

The Assam Rising

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Vol. No. VI ■ Issue No. 88 ■ RNI-ASSENG/2014/58385 | GUWAHATI ■ FRIDAY ■ MAY 14, 2021 | PAGES 8 ■ PRICE RS. 7.00

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NEWS IN BRIEF

18 wild elephants die

Guwahati, May 13 : In a tragic incident, at least 18 wild elephants were killed by lightning atop Bamuni Hills in Central Assam's Nagaon district. As per reports, the elephants were hit by a lightning atop the hill on Wednesday night. Four elephants were partially charred and three elephants were found dead lying on the foothills. Forest officials said the report of the elephant deaths came on Thursday afternoon after local villagers informed them. Forest officials have rushed to the spot and a postmortem examination will be conducted on Friday.

Kamkhya Devalaya

Guwahati, May 13 : The Kamkhya Devalaya administration on Wednesday informed that the Devalaya and all other Temples atop Nilachal Hills would be closed from Thursday (May 13) for 15 days. Earlier in the day, the Assam Government released a new SOP, which has directed all the religious places to remain closed for 15 days. It further mentioned that the religious head of a religious place or their representative may continue minimal religious rituals. The Kamakhya Temple is a Sakta temple dedicated to the mother goddess Kamakhya. It is one of the oldest of the 51 Shakti Pithas. Situated on the Nilachal Hill in western part of Guwahati city in Assam, India, it is the main temple in a complex of individual temples which is the most comprehensive representation of the ten Mahavidyas of Saktism, namely, Kali, Tara, Tripura Sundari, Bhuvaneshwari, Bhairavi, Chhinnamasta, Dhumavati, Bagalamukhi, Matangi and Kamalatrika.

Odd-Even rule

Guwahati, May 13 : Movement of people in contravention of 'Odd-Even rule' in Assam is permitted if they produce paper of vaccination slot booking of that day. "Important Update regarding new #Covid19 Directives. Movement of people in contravention of Odd-Even rule is permitted if they produce paper of Vaccination Slot booking of that day. We request citizens to follow these directives to avoid any kind of inconvenience," Assam Police said in a statement.

CM reviews COVID19 situation in Majuli and status of various schemes

Make COVID tests mandatory in all entry points : CM



Guwahati, May 13 : Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today reviewed the prevailing COVID19 situation in river island district of Majuli at a meeting held with Deputy Commissioner

(DC) and other senior officers at Majuli DC Office conference hall and directed strict implementation of restrictions for containing the pandemic. The Chief Minister took stock

of the availability of ICU beds in the district along with oxygen, medicines, health infrastructure etc in view of the rising number of cases. He directed for generating mass aware-

ness about the importance of following COVID19 protocols for containing the spread of the pandemic and instructed DC Majuli to ramp up testing and make testing mandatory at all entry points to the district. Chief Minister Dr. Sarma also reviewed the status of implementation of various schemes in Majuli and he stressed on ensuring quality of construction and *Contd...Page 6*

CM visits Dakshinpaat, Auniati and Uttar Kamalabari Satra at Majuli

Guwahati, May 13 : After assuming the charge of Chief Minister of the State, Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma today made his first visit to river island Majuli and took part in a host of activities. The Chief Minister visited Sri Sri Dakshinpaat, Sri Sri Auniati and Sri Sri Uttar Kamalabari Satra, which are known for rich repository of Satriya culture and tradition. After landing at temporary helipad at Bonkhowa in Majuli, Chief Minister Sarma first went to



prayed for well being of the people of the State. The Chief Minister took a look at the three hundred years old 'Akshay Banti' which is preserved at the grand treasury

of the Satra. Satradhikar Sri Sri Nanigopal Devgoswami presented the Chief Minister with a few silver coins of Ahom era *Contd...Page 6*

DCGI Approves Phase II/III Trials Of Covaxin In 2-18 Age Group

New Delhi, May 13 : The National Regulator of the country, the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI), has accepted the recommendation of the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) and accorded permission to conduct the Phase II/III clinical trial of Covaxin (COVID vaccine) in the age group 2 to 18 years after careful examination to

its manufacturer Bharat Biotech Ltd on May 12. Bharat Biotech International Ltd., Hyderabad (BBIL) had proposed to carry out a Phase- II/III clinical trial of Covaxin in the age group of 2 to 18 years. The trial will be conducted in 525 healthy volunteers. In the trial, the vaccine will be given by intramuscular route in two doses at day 0 and day 28. As rapid regulatory response, the proposal was deliberated in Subject Expert Committee (SEC) (COVID-19) on 11.05.2021. The Committee after detailed deliberation recommended for grant of permission to conduct proposed Phase II/III clinical trial to certain conditions. Bharat Biotech, which developed Covaxin in association with the Indian Council of Medical Research, submitted the proposal of conducting trials on children early this *Contd...Page 6*



Most of country should remain locked down for 6-8 weeks to curb Covid spread : ICMR chief

New Delhi, May 13 : The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has said districts reporting a high number of Covid-19 infections should remain locked down for another six to eight weeks to control the spread of the rampaging disease. Dr Balram Bhargava, head of the ICMR, said in an inter-

view that lockdown restrictions should remain in place in all districts where the rate of infection is above 10% of those tested. Currently, three-fourths of India's 718 districts have what is known as a test-positivity rate above 10%, including major cities like New Delhi, Mumbai and the tech hub of Bengaluru. Bhargava's comments are the first time a senior government official has outlined how long



view that lockdown restrictions should remain in place in all districts where the rate of infection is above 10% of

lockdowns, which already encompass large parts of the country, need to continue to rein in the *Contd...Page 6*

Curfew and Odd-Even rule Assam Govt. Issues Notification on Exempted Categories



Guwahati, May 13 : The Assam State Disaster Management (ASDM) on Thursday issued a notification stating the list of exempted categories from curfew and odd-even vehicular regulation. All Officials and persons, both government and private involved in emergency services such as health and family welfare are exempted from the restrictions. The notification states, "All Officials and persons, both government and private involved in emergency services such as Health and Family Welfare and all related medical establishments, Police, Prisons, Home Guards, Civil Defence, Fire and emergency services, District Administration Pay & Account Office, Electricity, Water and Sanitation, Public *Contd...Page 6*

UPSC Postpones Civil Services Prelims Exam

New Delhi, May 13 : The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has postponed the preliminary exam which was scheduled to be held on June 27 in view of

the COVID-19 situation in the country. The exam will be held on October 10, the Commission said. The commission conducts civil services examination annually

in three stages — preliminary, main, and interview — to select officers of Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS), and Indian Po-

lice Service (IPS) among others. "Due to the prevailing conditions caused by the Novel Corona Virus (COVID-19), the Union Public Service Commission has deferred the Civil Services (Preliminary) Examination, 2021, which was scheduled to be held on 27th June 2021. Now, this Examination will be held on 10th October 2021," the UPSC has notified. Last year, the Civil Services exam was also rescheduled from May 31 to October 4. So far, the main written exam has been over. The interview was put on hold due to the rise in coronavirus cases. The exam for the selection of enforcement officers in the Employees' Provident Fund Organization which was scheduled on May 9 has been postponed. "As and when dates are decided for the deferred Tests/Interviews, it will be ensured that candidates are given a notice of at least 15 days," the Commission has informed candidates. The Commission has also deferred the registration for the Combined Medical Services exam which was scheduled to begin on May 5.

Govt Recommends To Increase Gap of Covishield Doses To 12-16 Weeks



New Delhi, May 13 : A government panel on Thursday recommended to increase the gap between two doses of Covishield to 12-16 weeks which is currently four to eight weeks of interval. No change in dosage interval for Covaxin was suggested by the panel. Those who have tested positive for Covid-19 and are waiting to take the vaccine should defer vaccination for six months after recovery, the National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) rec-

ommended, reported India Today. The government panel said those having laboratory test-proven SARS-CoV-2 illness should defer Covid-19 vaccination for six months after recovery. However, the panel recommended that pregnant women may be offered the choice to take any Covid-19 vaccine and that lactating women can be inoculated any time after delivery. As per sources, the panel said that pregnant women may be offered a choice to take any *Contd...Page 6*

Bharat Biotech, Serum Institute submit Covid vaccine production plans for next 4 months to Centre

New Delhi, May 13 : The Covid-19 vaccine production of the country will be accelerated in the next coming months as both Pune's Serum Institute of India and Hyderabad's Bharat Biotech are ramping up their monthly production capacity and have sub-

mitted their plans for the coming four months to the Centre. In a meeting on Wednesday with seven states/UTs which are lagging behind in terms of vaccinating people against Covid-19, Union health minister Dr Harsh Vardhan said India's vaccine

production is likely to reach eight crore doses in May and 9 crore doses in June. After Maharashtra, Karnataka suspends Covid vaccines for 18-44 from Friday. The pace of vaccination has got stymied in some states like *Contd...Page 6*

CM Himanta Biswa Sarma meets Ritul Saikia's wife

Guwahati, May 12 : Assam chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday met wife of Ritul Saikia, one of the



ONGC employees abducted by the United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I). Dr Sarma met Saikia's wife and brother at Majuli circuit house in the presence of Titabor MLA Bhaskarjyoti Barua. The chief minister assured them that all the efforts have been taken by the Assam government to rescue the ONGC employee. The two other employees abducted by the militants were rescued by the security forces following a gunfight with the abductors in Nagaland bordering Myanmar.

