

# The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Press secretary to Assam CM

**Guwahati, May 21 :** Senior journalist Dhruba Mahanta has been appointed as principal press secretary to Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Mahanta is a consulting editor of the Assamese news channel News Live. Mahanta will serve as the principal press secretary to the chief minister pending the finalization of the terms and conditions of his service, said a notification issued by CMO on Friday. Journalist Naba Patgiri has been made officer on special duty (communication, public relations and protocol).

### Ranjeet Kumar Dass took oath

**Guwahati, May 21 :** Assam state BJP president and cabinet minister Ranjeet Kumar Dass took oath as MLA on Friday. Dass, MLA from Patacharkuchi took oath in the first session of new assembly. The oath was administered by pro-tem speaker Phani Bhushan Choudhury. "On this auspicious occasion, I express my heartfelt gratitude and respect to the people of Patacharkuchi and the people of Assam," Dass said in a Facebook post.

### Commissioner of Guwahati Municipal Corporation

**Guwahati, May 21 :** Devasish Sharma has been appointed as the Commissioner of Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC). Sharma an Assam Civil Service (ACS) officer was posted in Mumbai as Joint Commissioner, Assam Bhavan. Sharma will keep the charge additionally along with the new role as the GMC Commissioner. He was earlier serving as the Additional Commissioner to the Government of Assam, General Administrative Department. Meanwhile, the current GMC commissioner, Devajyoti Hazarika is transferred and will report to the Personnel Department. Bhupesh Ch. Das, ACS, District Development Commissioner, Cachar is transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner, Sonitpur.

## Assam Govt. releases SOP to tackle Black Fungus infection



**Guwahati, May 21 :** Days after a COVID-19 recovered patient died of mucormycosis or black fungus at a hospital here, the Assam Health and Family Welfare Department on Friday released a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to contain the possible spread of the disease. The Union Health Ministry has already appealed to all the states and Union Territories to declare black fungus as a notifiable disease under the Epidemic Disease Act, 1897. The order

issued by the principal secretary to the Assam governments Health Department said, a large number of similar cases have been reported from other parts of the country, and there is a likelihood of an increase in the number of such cases in the future. "In order to screen, diagnose and manage such cases of black fungus in COVID patients, the Standard Operating Procedure is notified with immediate effect," it said. The SOP contains

details about symptoms, management of COVID-19 patients with black fungus infection and advisory for the general public, and treatment protocols. Elaborating on black fungus infection, it said, mucormycosis is a rare serious fungal infection caused by fungus *Mucor*. People can be infected with black fungus by coming in contact with its spores in the environment. It can also develop in the skin after the fungus enters the skin through a cut, abrasion, burn, or other types of skin trauma, the advisory said. People who have uncontrolled diabetes mellitus, and immune-suppressed patients, those

in ICU for a prolonged period, people with HIV or malnutrition, and those on steroids for medical cause need to be careful if they develop nasal blockage, facial or cheekbone pain, blackish and foul-smelling nasal discharge, congestion or redness and swelling of eyes and nose, and difficulty in vision. The other symptoms are headache and fever, seizures, altered mental state, cough, and blood-stained sputum, shortness of breath with worsening respiratory problem, toothache, loosening of teeth, and blackish discoloration in the skin **Contd...Page 6**

## 13 Naxals killed in encounter with security forces in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli Mumbai



**Mumbai, May 21 :** The encounter between Maharashtra Police and Naxal's broke out around 5:30 am on Friday at Paydi-

Kotmi forest in Etapalli where the Naxals had gathered for a meeting. Sandip Patil, Inspector General of Police **Contd...Page 6**

