide. It was risky and aggressive but exactly what the Dutchman is good at while Hamilton did well to avoid a clash, recognising he needed to stay in the game. With passing so difficult the race looked as if it was in Red

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Calvert-Lewin fires Everton to win to deflate West Ham's top-four hopes

London, May 10 : This was probably the day when West Ham's unlikely dream of qualifying for the Champions League fell apart. Although their challenge is not over yet, the sight of Vladimir Coufal slumping to the ground in despair at the end told a story. The right-back had come closer than anyone to rescuing a draw for West Ham and it probably did not help the Czech's mood when he saw Dominic Calvert-Lewin lying on his back a few yards



away, taking a few moments to recover from his tireless performance in Everton's attack. The margins were fine. Whereas Coufal's angled shot hit the inside of a post and bounced into Jordan Pickford's grateful arms in the 61st minute, Calvert-Lewin was ruthless when his moment arrived. The Everton striker's clinical finish summed up the difference between the sides. The pressure was too much for West Ham and although it was impossible to fault them for effort, they could not match Everton's greater conviction in the final third. Everton, who are up to seventh and have a game in hand on West Ham, deserved a win that keeps their hopes of European football alive. Carlo Ancelotti's side were measured in midfield, defiant at the back and sharper up front, earning the points thanks to Calvert-Lewin's 21st goal of the season. "We managed the game well," Ancelotti said. "It was important to feel how important this game was. The motivation was really high." This was a bad moment for West Ham, who are five points below Leicester with three games left, to misplace their composure. Too many of David Moyes's forwards were off their game. Jesse Lingard's ruthless touch eluded him for once. Michail Antonio battled without reward. Clear chances were rare and Said Benrahma was wasteful when one arrived, heading over when he could have gone a long way towards justifying West Ham's £30m outlay on him last summer. Benrahma, yet to score since joining from Brentford, had a poor game on the left flank. Nothing quite clicked for West Ham in the final third and they lacked their usual intensity in midfield, struggling as Everton pressed high to force errors. The problem for West Ham was partly that Manuel Lanzini was too lightweight a partner for Tomas Soucek, who is not the same force without Declan Rice alongside him in midfield. Rice was still not ready to return from his knee injury and with Mark Noble also missing, Everton were able to impose themselves in the first half. Everton had the tactical edge thanks to Ancelotti's 3-5-2 system. Tom Davies and Allan offered bite in midfield, snuffing out West Ham's creative talents, and provided the visitors with a platform to

push forward. Gylfi Sigurdsson was lively and Richarlison threatened up front, repeatedly spinning away from Issa Diop. It came as no surprise when Everton scored in the 24th minute. West Ham gave Ben Godfrey time to step into midfield and the centre-back punished them by releasing Calvert-Lewin, who had the pace to evade Craig Dawson and the composure to drill a low finish beyond Lukasz Fabianski. "The goal of a top striker," Ancelotti said. Moyes was less generous than Everton's manager, calling it "a terrible goal" and criticising his side's defending. Yet it was no more than the visitors deserved and they could have extended their lead before the break. Fabianski pushed Sigurdsson's free-kick over and saved well from Richarlison. West Ham, did not have a shot on target, although they should have equalised when Pablo Fornals crossed from the right. Benrahma was unmarked and lost his nerve when it looked easier to score. At least it was a reminder of West Ham's threat. Everton fell back in the second half and had to defend well. They needed Michael Keane, Yerry Mina and Godfrey to stand up to Antonio. They also needed a slice of luck when Fornals found Coufal, arriving from right-back and desperately unlucky to see his shot hit the far post. Jarrod Bowen, who came on for the injured Lanzini, could not latch on to the rebound. While they huffed and puffed, West Ham did not create another chance. Everton got their blocks in and their defence headed everything away, even though Mina had to make way for Mason Holgate. They even could have added another on the break, only for Joshua King to head against the left post after replacing Richarlison. When it was over Calvert-Lewin fell to the turf out of sheer exhaustion. The striker had given everything to the cause. It was West Ham who had run out of steam.