COVID-19 : Sputnik vaccine sale could begin next week, says NITI Aayog's Dr VK Paul

New Delhi, May 13 : Russia's Sputnik vaccine for COVID-19 has arrived in India and its sale could begin as early as next week, informed NITI Aayog member Dr VK Paul on Thursday (May 13). He said that the limited supply of Sputnik vaccine doses that has come from Russia is likely to be available in the market next week. "Sputnik vaccine has arrived in India. I'm happy to say that we're hopeful that it'll be available in the market next week. We're hopeful that the sale of the limited supply that

has come from there (Russia), will begin next week," Dr VK Paul said. He said that the vaccine's production in India will begin in July. "Further supply will also follow. Its production will begin in July and it is estimated that 15.6 crore doses will be manufactured in that period," he said. Regarding other vaccine candidates such as Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson & Johnson, Dr Paul said that the authorities are constantly in touch with the manufacturers and significant headway is likely to *Contd...Page 6*



Chief Minister reviews schemes of Finance Department

Asks the department to help State government's fight against COVID 19 pandemic



Guwahati, May 12: Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma on his third day in office after taking over the post of Chief Minister, held a meeting with the Finance Department and asked the officials to accord high priority on any file related to health to augment the state's fight against COVID pandemic. Taking a review of the works of the Finance Department where State Finance Minister Ajanta Neog was also present at the conference hall of Finance Department, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma asked the department to accord high priority to the files and dispose them expeditiously to strengthen the government's proactive guards against the Corona pandemic. Taking stock of the issues with respect to the Finance Department, Dr. Sarma also asked the department to expeditiously release funds following all financial norms for all the welfare schemes for the benefit of all sections of the people. He also made it clear that the momentum of development of the state depends to a great extent on the finance department. He, therefore, asked the department to seamlessly continue the best practices adopted and implemented over the last five years to continue to sustain the good fiscal health of the state. Dr. Sarma also asked the Finance Department to declare July as the Orunodoi month to give a new facelift to State government's pro-people scheme of finan-

cial inclusion. He also asked the officials of the department to include more eligible beneficiaries under the ambit of the scheme. He asked the department to release funds under SVAYEM scheme for youth empowerment. On taking note of distribution of scooters under Banikanta Kakati Merit Award of Pragnya Bharati scheme, Dr. Sarma asked the department to expeditiously complete all modalities to carry forward the scheme and distribute the remaining scooters among the girl students on an urgent basis. Chief Minister Dr. Sarma also asked Principal Secretary Finance Samir Sinha to take a lead in assessing the existing vacancies in different government departments for the state government to take pragmatic steps for recruiting one lakh youths in government jobs. He also asked the department to undertake an extensive evaluation on the volume of loans provided by micro finance institutions to enable the government to prepare a realistic roadmap for the waiver of loans. Taking into consideration of the 'demography and demand' of the state, the Chief Minister asked the Finance Department to work more aggressively so that the state finance grows and be kept in good stead. Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, Chief Minister's Political Secretary Jayanta Malla Baruah, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister and Finance Samir Kumar Sinha, and other senior officers of

Biswanath To Further Intensify Covid Fight In Rural Areas, Various Task-Forces To Be Formed

Biswanath Chariali, 13 May: With Covid 19 fast taking rural areas in its clutch, the Biswanath district administration has decided to further intensify its fight against the deadly virus in countryside and interior areas. Chairing a high-level meeting here today, Mr. Ashok Singhal, minister-in-charge of Covid management for Biswanath district, today instructed the administration to form Task Forces at Panchayat levels involving civil society; self help groups (SHGs), Naamghars etc. to generate awareness and to initiate preventive measures at micro level. "Prevention and awareness are the only ways to prevent Covid-19 and importance has to be laid on these two," said Mr. Singhal. Singhal further said that it was the joint responsibility of the district administration and the society to make people aware of the deadly virus. He also underlined the important role of the Gaonburhas and Panchayat members in this fight against Covid 19, particularly in the rural areas. He instructed the concerned departments to hold regular meetings with Panchayati and Rural Development department so that preventive measures could be further intensified. Deputy Commissioner of Biswanath, Mr. Pranab Kumar Sarmah, apprised the minister on the measures be-



ing taken by the district administration in preventing and fighting Covid 19. "Our prime aim is to intensify testing so that we can isolate the infected patients immediately. We also urge the people not to take the virus lightly and voluntarily abide by all Covid related protocols and rules," said Mr. Sarmah. The meeting was also attended by Superintendent of Police (SP), Chief Operating Officer (CEO), Zilla Parishad, Sub-Divisional Office (Civil), Gohpur, all the Additional Deputy Commissioners (ADCs) and other administrative officers of the district and top officials from health department.

Covid Update from Golaghat

Golaghat, May 12: Covid has badly hit Golaghat. Today 161 Positive cases were reported. At present the number of Active Cases of Covid in the district is 1139. Also today four persons lost their lives due to Covid. With these four deaths, the toll rises to nineteen. Meanwhile in view of the rising Covid positive cases and to prevent further spread of Covid two areas in Golaghat have been declared as Containment Zone by the administration today. Borfolong Tea Estate under Khumtai Revenue Circle and Dharmapur village under Dhansiri Sub Division are declared as Containment Zones. Taldanga Line and Maz Line of Borfolong Tea Estate also covered under Containment Zone. Any type of individual or vehicular movement is prohibited and entry and exit have also been restricted in the declared Containment Zones. Till today there are five active Containment Zones in the district.

Appeal for Vaccination Drive in Tea Gardens

Golaghat, May 13: Seeing the rise in number of Covid positive cases and deaths due to it in Golaghat, Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha Golaghat Branch Secretary Ghanshyam Barhoi has made an appeal to the district administration to carry out a Vaccination Drive in Tea Garden areas. Barhoi said, "I have requested Deputy Commissioner of Golaghat to make arrangements and provide Covid Vaccines to the tea garden workers for the greater interest of garden people." The ACMS official has also given the list of Tea Estates

Within 24 hours five persons succumb to novel corona virus at Nagaon

NAGAON, May 12: Within the last 24 hours, five COVID patients succumbed to novel corona virus, taking the total toll during the second wave of COVID 19 in the district to 20. Besides, 302 fresh COVID positive cases were recorded today including which the total number of active COVID positive cases in the district were recorded around 2361 till filing of this report, sources added. Significantly, 73 COVID patients who were under-

going treatment in hospital as well as being isolated at their home were recovered from the infection of the virus so far. Sources claimed that among those who tested positive today, 38 were immediately admitted to Nagaon COVID hospital while the rest were put in home quarantine. Rapid Antigen Test was conducted on 2545 people while RT-PCR test was conducted on 61 swab samples, sources added further.

Assam's new health minister Keshab Mahanta visits FAAMCH, Barpeta on Thursday

Barpeta, May 13: State Health and Family Welfare, Water Resources etc. Minister Keshab Mahanta today arrived at Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College Hospital in Barpeta and held a review meeting on the treatment of Covid patients. Where Deputy Commissioner, Barpeta (in-charge) Tej Prasad Bhusal, Deputy Commissioner, Bajjali Mrigesh Narayan Baruah, Barpeta SP Dr. Raveen



Kumar, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed Medical College Principal Dr. Ramen Talukdar and other district officials were participated. The Minister, who is also in charge of science and information technology, announced the decision to provide Covid vaccine to one lakh people every day in Assam from today onwards. In the conversation with the reporters he said the government will focus on providing a second dose vaccine on priority basis. The Health Minister also announced that another oxygen plant will be set up at Barpeta Medical College Hospital. The work of setting up the oxygen plant will be complete within the next fortnight. Once the project is complete, oxygen can be given to the patient through pipes in about two hundred beds. He also directs the public sector department to start the work of the project from this day or tomorrow. The

Covid positive patients will be under constant monitoring from the district administration, police administration and health departments and appropriate treatment will be provided, he added. The minister directed the district commissioner to provide food grains of Rs. 2000 to families under the BPL i.e. poverty line in isolation or in the containment zone at home. On the other hand, patients at the Covid Care Centre will be given food of Rs. 300 per day. The minister informed that the prominent technical institute in Guwahati, which is administered under the guidance of Shrimanta Shankar Academy (SSA) Society, was also used as a Covid Care Centre after the first wave of Covid19 hit Guwahati. The awareness on the part of the new health minister regarding the state's Covid19 situation has brought hopes to the people of Assam.

There is a Life beyond Alcoholism & Drug Addiction: Vikas Goenka

Guwahati, May 12: Alcohol and Drug addiction is a persistent relapsing disorder that has been distinguished by the compulsive use of addictive substances regardless of the consequences to the individual and the society. Not known to many but this is actually a disease which can be arrested ONE DAY AT A TIME. Nowadays this is becoming a trend or a style statement per se, not only in India but worldwide. Youngsters, men as well as women are drawn towards it. They are being clutched into the jaws of despair. This is not only affecting the health of the individual but also his mental and emotional state of mind. Addiction to drugs and alcohol is now a major public health problem. Assam has recorded a whopping rise of 50% Drug related cases in the last few months. Alcoholism is not conservatively restricted to the youth and men. Reports state that consumption of alcohol among women is on the rise. A recent research shows a significant increase in the percentage of female drinkers in Assam. Assam is the surprising winner in both male and female categories as Nation's Top Drinkers crushing Punjab and Telangana's reputation as big drinking states. Assam is way ahead of any mainland state as only two tribal states of the region Mizoram and Meghalaya had given some competition. Not only male, but also female drinkers have topped the charts. Government of India reports state that one out of four female and every second male of Assam is a drinker. Abuse of alcohol and drugs is a worldwide problem. Not only it imposes a threat to the individual's health but also consequently gives rise to socio-economic problems. Evidence also supports the association of drugs and alcohol with crime such as domestic violence, murder, theft, drug peddling, rape, road ac-

cidents and many more. Apart from the individual being affected, their families are equally or more traumatised in many ways including emotionally, financially, legally and medically. Every person in the addict's family is affected by the individual's substance abuse. Withdrawal, Strained relationships, financial hardships, poor school performance, reckless behaviour within the home, stealing money from parents to support their habit, running away from home, mood swings, marriage failure, verbal and

would like to introduce Mr. Vikas Goenka, one such individual who was once a prey to alcoholism. He was an out-an-out alcoholic. He had given into alcohol at the cost of his family, friends and also his career. Just one bottle of beer during his hostel days had dragged him into the world of alcohol dependency. He had been through many trials and tribulations, drinking endlessly, not knowing the difference between night and day. Finally, he was sent to a Rehabilitation Centre in Kohima, where he

them & the family to enjoy the same freedom that he is doing now. He has helped hundreds of Alcoholics & Addicts by showing them the way to recovery & getting rid of this deadly disease. Keeping this in mind Mr. Goenka has founded "Punarvaas Rehabilitation Centre" a Project under Santosh Gupta Memorial Trust. He is the Project Director of the same. "Punarvaas" is not just a Rehabilitation Centre, it's a HOME AWAY FROM HOME located in Ganeshguri area of Guwahati. The focus & objective of the treatment process is not only to guide the inmates about how to leave drugs & alcohol but also to teach them how to live without it for the rest of their life. Here, they have tried every possible way to create an ambience where it's not just treatment, it's about the holistic development of their patients & family also. They have made sure to keep in mind the patients' recovery as well as his comfort. It is fully air-conditioned backed up with CCTV surveillance. Every meal on the table is made with utmost love and care which is healthy and delicious. Apart from State-Of-The-Art treatment procedure, they have included excellent Counselling Sessions, Family Counselling with some of the best Counsellors, Withdrawal Management, Group Therapies, Games and Activities as well. Mr. Goenka's ultimate dream is to make this society free from Drugs and Alcohol Abuse so that we all can live a healthy, successful and peaceful life. Let us all join hands together in making this a grand success.