## Akhil Gogoi allegedly 'Manhandled' at the Assembly by government personnel



**Guwahati:** Jailed RTI activist Akhil Gogoi, who was elected from Assam's Sibsagar seat in the recently held state polls, was allegedly manhandled at the Assembly by government personnel before he was sworn in as an MLA today. "I have been harassed by Covid workers who pushed me around in violation of protocols. They cannot do this to an MLA. But one thing is sure,

they can no longer stifle my voice," said Mr Gogoi. A video that is doing the rounds on social media shows some men pushing Mr Gogoi as he reaches the Assembly for a three-day session that began today. "This is an insult to the people of Assam," Mr Gogoi is heard saying in Assamese in the video released by his party Rajgor Dal. He is heard saying in Assamese. He **Contd...Page 6**

## 686 IIT Guwahati Students placed through virtual placement drive of Academic year 2020-21

**Guwahati, May 21:** IIT Guwahati has successfully placed 686 of its students through a virtual campus placement drive for the academic year 2020-21. A total of 140 companies were a part of this virtual recruitment process, including names like Microsoft, Walmart,

received job offers during the placement drive. "Microsoft, Google, Qualcomm, Oracle, American Express, DE Shaw, Enphase, Nutanix, Walmart, Adobe, Goldman Sachs, and IBM recruited the most number of students. While the institute also saw increased recruit-



ment from several prominent start-ups such as Ally.io, Gainsight, Harness, Thought sport, Chalo, Razorpay, Qure.ai, and Groww," the statement read. Job profiles such as IT/Software, Finance, Analyst, Core

Engineering, and Design were offered by the employers. The students of IIT Guwahati were even placed in two **Contd...Page 6**

## Chipko movement leader Sundarlal Bahuguna dies

**Assam chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma condoled the demise of renowned environmentalist**

**Rishikesh/Guwahati, May 21 :** Environmentalist and Chipko movement pioneer Sunderlal Bahuguna died at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences



here on Friday after battling COVID-19 for several days. He was 94. He breathed his last at 12.05 pm, AIIMS Director Ravikant said. Bahuguna, one of India's best known environmentalists, was admitted to the hospital on May 8 after testing positive for Covid. He had been critical since last night with his oxygen level dropping drastically. He was on CPAP therapy in the ICU of the **Contd...Page 6**

## Tarun Tejpal's Acquittal Likely to Deter Other Victims from Reporting Sexual Assault Cases: Activists

**New Delhi, May 21 :** Several women's rights activists on Friday questioned the grounds on which journalist Tarun Tejpal was ac-

quitted in a rape case and said the Goa court's verdict would deter other women from coming forward to report cases of sexual assault and abuse. Some of the activists pointed out that Tejpal had himself admitted to attempting to assault the woman and tendered apol-



ogy, and said the judgement is disappointing and demotivating. A sessions court in Goa acquitted Tejpal, **Contd...Page 6**

## Delhi's COVID-19 positivity rate dips below 5%, fewest new cases since April 1

**New Delhi, May 21 :** The COVID-19 case trajectory in the city continued to dip on Friday, with the city reporting 3009 new cases, the least since April 1, while the test positivity rate also fell to 4.76%. This is the

lowest test positivity rate for Delhi for the first time since April **Contd...Page 6**



## India prepares for Cyclone Yaas, NDRF positions teams in Bengal and Odisha



**New Delhi, May 21 :** The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has begun positioning its teams in West Bengal and Odisha as Cyclone Yaas is

likely to hit these states on the eastern coast of the country around May 26-27, officials said on Friday (May 21). Some of the teams dispatched to undertake **8iContd...Page 6**

## PM Narendra Modi gets emotional as he pays tribute to COVID-19 victims

**Calls Black Fungus a big challenge**

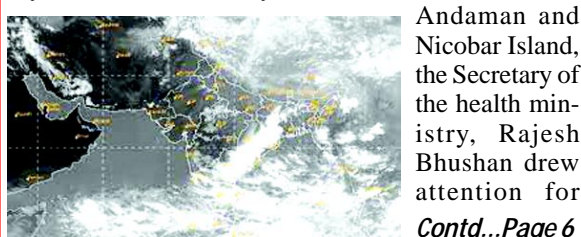
**New Delhi, May 21 :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday (May 21) got emotional while speaking about the lives lost due to COVID-19. "The effect of the pandemic has been so vast that despite all efforts, numerous lives were lost," the PM said in a visibly emotional state. Addressing the doctors and paramedical staff of his Lok Sabha constituency Varanasi, PM Modi lauded their efforts in battling COVID-19. He said that it is "going to be a long fight" against the COVID-19 pandemic and stressed preparing to deal with black fun-



gus infection. "You have contained the virus significantly but there should be no complacency as it is **Contd...Page 6**