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Real Madrid rescue point against Sevilla after VAR penalty drama

London, May 10 : There were still thirteen minutes and three more games to go but inside Valdebebas it felt like the entire season was all coming down to this one decision, the fate of four teams in the hands of a single man. The night after Barcelona and Atlético Madrid had drawn 0-0, leaving Real Madrid in control of their own destiny, it was 1-1 between Zinedine Zidane's side and Sevilla and there was a penalty at one end and a penalty at the other. Standing at the VAR screen, it was down to Juan Martínez Munuera to decide which to give. As Eder Militao had leapt to clear a Sevilla corner, the ball had struck his outstretched arm. There had been shouts but the referee had not seen it and suddenly Madrid were breaking through the pitch, wide space opening before them. Karim Benzema went round Yassine Bono, and was brought down. Racing up behind, Munuera pointed to the spot and a huge, relieved cheer went up from the stands. It had been a difficult night for Madrid but it seemed that at the end of a season of survival they were going to find a way again, clinching a victory that would take them top. The referee though halted everything, the title race put on hold as he put a finger in his ear. Called to the VAR screen, he watched as subs, staff and players piled on the pressure, shouting and trying to turn him. Eventually he stepped back, drew a square and pointed to the spot in the Madrid area, giving the handball that came first not the foul that came next. Ivan Rakitic stepped up and scored the goal that was set to give Sevilla a huge victory that would almost end Madrid's title



hopes and reawaken theirs. Instead, a late twist saw Toni Kroos score a deflected equaliser, via Eden Hazard, on 93.43 and Casemiro bent a shot agonisingly past the post in the 96th minute to leave every team where they were, just another week closer to the line, another set of hurdles cleared. The table reads: Atlético 77, Barcelona 75, Madrid 75, Sevilla 71 and ultimately all four of them will feel like this was a weekend of missed opportunity. Madrid most of all but Barcelona and Atlético too and even Sevilla who had impressed for so long here, were two minutes away from a victory that would have brought genuine hope that they might be allowed back into the race. Taking possession and control, Sevilla also took an early lead with a wonderfully worked free kick, Suso playing short to Jesús Navas who cut inside and crossed. Rakitic's header dropped the ball at the feet of Fernando

who cut back past Casemiro and scored the goal that took them into half time deservedly in the lead and in the league too. Madrid needed a reaction and they did. Sevilla, so calm until then, felt the pressure, but continued to play. Madrid played too, this game still capable of going either way. All the more so when Marco Asensio was sent on and within a minute he had levelled this, first time in at the near post from Kroos's measured pass. The move had begun with Benzema winning the ball in the centre circle. Madrid had twenty-five minutes to get another, to reach for top spot; soon they thought they had, Benzema brought down by Bono. But then came the moment that changed the game and might have changed everything - or perhaps nothing. Eventually the referee stepped from the screen, everyone waiting to see which way he would turn. He went right and as all about him people lost their heads, Rakitic kept his.

Calvert-Lewin fires Everton to win to deflate West Ham's top-four hopes

London, May 10 : This was probably the day when West Ham's unlikely dream of qualifying for the Champions League fell apart. Although their challenge is not over yet, the sight of Vladimir Coufal slumping to the ground in despair at the end told a story. The right-back had come closer than anyone to rescuing a draw for West Ham and it probably did not help the Czech's mood when he saw Dominic Calvert-Lewin lying on his back a few yards