physical fights at home, use of abusive language are some of the most common repercussions which affects the family dynamics. This has also resulted in one's loss of career, hindrance in social life and the list goes on. Addiction impacts a family to a great deal. But this is not the end of the story. In the midst of hopelessness, anguish, distress we have some heroes who have fought their battle against the dark, murky night and have become victorious. They have aligned themselves towards the brighter side of life. Proudly, I

received one of the best treatments. By the grace of God and his loving family and friends and of course his treatment, he is a free man. Today, he has completely recovered from this horrific nightmare and is enjoying 8 plus years of sobriety. Now, he is a successful Real Estate Consultant, Owner of a Showroom, doing multiple businesses and a responsible citizen of our country. He has pledged himself to do something worthwhile for the society by helping Drugs and Alcohol afflicted people. He wishes each one of

Two-day long online workshop held

Panigaon, May 13: Under the aegis of Lakhimpur Telahi Kamalaboria (LTK) College IQAC and ICT Cell, North Lakhimpur and in association with Teaching-Learning Centre, Tezpur University, a two-day long online workshop titled "Use of Information and Technology in the classroom" held on 10 and 11 May. On 10 May, LTK College Principal Dr. Bubul Kumar Saikia inaugurated the workshop at 10 a.m. which was followed by the keynote address of Prof. Bipul Sarma and Teaching-Learning Centre, Tezpur University Director Dr. Subhanshu Shekhar Sarkar. Then, LTK College ICT Cell co-ordinator Manas Pratim Borah addressed. In both the

two days of the workshop, Teaching-Learning Centre, Tezpur University, Assistant Professor Dr. Swapna Borah and Iqbal Hussain Ahmed participated in the workshop as the Resource Persons. 70 Professors from different colleges, including LTK College, took part in the workshop through Google Meet App. Participating in the concluding ceremony on the second day of the workshop, Tezpur University Registrar Dr. Biren Das spoke on how to solve the problems of online system in teaching-learning process arising in case of the economically weak students. LTK College IQAC co-ordinator Biju Kumar Sonowal offered vote of thanks.

Asom Nagarik Moncha requests Hojai District Administration to setup three counters at each Vaccination Centre category wise

Hojai, May 13: In a bid to mitigate the inconvenience suffered by the citizens of Hojai District, Asom Nagarik Moncha have requested the District Administration to setup three vaccination counters at each

Vaccination centre within the district in age group category wise- one counter for 18 to 44 years, one counter for 45 years and above age group and another one counter for second dose. "In this regard we have submitted a memorandum to Deputy Commissioner Dr. Sadnek Singh, via online mode on Thursday," told Bijay Chakraborty, General Secretary, ANM while informing this Correspondent. He said, "a large no. of

People have to stand in large serpentine queues for long hours thereby losing patience at the centre, as a result Covid 19 protocol is violated as there are single vaccination counter at each centre, seeing the agony of the people at large, ANM have come forward and raised this issue and urged the district administration to take necessary action immediately in order to provide relief to the denizens within the district."

DC, DF & CSO Monitors Distribution of PMGKAY-111 Rice to AAY & PHH Beneficiaries

Mechuka, 13 May: The Shri Yomi Deputy Commissioner Shri Mito Dirchi accompanied by Er. Minli Tato DF&CSO Mechuka witnessed and monitored the distribution of PMGKAY-111 Rice to all AAY and PHH beneficiaries of the district at Mechuka town today. %kg per head rice was distributed to the beneficiaries for the month of May and

June were distributed at a go. Till evening 75 Ration Card Holders 70 quintals of rice were distributed. The ration commodities were distributed to all poor and needy people of the district as per policy and guidelines framed by the state and Govt. of India. The distribution assumes significant keeping in consideration of coming monsoon and pandemic situation to meet up any food scarcity in the days to come. They people expressed their gratitude to the district administration and Supply department for providing the essential commodities at such a crucial time.



Video conference of hon'ble CEM of BTC Pramod Boro, Arup Kr Dey EM health services, Ranjit Basumatary EM Forest, Rakesh Brahma EM Fishery and Principal Secretary, BTC Anant Lal Gyani IAS with all DCs of BTR was held on May 13, 2021 at BTC Secretariat video conference room at around 10.30 am. CEM was asking details of stock of Medicines ICU rooms PPE kits treatment centres, Oxygen cylinders, no. of positive & negative patients in each district of BTR, whether daily testing are going on at Sriram pur gate & Railway stations to the all passengers of railways, buses, drivers, Discussion was also held on DRDA on developmental works of four Districts of BTR with DCs

Israel continues Gaza airstrikes amid rise in mob violence

Gaza, May 13 : Israel has pressed ahead with a fierce military offensive on Gaza that has flattened high-rise buildings and Hamas fired volleys of rockets deep into the country on Wednesday night, while racist mob attacks spread through Israel in the worst Arab-Jewish chaos for years. Thousands of Israelis went into shelters early on Thursday after warning sirens sounded in the economic capital Tel Aviv in the middle of the country, but also in Jezreel Valley in the north, the first time it has happened since the unrest escalated this week, the army said. There was no immediate word of any casualties from the pre-dawn salvo, and later reports suggested the sirens in the north were false alarms. Israel continued to carry out airstrikes on residential areas in Gaza. Since Monday, the Israeli military has carried out hundreds of airstrikes in Gaza, killing four senior Hamas commanders and a dozen more Hamas operatives. Two high-rise buildings containing flats and offices in Gaza City were targeted. At least 67 people have now been killed in Gaza since the violence escalated on Monday, according to the enclave's health ministry. Seven people have been killed in Israel, medical officials said. As the crisis continues to spiral, US energy corporation Chevron said it had shut down the Tamar natural gas platform off the Israeli coast as a precaution. Israel said its energy needs would continue to be met. At least two US airlines cancelled flights to Tel Aviv on Wednesday and Thursday. Israel, which briefly suspended operations at Ben Gurion airport on Monday after a rocket barrage on Tel Aviv, said national airline El Al stood ready to provide supplemental flights. Thursday's barrage on Tel Aviv prompted Israel to reroute an El Al flight from Brussels away from Ben Gurion, its intended destination, to Ramon airport in the south. It appeared to be the first time Israel

had used Ramon as an alternative to Ben Gurion due to conflict. A flight was previously diverted there due to bad weather, according to aviation tracker Avi Scharf. While the conflict raged, Israel appeared on the brink of losing control of its mixed cities. Overnight on Wednesday, far-right Jewish mobs took to the streets across the country searching for Arabs, while Palestinian citizens of Israel clashed with police. Prime minister, Benjamin



Netanyahu has called on both Jews and Arabs to cease attacks on each other: "It doesn't matter to me that your blood is boiling. You can't take the law in your hands," he said. However, Netanyahu had also pledged to restore order "with an iron fist if needed, and his public security minister, Amir Ohana, appeared to encourage mob violence. On Wednesday, Ohana called for the release of a Jewish man arrested in connection with a fatal shooting of an Arab man in the city of Lod, after a synagogue and other Jewish property was torched. Ohana alleged, without providing evidence, that the shooter "acted in self-defence". He added that "law-abiding citizens carrying weapons" were an aid to authorities. Later on Wednesday a mob of far-right Israelis dragged a man they thought was an Arab from his car and beat him until he lay on the ground motionless and bloodied. Footage of the attack in

Bat Yam, a Tel Aviv suburb, was broadcast live on television but police and emergency services did not arrive on the scene until 15 minutes later, while the victim lay motionless on his back in the middle of the street. Videos were posted on social media of what appeared to be other attempted lynchings overnight. Violent incidents, including the burning of shops and restaurants, were reported in multiple towns across

Israel, including Acre, Haifa and Tiberias. The latest unrest took place after US president, Joe Biden, spoke to Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Biden voiced hope the recent surge in violence centred on Gaza would soon end, saying: "My expectation and hope is this will be closing down sooner than later, but Israel has a right to defend itself." Biden did not explain the reasons behind his optimism. Netanyahu's office said he told the US president that Israel would "continue acting to strike at the military capabilities of Hamas and the other terrorist groups active in the Gaza Strip". Amid reports that Egyptian mediators were attempting to broker a deal to end the fighting, Benny Gantz, the Israeli defence minister, said: "Israel is not preparing for a ceasefire. There is currently no end date for the operation. Only when we achieve complete quiet can we talk about

calm." US secretary of state, Tony Blinken, condemned the rocket attacks during a call with Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, on Wednesday, and emphasised the need to de-escalate tensions, the US state department said. Abbas is a Hamas rival whose authority is limited to the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Hady Amr, the US deputy assistant secretary of state for Israel and Palestinian affairs, is to travel to the region immediately to meet Israeli and Palestinian leaders. A nominee for the empty post of US ambassador to Israel is to be made in the next few weeks, the White House said. Since hostilities escalated on Monday evening, Hamas has fired around 1,500 rockets from Gaza into Israeli territory, according to the latest estimate by Israel's army. The launch of around 350 rockets had failed, while hundreds more were intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome air defence system, the army said. The Israeli military said earlier it had killed four senior Hamas commanders in a "complex and first-of-its-kind operation" jointly with the Shin Bet security service. The dead included Bassem Issa, the Gaza City Brigade commander, the head of the cyber-command and the head of Hamas's production network, said a security agency statement. "We eliminated senior Hamas commanders and this is just the beginning," Netanyahu said. "We will inflict blows on them that they couldn't even dream of." The Israeli military would use "increasing force", he added.