## 'Ensure health facilities stocked', Centre tells states near eastern coastline ahead of Cyclone Yaas

**New Delhi, May 21 :** The Centre on Friday directed the states in the eastern coastline to ensure adequate stocks ahead of Cyclone Yaas that is likely



to hit by May 24. In a letter to Chief Secretary of States of Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal and Administrator of Andaman and Nicobar Island, the Secretary of the health ministry, Rajesh Bhushan drew attention for **Contd...Page 6**

## World's Oldest Tea Executive Sees the Cup Half-full for Assam Estates

**Guwahati, May 21 :** Dressed for duty, Sagar Datt Mehta reached his office at his usual time of 7am on May 21. At 92, he elegantly drives his white Maruti Gypsy to his tea garden and responds on the official WhatsApp group about the day's work. Before getting there, he also finds time in the morning to check his emails and browse through the news headlines on his cellphone. Mehta is the world's oldest-serving tea executive and president of the Khoomaite Tea Estate in Golaghat district of Assam. By the time we tried reaching him on International Tea Day, May 21, he was out in the garden finish-



ing his office duties, which include studying the worker job sheet, taking key decisions and signing payment vouchers. "We use the word 'veteran' so often

for people that at times it loses the true meaning and emotions attached to it. If at all the word is to be correctly used, it should be used to describe this legend

of the tea industry. Mr Sagar Datt Mehta is a true veteran and an institution of tea in himself. A remarkable person to work with and learn from," said Saravjit Singh Marvah, senior manager at the tea estate. Mehta joined the tea trade in 1954, right after graduating from Calcutta University. In 1981, he joined the Khoomaite Tea Estate. It has been a glorious and eventful 60-year journey for Mehta, for whom green is the colour of life. "I broke the stereotypes of a tea garden manager. I kept cordial relationships with the labour and the garden officials. Earlier the labour used to come on long

contracts. The wages were fixed and commissions were paid to the 'sardars'. There was hardly any interaction between the 'sahibs' and the labourers. I worked otherwise and I still do. I am worried as the gardens are losing their biodiversity. The waterbodies are vanishing fast, resulting in prolonged aridity. I harped on planting fruit trees in the garden. My breakfast is only fruits and that too the home-grown ones. Possibly this is the secret to my vibrancy and long life," said Mehta. The Assam tea business this year is staring at a crop loss of about 60 million kg compared to **Contd...Page 6**



### 202 New Positive Cases and Three Dead in Golaghat

**Golaghat, May 21:** Today 202 persons were tested Covid positive in Golaghat. Active cases of Covid 19 in Golaghat is now 1099. Today three persons succumbed to Covid. Anjan Sai Keot (67) from Butolikhowa, Khumtai, Hiteswar Saikia (66) from Ward No 10, Dergaon and Muhibur Ali (50) from Badulipara Tea Estate lost their lives due to Covid. With these three cases Covid death toll rises to 37 in Golaghat. Meanwhile today Oating Tea Estate under Golaghat Revenue Circle has been declared as Containment Zone by the administration. At present there are seven Active Containment Zones in the district.