away, taking a few moments to recover from his tireless performance in Everton's attack. The margins were fine. Whereas Coufal's angled shot hit the inside of a post and bounced into Jordan Pickford's grateful arms in the 61st minute, Calvert-Lewin was ruthless when his moment arrived. The Everton striker's clinical finish summed up the difference between the sides. The pressure was too much for West Ham and although it was impossible to fault them for effort, they could not match Everton's greater conviction in the final third. Everton, who are up to seventh and have a game in hand on West Ham, deserved a win that keeps their hopes of European football alive. Carlo Ancelotti's side were measured in midfield, defiant at the back and sharper up front, earning the points thanks to Calvert-Lewin's 21st goal of the season. "We managed the game well," Ancelotti said. "It was important to feel how important this game was. The motivation was really high."This was a bad moment for West Ham, who are five points below Leicester with three games left, to misplace their composure. Too many of David Moyes's forwards were off their game. Jesse Lingard's ruthless touch eluded him for once. Michail Antonio battled without reward. Clear chances were rare and Said Benrahma was wasteful when one arrived, heading over when he could have gone a long way towards justifying West Ham's £30m outlay on him last summer. Benrahma, yet to score since joining from Brentford, had a poor game on the left flank. Nothing quite clicked for West Ham in the final third and they lacked their usual intensity in midfield, struggling as Everton pressed high to force errors. The problem for West Ham was partly that Manuel Lanzini was too lightweight a partner for Tomas Soucek, who is not the same force without Declan Rice alongside him in midfield. Rice was still not ready to return from his knee injury and with Mark Noble also missing, Everton were able to impose themselves in the first half. Everton had the tactical edge thanks to Ancelotti's 3-5-2 system. Tom Davies and Allan offered bite in midfield, snuffing out West Ham's creative talents, and provided the visitors with a platform to



push forward. Gylfi Sigurdsson was lively and Richarlison threatened up front, repeatedly spinning away from Issa Diop. It came as no surprise when Everton scored in the 24th minute. West Ham gave Ben Godfrey time to step into midfield and the centre-back punished them by releasing Calvert-Lewin, who had the pace to evade Craig Dawson and the composure to drill a low finish beyond Lukasz Fabianski. "The goal of a top striker," Ancelotti said. Moyes was less generous than Everton's manager, calling it "a terrible goal" and criticising his side's defending. Yet it was no more than the visitors deserved and they could have extended their lead before the break. Fabianski pushed Sigurdsson's free-kick over and saved well from Richarlison. West Ham, did not have a shot on target, although they should have equalised when Pablo Fornals crossed from the right. Benrahma was unmarked and lost his nerve when it looked easier to score. At least it was a reminder of West Ham's threat. Everton fell back in the second half and had to defend well. They needed Michael Keane, Yerry Mina and Godfrey to stand up to Antonio. They also needed a slice of luck when Fornals found Coufal, arriving from right-back and desperately unlucky to see his shot hit the far post. Jarrod Bowen, who came on for the injured Lanzini, could not latch on to the rebound. While they huffed and puffed, West Ham did not create another chance. Everton got their blocks in and their defence headed everything away, even though Mina had to make way for Mason Holgate. They even could have added another on the break, only for Joshua King to head against the left post after replacing Richarlison. When it was over Calvert-Lewin fell to the turf out of sheer exhaustion. The striker had given everything to the cause. It was West Ham who had run out of steam.

Outsider Third Realm first past the post in Lingfield Derby Trial

London, May 10 : When there has been plenty of rain overnight and Lingfield's Classic trials are both won by the outsider of the field, it would be easy to dismiss the results as offering few worthwhile clues to the Derby and Oaks at Epsom next month. The horses, though, control neither the weather nor the betting, and Third Realm earned serious consideration as a Derby

candidate here on Saturday with a convincing defeat of Adayar, the 6-5 favourite, in a race which was won by High-Rise, in the same yellow colours, before his Epsom success 23 years ago. Third Realm started the season as a maiden and just one among at least half a dozen colts in Roger Varian's stable, probably more, with the pedigree to be a Derby horse if or when they stepped up to middle-distances. He



was worth a punt in a novice and a trial, in other words, and having got off the mark on good-to-firm ground at Nottingham last month, further progress allowed Third Realm to put Saturday's race to bed with a strong surge into the lead a quarter of a mile from home. His 14-1 win came as a surprise to the punters but not entirely so to his trainer, who also took the Dee Stakes at Chester two days ago with El Drama. "The three-year-olds are showing themselves to be a nice bunch," Varian said. "He had quite a big setback in the June of his two-year-old career so we didn't really know too much about him [at the start of the season], but he was one that was in the Derby and was always going to try to win his novice in April and go for a trial if he deserved to. I'd be lying if I said I thought in March he was a definite Derby candidate, but he's a horse that we've always liked, if that