Aide who made bullying claims against Meghan to leave service of Cambridges



London, May 13 : The royal aide who made a bullying allegation against the Duchess of Sussex is to leave his senior role with the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. Jason Knauf will leave his post as the chief executive of the Cambridges' Royal Foundation at the end of the year. Knauf was the Sussexes' communications secretary when, in October 2018, he reportedly emailed concerns about Meghan's treatment of staff to William's then private secretary. Last week Knauf's "unequivocal" denial that he helped Meghan write a letter to her estranged father helped her win her copyright claim against the Mail on Sunday, which had published parts of the document, a high court judge ruled. The American-born former corporate affairs executive is said to be moving abroad. He worked for a range of institutions, from the office of the New Zealand prime minister to HM Treasury and the Royal Bank of Scotland, before joining Kensington Palace and leading the press

team for the Cambridges and the Sussexes. He has been the Royal Foundation chief executive since September 2019. In a statement, William and Kate said they were "immensely grateful for his hard work and commitment", and were sad to see him go. Knauf said working with the couple had been "the privilege of my career". The Mail on Sunday, which printed extracts of the letter, alleged Knauf helped Meghan draft a letter to her estranged father and that he could have joint copyright. His "unequivocal" denial of this led to Meghan being granted summary judgment in her favour. Earlier this year the Times claimed Knauf had expressed concerns over claims that Meghan had driven out two personal assistants during her time as a working royal. Lawyers for Harry and Meghan told the newspaper it was a "wholly false narrative", while Buckingham Palace said it would investigate the bullying allegations against Meghan.

Liz Cheney removed from House leadership over Trump criticism

London, May 13 : Congresswoman Liz Cheney of Wyoming was removed from her leadership position in the Republican caucus of the House of Representatives on Wednesday morning in the outcome of an internal battle seen as a bellwether of the future direction of the party. Immediately after the meeting where she was stripped of her position, Cheney said she was "absolutely committed" to not embracing Donald Trump's "big lie" about the election. "We cannot both embrace the big lie and embrace the constitution," Cheney said. "The nation needs it: the nation needs a Republican party that is based upon fundamental principles of conservatism, and I am committed and dedicated to ensuring that that's how this party goes forward, and I plan to lead the fight to do that." Cheney's ouster was widely expected after she found herself

who has fumed about Cheney's criticism and her decision to vote to impeach the president, alongside almost a dozen other House Republicans. Cheney has been the highest-ranking outspoken anti-Trump Republican in Congress. That stance looks to be felt back home in Wyoming, where multiple candidates have jumped into the Republican primary to oust Cheney from her congressional seat. Trump and his allies are assessing who to support in that election. The former president's political operation is watching the primary field closely, looking to see who might emerge as the strongest challenger to Cheney. Cheney's troubles are the latest sign that Trump's influence is still hugely powerful within the Republican party, more so than any of the other recent Republicans who were elected president or were nominated to be president. Cheney herself is no newcomer to primary challengers. She once ran for Senate in Wyoming, challenging then senator Mike Enzi. She ended up dropping out after failing to get serious traction. She was later elected to Congress as the sole representative from the state. Ahead of the vote, Cheney had some support from some like-minded Republican allies. Expelling Liz Cheney from leadership won't gain the GOP one additional vote, but it will cost us quite a few. The office of Washington congresswoman Jaime Herrera Beutler said earlier this week Beutler would vote to keep Cheney in her leadership position.



at odds with other members of Republican leadership over her refusal to stop blaming Trump for inciting the mob attack on the US Capitol on 6 January. Before the closed vote on Wednesday, Cheney addressed the caucus, standing by her position. "If you want leaders who will enable and spread his destructive lies, I'm not your person - you have plenty of others to choose from. That will be their legacy," Cheney said. At moments she was booed by some of her colleagues. She also previously addressed the vote on Tuesday evening in a fiery speech to the House of Representatives. "Today we face a threat America has never seen before," she said. "A former president who provoked a violent attack on this Capitol, in an effort to steal the election, has resumed his aggressive effort to convince Americans that the election was stolen from him." On Tuesday night Cheney had doubled down on condemning Trump and his allies for risking the peaceful transition of power with their baseless accusations that the election was rife with fraud. The daughter of the former vice-president Dick Cheney, Cheney has become a symbol of a dwindling band of Republicans largely opposed to Trump's vice-like grip on the party. But though she is a staunch conservative, she has faced implacable hostility from Trump and his loyalists. Cheney had faced the threat of removal from her leading role before, but she survived that handsily, in part, thanks to support from other members of Republican leadership. This time was different though. Cheney lost support from Congressman Kevin McCarthy of California, the House minority leader, and Congressman Steve Scalise of Louisiana, the House minority whip. McCarthy had endorsed Congresswoman Elise Stefanik of New York to replace Cheney before the vote. "Yes I do," McCarthy said in an interview on Fox News when asked if Stefanik had his support now instead of Cheney. He was also recently caught on a hot mic saying: "I've had it with her." McCarthy had set the vote for a new conference chair for Wednesday. In a letter announcing the new election, the California representative echoed arguments many Republicans made against Cheney - that her criticism of Trump was distracting from Republicans' primary efforts to retake control of the House. "This is no time to take our eye off the ball," McCarthy wrote in the letter. "If we are to succeed in stopping the radical Democrat agenda from destroying our country, these internal conflicts need to be resolved so as to not detract from the efforts of our collective team." "Having heard from so many of you in recent days, it's clear that we need to make a change." The main driver behind the attack on Cheney, though, has been Trump,

Boris Johnson apologises 'unreservedly' for Ballymurphy deaths

London, May 13 : Boris Johnson has apologised for the British army operation that resulted in the death of 10 innocent civilians in the west Belfast neighbourhood of Ballymurphy in 1971. The prime minister made the apology on Wednesday, a day after an inquest in Northern Ireland found the use of force had been unjustified, implicating the army in a Troubles atrocity to rival Bloody Sunday. Johnson made his remarks in a phone call to Northern Ireland's first minister, Arlene Foster, and the deputy first minister, Michelle O'Neill, Downing Street said in a statement. "He said the conclusions of the Ballymurphy inquest, published yesterday, were deeply sad and that the events of August 1971 were tragic. The prime minister apologised unreservedly on behalf of the UK government for the events that took place in Ballymurphy and the huge anguish that the lengthy pursuit of truth has caused the families of those killed," it said. The statement followed mounting pressure from political leaders and the families of those killed for an official apology for the killings and for the fact that it took 50 years to establish the truth. John Teggart, whose father, Daniel, was one of those killed at Ballymurphy, said Johnson's statement was not a public apology. "The apology was to third parties, it wasn't to the Ballymurphy families," he told the

BBC. "What kind of insult is it to families that he couldn't have the conversation with ourselves. His office couldn't come and speak to the families of what he was doing. That's not acceptable to the families and never will be. This is not an apology to us." The killings took place when the army swept through republican districts across Northern Ireland to round up suspects for internment without trial. Violent street protests erupted. The Parachute regiment spent several chaotic days detaining and shooting people in Ballymurphy from 9 to 11 August. There were no TV crews or newspaper photographers to document what happened, unlike in Derry five months later when the same regiment massacred protesters and triggered worldwide condemnation. The inquest concluded that soldiers killed nine of the Ballymurphy dead. The coroner, Mrs Justice Keegan, could not establish who killed the 10th victim, John McKerr. "All of the deceased in the series of inquests were entirely innocent of wrongdoing on the day in question," her report said. Her blistering report rejected army claims that troops had opened fire only when they perceived they were under threat. No weapons were recovered from any of the dead, who included a parish priest, Hugh Mullan, and a mother of eight, Joan Connolly. Briega Voyle, one of Connolly's daughters, said Johnson's

apology was not enough. "Is he trying to sneak it in? I don't care about an apology, I want to know why. Our loved ones were all completely innocent, so why were they shot? His apology means nothing. We need him to go back to the MoD and tell them to tell the truth, tell our legal team the names of the soldiers who murdered our loved ones and ask them why." An apology in the House of Commons would have been more respectful, she said. "To do it this way is trying to push it under the carpet." David Cameron apologised in the Commons after the findings of the Bloody Sunday inquiry in 2010. That Johnson made his apology off-camera in a phone call may reflect the government's sensitivity to army veteran groups and their campaign to shield veterans from prosecution for alleged crimes during the Troubles. "The prime minister restated the government's intention to deliver a way forward in Northern Ireland that focuses on reconciliation, delivers for victims of the Troubles and ends the cycle of reinvestigations," the Downing Street statement said. "He stressed the importance of working hard to keep the gains made through the Belfast/Good Friday agreement and of all parties doing their utmost to help the victims' families find out what happened to their loved ones, so that future generations are not burdened by the past." Some families may welcome the statement, but they are expected to continue to pursue a civil action against the Ministry of Defence. Some also want the police to launch a criminal investigation. The shadow Northern Ireland secretary, Louise Haigh, welcomed the apology as vindication for families who campaigned amid "disgraceful slurs" against their loved ones. "If this apology is to be meaningful the PM must immediately confirm that amnesty will not feature in any upcoming legacy legislation," she said.



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APPENDIX - IV - A [See proviso to rule 8 (6)]
Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Properties

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to M/s Ashin Textile, Prop: Mr. Hafizur Rahman, Borrower & Sri Abdur Rouf Talukdar, S/o Lt. Wahid Ali & Mr. Harunar Rashid, S/o Md. Abdur Rouf Talukdar, Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical/Constructive/Symbolic (whichever is applicable) possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank (eAB), Barpeta Branch, Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 28.05.2021, for recovery of Rs. 15,73,794.00 (Rupees Fifteen Lacs Seventy Three Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety Four only) as on 09.02.2020 due to the Indian Bank, Barpeta Branch, Secured Creditor, from M/s Ashin Textile, Prop: Mr. Hafizur Rahman, S/o Md. Abdur Rouf Talukdar (Borrower) / Sri Abdur Rouf Talukdar (Guarantor) of Beki Road, Village - Nagarjar, Barpeta, Assam. The specific details of the property intended to be brought to sale through e-auction mode are enumerated below:

Detailed description of the Property	Plot of Md. Abdur Rouf Talukdar having Dag No. 157 and Patta No. 103 having area 2 Kathas and 9.5 Lechas.
Encumbrances on property	Md. Abdur Rouf Talukdar
Reserve Price	Rs. 28,73,500.00
EMD Amount	Rs. 2,87,350.00
Bid incremental amount	Rs. 5,000/-
Date and time of e-auction	28.05.2021, 11.00 am to 14.00 pm.
Property ID No.	IDIB50179591304D

Bidders are advised to visit the website (www.mstcecommerce.com) of our e-auction service provider MSTC Ltd to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call MSTC HELPDISK No. 033-22901004 and other help line numbers available in service providers help desk. For Registration status with MSTC Ltd, please contact ibapiop@mstcecommerce.com and for EMD status please contact ibapifin@mstcecommerce.com. For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and conditions please visit: <https://ibapi.in> and for clarifications related to this portal, please contact help line number "18001025026" and "011-41106131". Bidders are advised to use Property ID Number mentioned above while searching for the property in the website with <https://ibapi.in> and www.mstcecommerce.com.