## Covid-19 awareness programme held at Rastra Sevika Samiti Office



**Guwahati, May 21:** Amidst the critical period of covid-19 pandemic, Yog gurukul asom has organised a Covid-19 awareness programme at Rastra Sevika Samiti, Guwahati. The programme was inaugurated by Rastra Sevika Samiti co-executive Sunita Saldekar. Saldekar inaugurated the event by igniting lamp. At the programme upachar

sachib of Yog gurukul asom Dr Himangshu Buzarbaruah described the various measures to keep a person fit. He also distributed free immunity boosting medicine among the participants. At the event yog instructor Mrityunjoy Rojok explained how yog can boost immunity and can help to fight against corona virus. At that Covid-19 awareness programme total 36 sevika were treated many illness. It is noteworthy that Yog gurukul asom is playing a vital role in public health related issues. Njan Jyoti saikia, president of Yog gurukul asom, Hemadri Purkayastha, vice-president, Dilip Goswami, secretary and upachar sachib of Yog gurukul asom Dr Himangshu Buzarbaruah thanks all the people who have made the programme a grand success.

## Nazira administration laid emphasis on awareness in this COVID fight

**Nazira, 21st May:** In a bid to stem the spread of COVID 19 pandemic, the administration of Nazira under the supervision of SDO(c) Lakhimi Dutta and health workers of COVID Centres started a joint initiative today at Mezenga sub-centre. The objective of this drive is to distribute leaflets containing covid guidelines in order to aware the people residing in the remote areas of Mezenga about COVID 19. As most of the people living in the remote areas do not know about the COVID protocols laid by the government, hence the drive was undertaken to encourage the people to wear masks, sanitise hands, to maintain social distance and to undergo tests as much as possible. Nodal Health Officer Dr Pradyut Konwar and Covid Supervisor Fajjur Rahman constituted a Committee that included ANM, Asha workers, VDP and Gaon Burhas. Several groups are made under the committee and these groups will regularly visit the



villages of Mezenga to aware the local people about the pandemic. Election Officer Sujata Gogoi, Information and Public Relation Officer Barnali Dutta and Covid Supervisor Fajjur Rahman accompanied the team and went door to door to aware the local people. Covid Supervisor Fajjur Rahman said - "Being the Frontline workers it is our duty to aware the people of the remote areas. There are 6 covid centres at Nazira Subdivision and I request everyone to undergo covid tests if anyone feels unwell." Information and public relation officer Barnali Dutta said - "Our

main objective is trace, test and isolate. If the number of tests are increased, the number of COVID infected patients will increase and accordingly we will be able to isolate them. Isolation is necessary to not just save the life of the COVID patient but also to save his/her family members." Addressing the local people Sujata Gogoi said that everyone should follow the COVID guidelines laid down by the government. Wear a mask whenever you are out and if not necessary then don't step out of your house. Maintain cleanliness to keep yourself away from the deadly virus.

### Oxygen Expresses deliver record 1118 MT of Oxygen in a day

## Total 13319 MT of Oxygen delivered so far in 814 tankers and 208 Oxygen Expresses

**Guwahati, May 21:** Overcoming all hurdles and finding new solutions, Indian Railways is continuing its journey of bringing relief by delivering Liquid Medical Oxygen (LMO) to various states across the country. So far, Indian Railways has delivered nearly 13319 MT of LMO in more than 814 tankers to various states across the country. It may be noted that 208 Oxygen Expresses have completed their journey so far and brought relief to various States. Till the time of this release, 13 loaded Oxygen Expresses on run with more than 1018 MT of LMO. Oxygen Expresses have been delivering nearly 800 MT of LMO to the Nation each day for last few days. It is Indian Railways endeavour to deliver as much LMO as possible in the shortest time possible to the requesting states. Oxygen re-

lief by Oxygen Expresses reached out to 13 states namely Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi & Uttar Pradesh. Till the time of this release, So far 614 MT of Oxygen has been offloaded in Maharashtra, nearly 3338 MT in UP, 521 MT in MP, 4110 MT in Delhi, 1619 MT in Haryana, 98 MT in Rajasthan, 714 MT in Karnataka, 320 MT in Uttarakhand, 649 MT in Tamil Nadu, 292 MT in Andhra Pradesh, 153 MT in Punjab, 118 MT in Kerala and 772 MT in Telangana. Railways has mapped different routes with Oxygen supply locations and keeps itself ready with any emerging need of the States. States provide tankers to the Indian Railways for bringing LMO. It may