makes any sense."I was very pleased when he won at Nottingham, he got a bit lost in the straight but if you watch him over the line, he's taken off. If it was another 100 yards, he'd have won five lengths. He's not a big horse, he's neat and very well-balanced and athletic. He handled the track well here and I can see him handling Epsom, so I think he ticks a lot of the boxes."The bookmakers tend to agree and having been a 100-1 chance for the Derby on Saturday morning, Third Realm is now generally a 12-1 shot, with one bookmaker still offering 16-1 on Saturday evening. His success here could also increase the chance that El Drama will head to the French Derby, over 10 furlongs, rather than Epsom over 12, while Varian also retains high hopes for Royal Champion, a likely runner in the Dante Stakes at York next week.

Canelo Álvarez stops Billy Joe Saunders to unify titles before vast crowd in Texas

London, May 10 : The unforgiving nature of boxing was seen in the white towel that Billy Joe Saunders draped around his head as he walked slowly towards a waiting ambulance late on Saturday night in Arlington, Texas. He then used the towel to

Texas full of his usual swagger and boasts, and he appeared convinced he would take away Álvarez's WBA and WBC belts and add them to his own WBO world title. Saunders had tried various stunts all week. He threatened to pull out of the fight following a dis-



cover his bruised and swollen face. Twenty minutes earlier, Saunders had cut a similarly forlorn figure in his corner as he told his trainer, Mark Tibbs, he could not see out of his right eye. A brutal uppercut from Saúl "Canelo" Álvarez in the eighth round had caused an immediate and horrible bulge. Saunders knew the damage was significant, both to his eye and to his chances of causing a huge surprise by beating Álvarez in their world super-middleweight unification bout. Tibbs turned to the referee to signal the fight was over before the ninth round could begin. As the journey began to the hospital room where Saunders would be examined in the expectation he had sustained a fractured orbital bone, the brash and sometimes obnoxious British fighter had time to reflect on the painful lessons of the week. He had arrived in

pute over the size of the ring. He spent much of his time trying to provoke Álvarez with crass needling. But, typically, Saunders overstepped the mark when he mocked a Mexican interviewer's use of English - which seemed a bit rich when his own command of his native language can be wayward. He remains a skilled operator in the ring. Saunders boxed confidently during the first seven rounds. He moved fluidly and landed flurries of punches to win a few rounds and ensure that, at the end of the seventh, he remained in contention in an interesting fight of contrasting styles. But it was obvious that Álvarez, the best pound-for-pound fighter in the world, was untroubled. Fighting as a southpaw, and often keeping his hands low before flicking out his snaking jab, Saunders kept Álvarez occupied as he stayed off the ropes, where he knew

the Mexican would do his most hurtful work. But Saunders is a light puncher compared with Álvarez, who throws much harder and heavier blows - particularly to the body. A bare statistic after the fight told a clear story. Álvarez landed 58 power shots to the 30 thrown by Saunders. Only one of those punches was needed to alter the entire shape of the contest and of Saunders's face. Álvarez evaded a right hand from Saunders in round eight and then, with crunching precision, uncorked a devastating right of his own. It was a shuddering uppercut, thrown perfectly by a master of his trade, and it rocked Saunders. His head snapped back and he reeled away in retreat. The damage was visible at once and Álvarez closed in with menacing authority. He knew the fight had changed course and he waved to his roaring supporters, urging them to make even more of a din. Saunders made it to the end of the round, but all his fiery spirit had evaporated as he trudged to his corner. An attempt was made to stem the swelling but Tibbs soon confirmed that Saunders was a beaten fighter. Álvarez pummeled his chest in defiance of Saunders, who had upset him during the week and prompted a prediction from the normally restrained Mexican that he would win by a knockout between rounds seven and nine. "It was not as difficult as I expected," Álvarez said coolly, insisting he had won almost every round. "I think I broke his cheek. He was not coming out [for round nine]." He paid an emotional tribute to the mainly Mexican crowd of 73,126, which set an attendance record for boxing in an indoor arena in the US. Texas has long flouted any Covid-related restrictions but it was still an astonishing turnout. This latest Canelo showpiece was trumpeted as