Date: 13.05.2021
Place: Barpeta Authorised Officer

THE ASSAM RISING

VOL. NO. VI, ISSUE NO. 88 FRIDAY, MAY 14, 2021

The Covid wave has peaked

India's second COVID-19 wave seems to have flattened but the climb down will be a more prolonged, long drawn-out process than the first and will possibly run till July, eminent virologist Shahid Jameel said. Though the new variants of the virus may partly be responsible for the explosion in the number of cases, there is no indication the mutant versions are more lethal, added the director of the Trivedi School of Biosciences, Ashoka University, amid mounting worries about what is fuelling the second wave in India. Addressing an online event organised by the Indian Express, Jameel noted that it is a little too early to say if the Covid wave has peaked. "The curve may have flattened but the other side of the peak is not going to be an easy climb down. It's possibly going to be a more prolonged long-drawn-out process running possibly till July. That means, even if the curve starts to decline, we will continue to have to deal with a large number of infections every day," Jameel said. According to the scientist, COVID-19 cases in the second wave also won't come down in as steady a fashion as they did after the first wave. "In the first wave, we did see a steady decline. But remember... this time we are starting from a higher number. Instead of 96,000-97,000 cases, we are starting from over 400,000. So it will take that much longer. And during the process at every time point, you'll have a lot of cases," Jameel explained. In his view, the actual mortality data for India is completely wrong. "... not because of some evil design of someone or a group of people or the state or whatever. But the way we record data I think is faulty." Discussing why India faced a second wave, he said the constant narrative was that somehow Indians are special and have some special kind of immunity. "You know, we had BCG shots when we are children. We get a lot of malaria. So you get all sorts of arguments," he said. The BCG vaccine is primarily used against tuberculosis. The noted virologist also said people gave opportunity to the virus not to just spread but also to transmit quickly by not adhering to COVID-19 protocols. "... by the time we came to December and the cases kept going down, we did start believing in this narrative (of immunity). There were a lot of big weddings that we had in January and February. So super spreading events happened," he added. He cited other "super spreading events", including elections rallies and religious congregations, for the high number of cases in the second wave. Vaccine coverage is a matter of concern in his view. Enough people, he said, did not get vaccinated when they had the opportunity in January and February. "... around the third week of February when numbers started going up, we had very, very little vaccine coverage, possibly about 2 per cent of people," Jameel said, adding that some people believed in the messaging that vaccines were not safe. "Vaccines are safe and the side effects are very rare. There are more chances of someone dying from lightning than due to rare side effects of vaccines." Referring to the vaccine shortage in some states, he noted that all big countries that had vaccinated a considerable proportion of their population had booked their doses around June 2020. "India didn't do that. We did have a big vaccine enterprise but remember our biggest vaccine companies are private limited companies. You know, it's another story that going back a few years we closed down all our public vaccine enterprises. So we depend entirely on the private sector. "Private sector does not work on charity. The private sector needs to be given orders for them to be confident or, you know, building facilities to make vaccines. And that is where we took our eye off the ball," he said. However, the virologist said funds have now been allotted to Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech and the Serum Institute of India, Pune, and both are expanding facilities. But it will take around July by the time vaccine supplies normalise. Calculations done during the first wave suggested that herd immunity may set in when about 65 per cent of the population gets infected or vaccinated. It no longer holds true, Jameel said. Herd immunity is a form of indirect protection that can occur when a sufficient percentage of a population has become immune to an infection, whether through vaccination or previous infections. However, for COVID-19, it is not known when such immunity will set in. "Now you have a virus that is moving at least twice as fast as thought, if not more. So what you need is you know, at least possibly 75 per cent of the population to be infected or vaccinated before we can achieve what you call herd immunity. So it's a shifting goal post right now. "And that is why it is so important for us to go and get vaccinated as soon as vaccines are available," he added. The virologist also said India may possibly see many waves of COVID-19 pandemic depending upon the conditions at that time and the progress of the vaccination drive.

The idea that Labour lacks patriotism is nearly as old as the party itself



The Labour party's endless debates about "patriotism" have a Groundhog Day quality to them. From Blair to Brown, Miliband, Corbyn and now Starmer, it's hard to remember a time when the party wasn't earnestly interrogating itself about its supposedly antagonistic relationship to questions of British - latterly English - identity. This discourse has barely changed since Blair's third term, and has often exhibited the worst and most self-defeating qualities of a party in decline: inward-looking, exclusively focused on Labour and its alleged failings, and largely neglectful of the political context in which the party operates. To the wider public, Labour's endless discussions of patriotism suggest a fatal lack of confidence and self-belief, in sharp contrast to the Conservatives' unshakeable, breezy entitlement. Accusations that Labour lacks a sense of "patriotism" are nearly as old as the party itself. The revisionist history told by many commentators, that Labour was regarded as irreproachably "patriotic" by all and sundry until Jeremy Corbyn came along, is a laughable invention. In the 1930s and 1980s, Conservative governments succeeded in portraying the organised industrial working class - inflationary, uncouth and potentially seditious - as standing outside a "true" British nation characterised

by the "vigorous virtues" of bourgeois

James Stafford

contempt for our fellow citizens. To voters, the main attraction of this new Tory nationalism is that it makes voting for Britain's traditional governing party seem like an act of thrilling rebellion against the "woke orthodoxy" represented by under-40s living in big cities. In focus groups conducted in "red wall" seats, you often hear the accusation that Labour is a party "for students". The Labour leadership rightly reads this as an invitation to find out what it needs to do to convince former voters the party still represents them. But it's the intensity of the disdain for students, not the belief that Labour is for those students, that is new and concerning here. As things stand, Labour is going to have a hard time convincing anybody that it isn't "for" young people and those who are "woke" - at least to a greater degree than the Conservatives, which is what matters in electoral terms. It would be folly, then, to allow this kind of ginned-up resentment to set the parameters for how Labour tries to tell its own story about Britain. Unless the party can convincingly articulate why idealistic young people have a role to play in the nation's future (something that, in a more functional political culture, would not be

such a hard sell), then it will be permanently boxed into the defensive crouch it has occupied for much of the past decade. The only way to break free is for Labour and the people it represents (whoever they are) to establish their own idea of the country's future, and confidently invite others to join them. A good starting point would be to take a little more pride in Labour's good standing with young people. In many other European countries, established parties of the centre left would do almost anything to attract thumping majorities among the under-35s in support of their programmes. It is not something to take for granted; nor is it surprising that in an ageing society where young people are forced to seek work in a small number of large cities, the votes of these cohorts count for less than they once did. But Labour shouldn't accept a zero-sum choice between keeping the coalition it has and growing the coalition it needs. The party leadership doesn't need to praise or condemn every action by social movements advancing racial and climate justice. Nor should these movements set much store by what the leader of the opposition does or doesn't say about them. What Labour politicians can do, however, is vigorously reject the notion that there is something inherently unpatriotic about challenge and dissent; and proudly weave popular movements, past and present, back into a more generous, less brittle account of what it means to live in 21st-century Britain. Unlike the cynical politicians and journalists who fall over themselves to sneer at movements such as Black Lives Matter and the climate strikers, these movements actually believe (at least on some level) that Britain is capable of addressing both the nation's past atrocities and present injustices. This isn't patriotism by the lights of the opinion pages or the focus groups. But it exhibits a greater faith in the actual moral and intellectual capacities of British citizens than the boosterish rhetoric Johnson and his acolytes spout whenever the cameras are rolling.

How John Lewis's brand of middle-class aspiration lost its lustre

Boris Johnson and his fiancée, Carrie Symonds, have spent an estimated £200,000 from who knows where renovating their official flat in order to avoid the shame of being upper-class people with middle-class furnishings. It's not surprising that their - and according to Tatler magazine their visitors' - distaste for Theresa May's "John Lewis furniture nightmare" seems to have attracted just as much attention as the questions over how Johnson might have paid for it. John Lewis, like all class signifiers in Britain's neurotic social minefield, means more than just a name: it means respectability and, by extension, middle-class acceptance. Although it's been around for ever - it first opened in 1864 - in the last 20 years the brand has taken on ever greater social cachet. Its recentish growth mirrored New Labour's aggressively middle-class aspirations, and the idea that the way to "rescue" declining high streets was ef-

fectively to price working-class people out of using them. For towns and cities that lacked a branch, getting a John Lewis felt like more than a vital shot at economic regeneration: it was a way of saying that the place mattered. Its recent history points to its status as a boom-time store, associated with the expanding homeownership and booming equity of the 2000s. Between 2008 and 2020, the company opened more **Lynsey Hanley** wider collapse of department stores after the 2008 financial crash. But only for so long. The John Lewis Partnership, which only a few years ago seemed to be on a ceaseless upward trajectory, reported losses of £517m for 2020 and has announced the closure of 16 stores - about a third of its total estate - since July 2020. In 2015, a new shopping centre, Grand Central, was opened at Birmingham's refurbished New Street station, with a huge John Lewis costing £35m as its "anchor" store. Whether Birmingham

needed another department store is another matter: it was literally across the road from a vast Debenhams - like BHS, soon to disappear from our high streets - and the gimmicky, New Labour-era Selfridges building. Last summer, when it was announced that the store would close permanently after the first lockdown, the West Midlands Tory metro mayor, Andy Street - whose previous job was actually running John Lewis as its MD - declared that to close one of the chain's largest stores was "a dreadful mistake" and that John Lewis needed to maintain a presence in the big regional cities. That the second largest city in the UK couldn't sustain its own branch of John Lewis seems significant in itself, until you consider Birmingham's demographics: almost half of the city's population is under 30, with an overall unemployment rate of 9.8% and - as the Observer reported late last year, more workers on furlough than any other local authority in the UK.