be noted that Oxygen Expresses started their deliveries 27 days back on 24th April in Maharashtra with a load of 126 MT. Criss crossing the country, Indian Railways is picking up oxygen from places like Hapa, Baroda, Mundra in the West and Rourkela, Durgapur, Tatanagar, Angul in the East and then delivering it to States of Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Telangana, Punjab, Kerala, Delhi & Uttar Pradesh in complex operational route planning scenarios. In order to ensure that Oxygen relief reaches in the fastest time possible, Railways is creating new standards and unprecedented benchmarks in running of Oxygen Express Freight Trains. The average speed of these critical

Freight trains is way above 55 in most cases over long distances. Running on high priority Green Corridor, with a highest sense of urgency, operational teams of various zones are working round the clock in most challenging circumstances to ensure that Oxygen reaches in fastest possible time frame. Technical stoppages have been reduced to 1 minute for crew changes over different sections. Tracks are kept open and high alertness is maintained to ensure that Oxygen Express keeps zipping through. All this is done in a manner that speed of other Freight Operation doesn't get reduced as well. Running of new Oxygen is a very dynamic exercise and figures kept getting updated all the time. More loaded Oxygen Expresses are expected to start their journeys later in the night.

### BSF Conducted Medical Camp And Awareness Programme On Covid-19 And Distributed Mask And Medicines To Border Villagers



**Guwahati, May 21:** Border Security Force besides guarding the Indo-Bangladesh Border plays crucial role in the overall development of the people living in the bordering villages. Seema Praharies of Guwahati Frontier are always standing with every person living in villages located at Indo-Bangladesh International border for their welfare. 2. On 20th May 2021 troops of Border Out Post Gheumari, Gachpara and Sialda of 67 Bn BSF of FTR HQ Guwahati

provided free medical assistance to the border villagers. During medical camp thermal screening and Covid testing were carried out and awareness programme on fight against Covid-19 at border villages of Gheumari, Gachpara and Sialda under PS & Dist Dhubri (Assam) were done. Apart from that free medicines, Masks and sanitizers were distributed to the border population and also briefed about precautionary measures required to be taken to prevent the spread of Covid-19. 3. The border population lauded the BSF for providing timely help to border people during hour of crisis. It is worthwhile to mention that Guwahati Frontier BSF is following the norms set by WHO as well as the Govt. of India/State Govt. to fight against Covid-19. 4. The Border Security Force is dedicated for Security of Border of India as well as protection of border population as its guided principle and ethos.

### RPF/NFR detected 11 cases of smuggling of contraband items during April

**744 smuggling cases detected during last three years**  
**Guwahati, May 21:** Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel of N.F. Railway have been successfully recovering consignments of contraband items during regular checks and special drives at stations and trains over N.F. Railway. During the month of April 2021, Railway Protection Force successfully detected 11 cases on charges of smuggling along with recovery of contraband items. In one such case on 11.04.2021, at about 05.50 hrs, acting on information, officials of the Crime Investigation Bureau of RPF/Guwahati comprising Inspector/R. K. Bezbaruah, Sub Inspector/D. Kalita, Constable/K. N. Yadav and Constable/Binay Das, jointly with Crime Prevention and Detection Squad team of RPF/Guwahati conducted surprise check of parcel packages at Parcel Gate No. 02 of Guwahati railway station. During surprise check they apprehended one person namely, Krishna Sahu, 30 yrs, s/o Laxmi Sahu, r/o House No. 24, Kharga Choudhury Road, Chatribari, PS-Paltanbazar, Dist. Kamrup (M) Assam with the recovery of 03 packages (without any booking mark) containing total 15 cartons foreign cigarettes (Total 1,50,000 sticks, made in Korea). The apprehended person failed to produce any document for possessing/carrying the recovered cigarettes and disclosed that he had brought those cigarettes for sending to Howrah by train. Later, the apprehended person along with the recovered cigarettes was handed over to Superintendent of Customs (Anti smuggling), Guwahati Division who registered a case vide No. 1/CL/IMP/AS/GAU/2021-22 dated 11.04.2021. Value of the recovered cigarettes is Rs 7,50,000/- approx. It may be mentioned here that during last three years (upto April 2021) total 744 cases of smuggling of contraband items were detected by RPF.