"the night boxing returned" - but, with few masks in the crowd and no social distancing, the health implications during a global pandemic were bluntly ignored. Eddie Hearn, who promotes both men, was predictably in the corner of the winner and he insisted "the only fight out there" for Álvarez is a final unification contest to clean up the super-middleweight division. Caleb Plant is the IBF title holder. Even before he faced Saunders, Álvarez had said he planned to unify all the belts by beating Plant in September. He reinforced that message in the ring when he turned to the camera, as if talking directly to Plant, and said: "I'm coming. I'm coming, my friend." It will be a huge payday for Plant - but one freighted with danger. There are also various obstacles to overcome. Plant is promoted by the notoriously elusive Al Haymon, who might be reluctant to risk him against a supreme champion in Álvarez. It adds to the familiar tangle as Hearn tries to keep the relentless Álvarez happy by securing a fight he wants so badly. A long way from the bedlam and hoopla, Saunders sat quietly in the ambulance as it left the arena. He was in that sad and lonely place boxing reserves for those who have had all the big talk beaten out of them. One day, maybe years from now, Canelo Álvarez will probably also end up here but, on Saturday night, his current domination was obvious. He was embraced by his family and friends, by fans and pundits, while everything looked secure in his kingdom. There was no such joy for Saunders as the ambulance moved through the darkened streets. In hospital he would learn the full extent of the damage he had sustained on a punishing night of boxing.

West Brom relegated after Nicolas Pépé's thunderbolt for Arsenal

London, May 10 : Sam Allardyce had said upon joining West Brom that a first relegation from the Premier League would "kill" him and, while the defeat that sealed their fate had a blessedly more benign effect, the agony was etched on his face at full time. Each of Arsenal's goals had been greeted by a clench of the jaw more shuddering than the last; Allardyce must have raced through the packs of chewing gum but, coming at this stage in his career, such a blot on his copybook will leave anything but a fresh taste. In truth this moment had long been coming and West Brom will have to yo-yo once again. It remains to be seen whether Allardyce retains control of the string for their latest attempt to depart the Championship; ending his days at the top level on this note will smart though and, given his fractious history with Arsenal, the identity of the side that applied the telling blow adds another insult. "I'm not going to tell you whether I'm staying or going," said Allardyce, pre-empting the question before anybody involved in his post-match press conference could get a word in. "I'm not going to answer that af-

ter it arrived in the final minute of a virtually meaningless game against doomed opponents. "Somehow this season we haven't managed to get the best out of him," Arteta said of Willian. "He had spells and highlights of things he can do and today was a great example of that." In truth Arsenal's season would be bereft of redeeming factors without Bukayo Saka and Emile Smith Rowe, both of whom could teach Willian and other senior players a little about consistency. Saka was deployed at left-back, a position he might usefully have filled during Kieran Tierney's recent absence, and still managed to be the best player on the pitch. West Brom had pressed early on, coming inches away from scoring through Callum Robinson, but Saka turned up the heat with a series of underlapping runs and his quality told on the half-hour. A waste-high cross from near the byline was adroitly volleyed in on the run by Smith Rowe, who opened his Premier League account, and for a while Arsenal looked keen to unload the frustration of Thursday's nightmare against Villarreal. Within five minutes Nicolas



ter the disappointment of the situation we're in and losing tonight. We put in a good show, we gave it everything we've got." They had a sniff of the draw that would extend their interest for at least 24 hours when Matheus Pereira drilled past Bernd Leno after an excellent solo run midway through the second half, reducing Arsenal's lead to one. If Darnell Furlong had not fluffed a glorious headed opportunity shortly after that, Allardyce might have been masticating less furiously by the final whistle. Instead their fire was extinguished and their efforts proved too little, too late. That sentiment applies just as well to Arsenal, even if a win offered the embattled Mikel Arteta some short-term respite. Their goals were superbly taken too, although the last of them made seasoned observers unsure whether to laugh or cry. Willian's season has been a disaster but the picturebook free-kick he curled past Sam Johnstone to secure the outcome was redolent of his best work at Chelsea. It was his first goal for Arsenal in his 37th appearance: what a shame that