An electoral stamp of approval for the Tories risks dishonesty becoming the new normal

What kind of country has this become? We will know more when Thursday's election results roll in by the weekend. Polls are narrowing but the Tories average 42% against Labour's 35%. That's extraordinary, when a party 11 years in power should expect heavy losses in midterm votes. But these are exceptional times: after 14 months of draconian restrictions the UK emerges blinking into the light, vaccinated and liberated, bouncing with anticipated bingeing and boozing. Many households who've saved money through lockdown are awash with surplus cash and homeowners revel in Rishi Sunak's deliberately created house-price boom. Even those who lost relatives and livelihoods celebrate freedom: if not, then success on Thursday tells the government it can safely ig-

nore them as a discontented minority. Politicians soliciting votes, like fixed-grin salesmen, are obliged to pretend the voter is always right. Out canvassing, they may listen politely to whatever atrocious views or insults get hurled at them, resisting the impulse to shake sense into unreasonable people. When politicians lose elections, they must blame themselves - but never the voter. Failure sends them into mea culpas of "listening" to seek out the fault within their party. But the rest of us are under no such constraint to pretend the voter can't be wrong or irresponsible, gullible or pork-barrel bribed, without checking basic facts available at the click of a mouse. Try Full Fact or the BBC's Reality Check for clear and simple explanations. Worse, many don't bother to vote at all, proclaiming:

"They're all the same." No, they never are, and the man in No 10 is a Trump-favoured knave. Citizens have a duty to vote: I'd make it compulsory, as non-voters forfeit any right to complain. Everyone has been shown recent revelations of alleged dishonesty, greed, and arrogance, far beyond anything witnessed in their lifetimes. The full **Polly Toynbee** lity would over-

flow this column with allegations of contracts for cronies, Greensill lobbying, ministerial codes flouted, gold wallpaper, Mustique holidays and claims that nannies were paid for by donors, not to mention country-wrecking Brexit lies. A prime minister beyond anyone's control elbows out civil servants who demur in order to terrorise the rest. His government meddles with public bodies for political ends. His ministers in TV stu-

dios defend the indefensible. Mounting investigations may be shrugged off. Scandals splashed across even devoutly Tory newspapers mean any slightly interested citizen must have noticed. Despite a corrupted voted system, the power of X on a ballot paper can throw the scoundrels out or, this week, inflict a humiliating condemnation of the **Johnsonocracy**. He will seize on anything less as endorsing his behaviour. If voters don't care, none of it matters: nothing to see here in this "farrago of nonsense", as he says. An electoral stamp of approval risks dishonesty becoming the new normal. That's why far more rides on these local elections in England than usual: most of the time, people should vote on the quality of their councils. But they look unlikely to turn out in multitudes to denounce their deplorable leaders. The "authentic" showman elected in 2019 has got Brexit done and he's vaccinating everyone. That's not good enough. Citizens have a duty to keep their government straight. Myriad quotes make the point, but here's Einstein: "The world is in greater peril from those who tolerate or encourage evil than from those who actually commit it." If "evil" is too epic for tawdry selfishness, self-obsession and greed, remember Johnson has let the bodies pile higher in the UK than anywhere in Europe and casually imperilled peace in Northern Ireland. Voters have no excuse, with Keir Starmer and his frontbench a thoroughly electable, decent and honest alternative compared with the rogues' gallery opposite. As Johnson arms himself with a hyped-up culture war of English nationalism and Brexit

tribalism, he thrives on a more dangerously divided country. Deciphering local election results will be complex: despite a 1% lead over Tories in "red wall" seats, YouGov predicts Labour losing many of those wards and councils, and there's no clear winner in sight in Hartlepool. Before Labour - a party that Rob Ford, professor at Manchester University, calls "as precariously put together as Tito's Yugoslav republics" - breaks into its usual strife, it should consider this. Be patient. Soon, voters will see the chancellor's brutal budget cuts causing crises in the NHS, schools, policing and jobs. Meanwhile, later this month, watch Dominic Cummings, in a "suicide vest" of explosive tapes and texts, deliver potentially career-limiting blows to his old employer. If not quite yet, not this Thursday, the Johnson timebomb is ticking.

Economic activity down in April, May but shock less severe than 2020: Fitch



Mumbai, May 13 : Fitch Ratings on Monday said the shock to economic activity from the latest wave of COVID-19 pandemic will be less severe than the one in 2020, but recovery is likely to be delayed as economic activity dropped in April-May. Fitch ratings, Indian economy, COVID-19 pandemic, drop in economic activity, RBI support to financial sector. Fitch said there are growing indications that the latest wave of COVID-19 infections will add to risks among financial institutions. Fitch Ratings on Monday warned that India's slow pace of vaccination could mean that the country remains vulnerable to further waves of the pandemic even once the current surge subsides. Just 9.4 per cent of the population had received at least one vaccine dose as of May 5, according to figures from Our World in Data, the agency said. MSP, wheat procurement, rabi crop, crop harvesting season, farm laws, MSP system. End of MSP? Far from it, rabi wheat purchases at brisk pace. XLR I professor and noted labour market expert KR Shyam Sundar said since around 21 states have resorted to restrictions, including stricter curfews, it was but natural that the urban unemployment rate breached the double-digit level. Covid effect: Weakened economy can't produce jobs, unemployment rate at 19-week high. India's slow pace of vaccination means that the country could remain vulnerable to further waves of the pandemic even once the current surge subsides, Fitch added. The Centre has already provided more than 17.56 crore vaccine doses to states/UTs free of cost. The cumulative number of COVID-19 vaccine doses admin-

istered in the country exceeded 16.94 crore on May 9. The global rating agency said there are growing indications that the latest wave of coronavirus infections will add to risks among financial institutions (FIs). It also anticipates that the RBI may introduce additional measures to support the financial sector if indications of economic stress mount. "We expect the shock to economic activity from the latest wave of the pandemic in India to be less severe than in 2020, even though caseloads and fatalities are much higher." Nonetheless, indicators show activity dropped in April-May, which is likely to delay the country's recovery, and the number of newly recorded cases remains extremely high," Fitch Ratings said in a report. It said that currently, authorities are implementing lockdowns more narrowly, and companies and individuals have adjusted behaviour in ways that cushion the effects. "There is a risk that disruption could persist longer and spread further than our baseline case assumes, particularly if lockdowns are introduced in more regions, or nationwide," it added. India is facing the world's worst outbreak of COVID-19 cases with more than 3 lakh new daily COVID-19 cases being reported for two weeks now and the new cases reached more than 4 lakh new daily cases over the weekend. More than 2.46 lakh people in India have died from the coronavirus infection. Public health system is buckling under the weight of surging infections and deaths with several parts of the country reporting shortage of hospital beds, medical oxygen, medicines and vaccines. Last month, Fitch had said the surge in COVID-19 cases could add to headwinds facing India's banks and non-bank financial institutions (NBFIs) if it led to a resurgence in asset-quality pressures. The latest data suggest that this risk is mounting, the agency said. "There are growing indications that India's latest wave of COVID-19 infections will add to risks among financial institutions (FIs) by sapping near-term momentum from the economic recovery," it said.

Indian Navy warships carry back Oxygen from Gulf countries; Japan funds O2 plants for North East

Mumbai, May 13: On May 10, 2021, three Indian Navy warships arrived with consignment of Oxygen and medical supplies from overseas -- INS Kolkata at New Mangalore, INS Trikand entered Mumbai and INS Airavat reached Visakhapatnam. INS Kolkata at New Mangalore, INS Trikand entered Mumbai and INS Airavat reached Visakhapatnam. These ships are part of the nine ships, according to the Indian Navy, have been deployed for shipment of Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) and other medical relief material from countries in the Persian Gulf and South East Asia. Pakistan, FATF, anti-corruption, Paris-based Financial Action Task Force, money laundering, terror financing. Pakistan govt to set new rules to meet FATF demands. IAF, CASMC, Embassy of South Korea, Republic of Korea, rapid antigen test kits, Oxygen concentrators, cryogenic oxygen tanks. India gets more Oxygen from overseas as Operation Samudra Setu II hits top gear! IAF sets up its COVID air. Deeply value the gift of 40 MT of LMO from our friend Kuwait. A special thanks for the generous donation to the Indian community in Kuwait for 200 O2 cylinders and 4 O2 concentrators, and to the community in Qatar for 200 O2 cylinders and 43 O2 concentrators. pic.twitter.com/Yulhke5FTGAs had been reported earlier in Financial Express Online, the ambassador of Kuwait to India Jassem Al-Najem, had in an inter-

action mentioned that on Monday, May 10, 2021, INS Kolkata will carry LMO from Kuwait. INS Kolkata reached New Mangalore Port with 400 bottles of LMO and 27 MT containers of LMO and 47 concentrators that were embarked at Qatar and Kuwait. The three ships that arrived on Monday, will augment oxygen supply in three different states. Also, two more ships are on their way to India from Kuwait, and

Mumbai. The consignment on board is part of the French mission "Oxygen Solidarity Bridge" which is in support of India's fight against the pandemic. From Singapore, this warship reached Visakhapatnam with a load of eight cryogenic oxygen tanks and around 4000 oxygen cylinders together with other critical medical equipment/supplies. Indian Army's Northern Command readies to fight the pan-

areas. The Army units have started massive awareness drives and providing transportation support which will help in the movement of the medical supplies and also provide assistance to the UT administration or civil organisations. The Army along with the government have jointly activated COVID facilities for the people of J&K and these include 250 bedded COVID Care centre at Rangreth in Srinagar. Another 200 bedded facility at Damana near Jammu and 20 bedded facilities each at Uri and Baramulla have been set up. Japan and UNDP join hands to help India to boost supply of oxygen generation plants to the North Eastern Region. Japan has joined hands with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). To ensure uninterrupted supply, with the support of the people of Japan, the UNDP has procured and installed eight Pressure Swing Absorption (PSA) oxygen generation plants in the States of Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Tripura. Some hospitals have been identified in the region for these oxygen plants and they have a capacity of 1,300 beds in total. Once the production starts, the excess oxygen will be distributed among other health facilities in the hospitals' vicinity. "North East occupies a special place for Japan India relations", says Satoshi Suzuki, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to India, in an official statement. According to Ms Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP India, "The situation in India is devastating and the pandemic continues to threaten millions of lives." In an effort to ensure that no one is left behind, UNDP is seeking urgent additional support. As reported earlier, Japan has already delivered medical aid to India and more is expected to arrive in the form of ventilators and oxygen concentrators.