## Senior scribe dies of COVID 19 at Nagaon

**NAGAON, May 21:** Senior scribe, journalist pensioner of the state government and adviser to All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU) Humeswar Hira died of COVID 19 at his residence situated at Nagaon Kothiatoli Chariali today. He was 63. He was suffering from fever as well as coughing problem following the vaccination of COVID 19 a couple of days ago. He was tested positive for COVID 19 this morning after his death. Hira was serving as a local correspondent in Dainik Agradoot, an Assamese Daily for over decades from the greater Kothiatoli area and also involved in various social organizations. He served All Assam Journalists' Union (AAJU) as an adviser till his death. Various organizations including state President of AAJU, Pankaj Kumar Nath, executive president Dhruva Jyoti Sharma, state secretary to the journalists' body Nakul Talukdar,

Nagaon district committee of AAJU, Nagaon Press Club, AASU, AJYC, working journalists' Association, Nagaon Electronic Media Association and other dignitaries of the district condoled his demise and also paid tribute to him. In a press release from AAJU state committee, president and secretary - Pankaj Kumar Nath and Nakul Talukdar stated that Hira was one of the forerunners of rural journalism in the state and a dedicated worker in the field. His death created a vacuum in the field of state rural journalism, the release added.

## NRI business man Mushtaque Anfar spends INR 55 lakhs to charter a direct flight from Guwahati back to Dubai to return back for his work

**Hojai, May 21:** NRI business man Mushtaque Anfar spends INR 55 lakhs to charter a direct flight from Guwahati back to Dubai to return



back for his work. For the very first time in Assam a private jet has flew all the way from Dubai to pick up only one family from Guwahati to take them back. Mr. Mushtaque Anfar a renowned businessman who runs a multinational perfumes and Oud business and also the president of Jamiat Ulama Assam has been in Assam lately to spend time with his Mother and for his social work. Unfortunately due to the Rise in Covid in India. Many countries including the UAE has banned all inbound flights from India. Mr. Mushtaque Anfar thought keeping out of work a long time will

not be justified. Hence he planned his own route to charter and took his wife, son and grandchildren back in Dubai on 5:30mins direct flight from Guwahati to Dubai on Thursday. Mr. Mushtaque Anfar Perfume company Oudh Al Anfar was established in 1950 by his late Father Haji Anfar Ali Sahab and today they have showrooms all over the GCC countries such as UAE, Kuwait, Saudi, Oman and many others GCC countries. They also have distribution to over 32+ countries having factory and head office based in the UAE.