Pépé cut inside and, offered all the space he needed to shoot, did so emphatically with his favoured left foot. It was a glorious finish and yet another demonstration of his obvious talent, but until he starts sending tall on the occasions that really matter nothing he does will quite seem enough. Arsenal sagged from there, rediscovering the flatness that has dogged too much of their campaign. Pereira, who Allardyce said is "without doubt our most skilful and talented player" reignited the contest and made a summer move more likely. But Furlong glanced Matt Phillips' cross wide and Willian was left to finish the matter, giving Arsenal outside hope of hounding down Spurs for a potential place in the Europa Conference League. or Allardyce, whose contract is believed to include a break clause that can be activated now West Brom are down, the Premier League would be more than enough. "Words can't describe it," he said when asked how much relegation hurt; the summer will give him plenty to chew over.

NFL star DK Metcalf finishes last with time of 10.37sec in 100m debut

London, May 10 : It looks like Seattle Seahawks star DK Metcalf will be sticking to the NFL for now. The wide receiver caused a stir earlier this week when he revealed he would compete in the 100m



at Sunday's Golden Games and Distance Open in California. Metcalf had hoped to earn a spot at next month's US Olympic trials, but he finished ninth in his heat with a time of 10.37 seconds - not bad for

a 6ft 3in, 220lbs football player but well short of the standard needed to compete with the fastest men on earth. "10.36 [sic] is crazy tho at that size!!," wrote Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes on Twitter. "Mad respect! @dkm14". Cravon Gillespie won the race with a time of 10.11sec. NFL players often rely on speed over short bursts and the 23-year-old started respectably in Sunday's race but

faded in the last 20 meters. "To test my speed up against world class athletes ... just having the opportunity to run against these guys was a blessing," said Metcalf after Sunday's race. "They do this for a living. This is very different from football speed." Many sprinters saw Metcalf's foray into their sport as a sideshow at best and an insult at worst. However, former Olympic sprinter Ato Boldon, who was working on NBC's

broadcast of the race, said Metcalf had performed well. "He did not embarrass himself," Boldon said. "He hung with the pack ... I didn't think he was going to run anywhere near that well." Metcalf's NFL speed was highlighted last season when he chased down Arizona defensive back Budda Baker from behind after an interception to prevent what seemed to be a sure touchdown. Metcalf made up nearly 10 yards on Baker and reached a top speed of

22.64mph in pads. He ran 108.8 yards on the play to tackle Baker short of the end zone. For decades, track standouts have been challenged by the speediest athletes in other sports. Hall of Fame NFL receiver Terrell Owens tried to set up a friendly competition with 2004 100m Olympic gold medalist Justin Gatlin, who is still in elite form at 39 and among the favorites to make the US team for the Tokyo Games.

Australia's Adam Scott opts out of Tokyo Olympics golf tournament

Melbourne, May 10 : Australian Adam Scott opted out of the Olympic Games in Tokyo, his manager has said. Johan Elliott of Sportyard International said the competition does not fit into Scott's 2021 schedule. "With the world being the way it is, Adam is gone four to five weeks at a time this year during his playing blocks," Elliott told Golf Channel.com. "With three young

children at home, this time in the schedule will be devoted to family." It is pretty much the only time up until October when he has a chance to see them for a stretch of time and not only a few days a week. "The Olympics golf tournament is scheduled for 29 July to 1 August at Kasumigaseki Country Club outside Tokyo, two weeks after The Open in England and a week before the WGC-



FedEx St. Jude Invitational in Memphis. Scott, 40, also opted out of the 2016 Summer Games in Brazil, citing the busy PGA Tour schedule and the Zika virus outbreak. Ranked No 35 in this week's official world golf rankings, Scott's 31 professional wins include 14 on the PGA Tour. He won the Masters in 2013 for his only major championship to date.





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