one ship is presently in Brunei and medical supplies are being loaded up. Last week on Wednesday, the INS Kolkata set off from Shuwaikh port carrying around 40 metric tons of liquid oxygen and 200 oxygen cylinders. According to Ambassador Al-Najem, "Two more ships with 175 tons of LMO and around 2,400 oxygen cylinders are on their way to India." The Cabinet of Kuwait had decided recently to send emergency aid to India to help it fight the spread of the global pandemic of COVID-19. A military aircraft of Kuwait Air Force had delivered 40 tons of emergency aid from Kuwait Red Crescent Society last week. The medical aid carried included around 282 oxygen cylinders, ventilators, medicines, 60 oxygen concentrators, and other medical supplies. Has carried back 40 MT LMO in Cryogenic containers from Hamad Port, Qatar to

demic in UTs of J&K & Ladakh. The Northern Command has geared up to help the serving personnel, ex-servicemen, Veer Naris, and their dependents. In a pre-emptive move, the Northern Command has joined hands with the Civil Administration and has started ramping up its holding capacity of COVID patients. It has ensured that there are enough ICU beds, oxygen availability, setting up four COVID Care Centre with around 490 bed capacity for the Awaam. It has also started vaccination of serving and retired personnel and Veer Naris. According to an official statement from the Indian Army, the Northern Command is ensuring the twin objectives of "Force Preservation" and "Optimised Utilisation of Medical Resources". This is going to be for the benefit of all the serving, retired and their dependants and also the Awaam located in far flung

Your Vehicle in COVID-19 Lockdown: How to save on insurance premium

Mumbai, May 13 : With people hardly taking their vehicles on road, it does not make sense in buying a comprehensive motor insurance policy. During the lockdown period, when you are hardly driving your vehicle and only using it for emergency purposes, it is better to get Third party + Fire + Theft insurance in place of a comprehensive policy. We are more than a year into the COVID-19 pandemic, and, the result is that our lives are changing drastically. Most of us have been hardly using our vehicles as commute to work remains cancelled due to the lockdown and also trips and journeys to see family and friends remain suspended. The situation is expected to continue for a few more months as work-from-home orders continue to be in place at least until 70% of the population is vaccinated. In fact, many studies conclude that until remote work adoption and shift to online shopping remain in action, the traffic volumes probably will not be going to increase. With people hardly taking their vehicles on road, it does not make sense in buying a comprehensive motor insurance policy. coronavirus home treatments, tests, home care, cost of oximeter, oxygen cylinder, medicines. Is the cost of oximeter, oxygen cylinder covered in home care treatment of Corona Kavach policyholders? Find out. 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. Health Insurance: Do you have health cover for Covid treatment? A combination of Third-party Cover and Own-damage Cover - a comprehensive motor insurance policy protects you against damages to your own vehicle and third party in case of an accident. Buying a comprehensive motor insurance policy only makes sense when you are taking your vehicle on road



every day and driving for a considerable number of kilometres. Insurance is one of the big costs in keeping a car on the road, with the average price of a fully comprehensive motor insurance policy for a 1200CC sedan car ranging between Rs 15,000 and Rs 18,000. However, if you are not driving your vehicle so frequently due to the ongoing lock-down and work-from-home orders, it is better to only buy coverage that is required. Considering the prevailing conditions, several insurers have come up with a special insurance

government rules, only third-party insurance is mandatory for driving the vehicle on Indian roads. If while driving the vehicle, you meet with an accident and cause damages to the third party, your insurer will bear the expenses on your behalf and pay to the third party. Also, in case your vehicle gets stolen while it is parked on road outside your home or any other place you might feel is safe, the insurer will pay you the entire IDV - Insured Declared Value mentioned on your insurance policy document. While renewing your motor insurance vehicle, it is always advised to make sure that you select the maximum IDV possible. This is because in case of incidents like total damage and theft, in case the authorities fail to retrieve your vehicle, the insurer will pay you the IDV mentioned on your policy. In order to get the maximum returns from your damaged vehicle, always select maximum IDV. The third incident for which the plan provides you adequate protection is fire. With day temperature crossing 40 degrees in most parts of northern India, incidents of vehicles catching fire are quite common. Most vehicles that

catch fire usually get completely damaged and cannot be used again. The insurer places such vehicles under the total damage category in which the vehicle owner gets the complete IDV of the vehicle. Fire and Theft are the two most common incidences that cause maximum damages to the vehicle and it is always important to provide adequate coverage to your vehicle against both of them. Third-party cover is also important, as it is mandatory by the government for driving the vehicle on road. During the lockdown period, when you are hardly driving your vehicle and only using it for emergency purposes, it is better to get Third party + Fire + Theft insurance in place of a comprehensive policy and save considerably on the premium. In the last one month - with lockdown rules again coming into force - there has been 2x increase in the sales of Third party + Fire + Theft insurance plans. Currently, these plans are available with a prominent insurer like Future Generali, United India Insurance and Digit. For a 1200CC sedan, the plan costs approximately Rs 4,500 - Rs 5,500.

By building competency amongst the poverty-stricken populations can eradicate the longest standing issue of our nation



As we all know, the United Nations has launched a blueprint of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and the objective is to create a more prosperous, capable, competent, egalitarian and protected world by the year 2030, and India actively participates to achieve the same. These goals are issues India has been grappling with for a long time, such as poverty, hunger, education, sanitation, health, climate, protection of other animals, water and plants, economic growth, industrial development and others. With regards to the first goal i.e. zero poverty, there are people in our country in millions who are deprived of clothes to wear and bread to eat. If it is indeed our intent to achieve this goal, creating opportunities to become self-sustainable over temporary philanthropy would empower them instead of their helpless reliance on others for subsistence. This will be the biggest help for them in the true sense.

Atul Malikram says that under India's goal of 2030, not only the government, but also is a moral obligation of responsible citizenship to contribute to end poverty in our country and that should be highlighted in every individual's life from today itself. We have to understand that the poor already bear the burden of struggling against their social and economic subjugation in our society, and need policies in place for a more efficient medical and education systems instead of mere subsidies that in turn prove to be counterproductive since it reinforces their dependence on others. The first step to boost their morale, uproot their sense of helplessness, and help them tap their potential is to provide them with safety of having the right infrastructure and basic needs fulfilled. The time is now for strict laws and policies that priorities adherence to the first sustainable development goal and to implement these seriously. The benefit of every such scheme introduced in the country should be given to the poor first, so that their confidence in themselves and this country can be increased. Maleficent individuals who stop or take advantage of these schemes should be punished severely. By adopting these measures, India will be able to become a poverty-free country by the year 2030.

China's population grows marginally to 1.412 billion, may begin to decline by 2022: Census

Mumbai, May 13: According to the seventh national population census released by the Chinese government on Tuesday, China's population in all the 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities reached 1.41178 billion. Chinese population, chinese population growth, China annual census, second-largest economy., 0.53 per cent growth in Chinese population, National Bureau of Statistics. China's population in all the 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities reached 1.41178 billion. China's population grew by 0.53 per cent to reach 1.41178 billion, up from 1.4 billion in 2019, keeping its status as the world's most populous country but the numbers are expected to decline from early next year, leading to labour shortages and a fall in consumption levels in the second-largest economy.



According to the seventh national population census released by the Chinese government on Tuesday, China's population in all the 31 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities reached 1.41178 billion. The figures do

not include Hong Kong and Macao. China denounces US appeal for Taiwan to join WHO meeting. New era of genetic weapons: Reports say China probed weaponising coronaviruses in 2015. New era of genetic weapons: Reports say China probed weaponising coronaviruses in 2015. Significantly, according to the data released by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the new census figures reveal that the demographic crisis China faced was expected to deepen as the population above 60 years grew to 264 million, up by 18.7 per cent last year. "The further ageing of the population imposed continued pressure on the long-term balanced development of the population in the coming period," the NBS statement said.

Pep Guardiola has mixed possession and pressing to start new Manchester City era

Manchester, May 13 : Pep Guardiola celebrates Manchester City's win in Dortmund as his team's run of quarter-final defeats came to an end. The Premier League title was confirmed for Manchester City on Tuesday, having never been

challenge the orthodoxy he had established at Barcelona: was it possible it had entirely supplanted it? There was evidence Guardiola had begun to make changes. Was he, too, having doubts? In part it was a question of circumstance: the truncated



in doubt since March. A run of 15 straight victories from mid-December. A team that, in rhythm, is mesmerisingly good. A squad able to withstand the rigours of a season even more relentless than usual. It would be easy from the perspective of late spring, as the tides of Covid recede - in the UK at least - to think City's triumph was just another super-club victory. But what makes it significant is how different everything looked three months into the season. It would be absurd to suggest their resources haven't helped, but this was a title that was far from inevitable. When City drew at home against West Brom on 15 December, they lay sixth in the table having won five of their first 12 games. The recruitment strategy was questioned: why had they not brought in a centre-forward? Had Leroy Sané been properly replaced? And what was it that meant Pep Guardiola kept wasting money on central defenders who then proved unable to adapt to his system? It seemed reasonable then to wonder whether this might be Guardiola's worst team and, more seriously, to ask whether the game's tactical evolution had moved permanently beyond his possession-driven juego de posición. The German pressing school, through Jürgen Klopp and Hansi Flick, had risen to

pre-season and the compressed nature of the calendar meant the hard-pressing teams were under great physical strain and also had little time between games to hone their approach for the next opponent. But Guardiola also seemed to be reconsidering his method, influenced perhaps by his new assistant, Juanma Lillo, the guru he had once moved to Mexico to play for. How Guardiola transformed Manchester City back into Premier League champions - video explainer. Last season, City were repeatedly caught out by balls played in behind them. The defeat at Stamford Bridge last June that secured Liverpool the title was part of a wider pattern: City dominated, held possession, looked almost impossible to resist, but failed to score and then got picked off on the counter. It had happened again and again to Guardiola sides in the later stages of the Champions League over the previous decade, which presumably led to the bizarre selection against Lyon in the quarter-final last season, Guardiola creating the conditions for his downfall by his attempts to avert it. In those early weeks of the season City often played with two deep-lying midfielders screening the back four. The problem with that approach was exposed in their second game, as they lost 5-2 at home to Leicester. Rodri

and Fernandinho were selected in what was effectively a 4-2-3-1 but, far from adding protection the additional defensive midfielder made them more vulnerable because when the press was sprung high up the field, Kevin De Bruyne was often left isolated. Nampalys Mendy and Yuri Tielemans merrily passed their way around him and were then able to feed Jamie Vardy and Harvey Barnes before the second wave of the press got to them. Raheem Sterling battles for possession with Nampalys Mendy, Yuri Tielemans and Daniel Amartey during City's home defeat by Leicester in September. But gradually Guardiola corrected the balance, found a way of easing back on the press so it remained effective while not being quite so vulnerable to those balls played in behind the defensive line. It is a sign of City's control that no side has attempted fewer "pressures" than them this season. Only Liverpool have attempted a higher proportion in the attacking third but they have attempted 17% more. That doesn't necessarily mean Liverpool will be 17% more tired, but it doesn't help. It was at Stamford Bridge in early January the difference from last season was highlighted. City won 3-1 but they were vastly superior to Chelsea. There have been some moments of concern since: the penalty Liverpool were awarded at Anfield stemmed from a simple ball over the top, before the visitors went on to win comfortably; Ole Gunnar Solskjær managed yet another win over City, by sitting deep and countering; Timo Werner exposed them in the FA Cup semi-final. But the real triumph of his reinvention came against Paris Saint-Germain, especially in the first leg last month. When the mechanisms have malfunctioned, Guardiola sides have had a tendency to go completely awry, one goal bringing two or three. Down 1-0 and under pressure in the Champions League semi-final, though, City had the control to slow the game to a more manageable tempo and then, in the second half, smother their opponents, generating the pressure that forced mistakes. In the second leg they did something that would previously have seemed utterly unnatural, absorbing pressure and attacking on the break. Rúben Dias may turn out to have been as transformative for City as Virgil van Dijk was for Liverpool:

at last a centre-back capable of playing in a Guardiola system who is also an exceptional orthodox defender. Guardiola has gone from being a coach who once observed in bewilderment that he didn't train tackles to one whose side celebrated Oleksandr Zinchenko making a block on Neymar. Kylian Mbappé is hustled off the ball by John Stones and Oleksandr Zinchenko. City restricted PSG to one set-piece goal in their two-leg tie. That represents a major development. City with the ball have always been terrifying, but the sense was that they were fragile if you could get through the press. If they have now worked out a way of combining possession with defensive resolve, they may have restored Guardiola's form of football to pre-eminence - although that will only become clear in a more normal season, when sides who follow the German model are less disadvantaged. Even if the superiority is temporary, the way Guardiola has adapted to circumstances demonstrates his qualities as a coach, his ability to improvise and change plan. It does make a difference that City's resources have provided him with a deeper squad than almost all of his rivals, but he has nonetheless deployed them expertly. The complaint that he has only achieved success with the biggest clubs slightly misses the point. Yes, his method would require significant tweaking were he suddenly to be thrust into the job at Grimsby or Southend, but he is the manager of Manchester City. Different levels of club require different skills. Necessity, perhaps, has proved a valuable guide and added a streak of pragmatism. It is probably no coincidence that the two sides who will contest the Champions League final are the two who have added a defensive element to the high press of modern football, while foregrounding the collective over celebrity. The question is what happens next. Guardiola's Barcelona made football about retaining the ball, then the German school made it more about regaining it. This season City - and to a lesser extent Chelsea - have found an effective synthesis of the two approaches, holding possession while protecting the space behind the defensive line and, at times, dropping deeper and getting players behind the ball.

Tom Brady's New England return set for Week 4 as NFL schedule released

London, May 13 : The NFL is returning to London in October and Tom Brady begins his pursuit of an eighth Super Bowl title against Dak Prescott and the Dallas Cowboys when Tampa Bay hosts the league's annual kickoff game on 9 September. The first game in London since the coronavirus pandemic will be played on 10 October as the Atlanta Falcons face the New York Jets. A week later, the Jacksonville Jaguars meet the Miami Dolphins. Both games will be played at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. The Falcons and the Jaguars will be the home teams. The confirmation of NFL's international fixtures means the top two picks in this year's draft will be making visits to London during their rookie seasons: the Jaguars' Trevor Lawrence, arguably the most talented college quarterback of his generation; and Jets signal-caller Zach

and will adhere to any and all future Covid regulations and restrictions. London has hosted 28 NFL games since 2007, with the city becoming a second home to the Jaguars, who will be playing their eighth game in the capital, while the Dolphins return for a fifth time. Reigning AFC champion Kansas City hosts the Cleveland Browns in a playoff rematch in Week 1. The Chiefs eliminated the Browns in the divisional round last season despite losing Patrick Mahomes to a concussion. "Every year stands on its own merit. For us, the focus is on the 2021 season," Browns coach Kevin Stefanski said. "Now, I realize that last game last year ended in Kansas City, so that certainly is something we have to learn from. It will truly be a matchup that is unique to 2021. The game won't start in the fifth quarter



Wilson, the No 2 overall pick. The NFL's first 17-game season opens on the same field where the Buccaneers defeated the Chiefs to become the first team to win a Super Bowl at home. It'll be Prescott's first game since sustaining a gruesome ankle injury last October. Brady returns to New England to face Bill Belichick and the Patriots in a Sunday night game on 3 October. Other highlights from opening weekend include Matthew Stafford playing his first game for the Los Angeles Rams on Sunday night against the Chicago Bears with SoFi Stadium welcoming fans for the first time. Most teams are expected to be at full capacity following a season played behind limited crowds because of Covid-19. "We are excited our fans get to experience a couple of home prime-time games and our players certainly feed off the fans' energy," Titans coach Mike Vrabel said. "We will be opening at home for the first time since I became head coach and I am happy our fans will be there to kick off the season with us." The coronavirus pandemic meant last year was the first since 2007 that there was no NFL game in London, but the league has worked with the UK government to enable a return this year, subject to the situation continuing to improve. "We are excited to be returning to London and welcoming back our fans for two great matchups," said the NFL's executive vice-president Christopher Halpin. "We expect these games to be a celebration of our sport and our robust UK fan base." "We have been working closely with the UK government, the city of London and the relevant health organizations over the past year in planning the games. Through their successful vaccine rollout and commitment to bringing crowds back to sports events, the time is right for the return of NFL football this fall." "We will continue to monitor the Covid environment, putting health and safety first,

from last year's game." Two other matchups feature playoff teams facing off in their first game. The Pittsburgh Steelers, who lost to Cleveland in the wild-card round, visit the Buffalo Bills, who reached the AFC title game. Carson Wentz and the Indianapolis Colts host Russell Wilson and the Seattle Seahawks. In Philadelphia, Wentz was 0-4 against Wilson. The Las Vegas Raiders host the Baltimore Ravens in the first Monday night game. The Green Bay Packers open the season with or without Aaron Rodgers at New Orleans minus the retired Drew Brees. Jaguars fans have to wait until the second game to see Clemson product Lawrence in person: Jacksonville open at Houston and hosts Denver in Week 2. Detroit, Dallas and New Orleans host games on Thanksgiving Day. The Lions face the Bears in the first game. The Cowboys play the Raiders in the second one. The Bills visit the Saints in the prime-time matchup. Four teams play on Christmas. Baker Mayfield and the Browns go to Green Bay and the Colts visit Kyle Murray and the Arizona Cardinals. The Bills visit the Chiefs in a rematch of the AFC championship game on Sunday night 10 October. A potential Rodgers-Mahomes showdown is set for Week 9 in Kansas City. Ten teams are scheduled for a league-high five prime-time games: Ravens, Cowboys, Packers, Rams, Steelers, Seahawks, Chiefs, Saints, 49ers and Buccaneers. The 17th game, which was added in the new CBA last year, features teams from opposing conferences that finished in the same place within their respective divisions at the end of the previous season. AFC teams have the extra home game this year. "One of the tremendous benefits of each team playing 17 regular-season games is the ability for us to bring more games to more fans," NFL commissioner Roger Goodell said.

Vijender Singh's unbeaten run in professional boxing ends, lose to Artysh Lopsan in Goa

New Delhi, May 13 : Indian professional boxer Vijender Singh on Friday (March 19) was handed his first defeat in professional boxing by Russian Artysh Lopsan. Vijender lost via technical knockout (TKO) in the fifth round of an eight-round bout on the rooftop of the Majestic Pride Casino Ship in Goa. With this loss, Vijender's unbeaten-run in professional boxing came to an end. Before this match, the Olympic bronze medal winner pugilist enjoyed a 12-game winning streak in the professional boxing career since starting his career in

2015. An eight-round duel, nicknamed 'Battle on Ship', turned out to be a one-sided affair. Vijender, the



35-year-old poster boy of Indian boxing, looked visibly tired after the third round. And in the fourth round, the

Lopsan with a combination of left and right punches thrice sent the Indian on the mat. The knockout punch was landed by Lopsan in round 5 as the referee deemed Vijender unfit to continue and handed the bout to Lopsan. A day before the fight Vijender had said: "I'm excited to return to the ring and the weigh-in gives me confidence that I'm on the right path. I never think about my opponent and don't really care who I'm fighting. I'll surely go for the knockout and if not that, I'll make sure my every punch counts." Notably, this was Vijender's first professional bout in more than

15 months, partly due to the Covid pandemic as all sporting activities had stopped. In his 12th bout held in Dubai in November 2019, the Haryana boxer had defeated Ghana's Charles Adamu. Vijender looked bit rusty from the first round. With his better reach, 26-year-old Lopsan took advantage of his height and kept his rival at bay. Competing for the first time outside Europe, that too in the warm and humid conditions in Goa, the Lopsan didn't show any sign of fatigue. He kept the pressure on despite receiving some hard punches on the body.

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