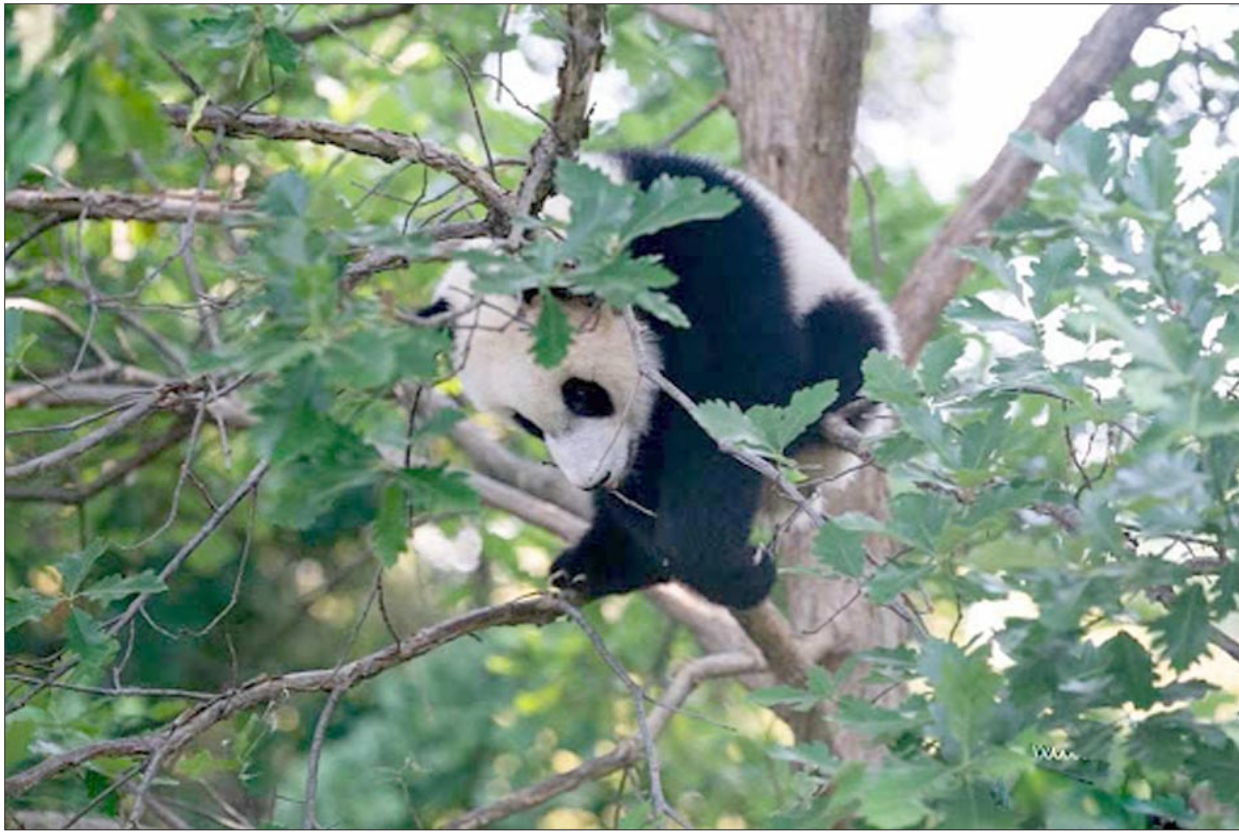
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how's the giant panda cub Xiao Qi Ji little miracle during a media preview at Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington, D

## Government considers BBC shake-up after damning Diana report

**London, May 21** : Damning findings about Martin Bashir's 1995 Panorama interview with Diana, Princess of Wales, means the governance of the BBC and how it operates will have to be examined, according to a senior government minister. The comments by the justice secretary, Robert Buckland, came as the Metropolitan police said they would "assess" the contents of John Dyson's report "to ensure there is no significant new evidence", after previously deciding not to begin a criminal investigation. The Met said it had determined in March that "it was not appropriate to begin a criminal investigation into allegations of unlawful activity in connection with a documentary broadcast in 1995, but should any significant new evidence emerge it would be assessed". Asked by the BBC's Today programme about potential police involvement, Buckland said it was a matter for the police and the independent prosecutorial authorities, but he added: "I think anybody reading the headlines and the summary of Lord Dyson's findings will be struck by his use of those words, fraud and deception and the like, and clearly those sort of issues, I'm afraid, could and do arise." Dyson's report into how a BBC interview with Diana and the "very striking" reactions of her sons to its findings had raised "some very serious questions" for the broadcaster, Buckland said. "The government has to, in the light of these serious findings, consider the matter very carefully and comprehensively indeed," Buckland told Radio 4's Today programme. "Because it wasn't just the decision of a reporter or a production team, there were decisions made much further up the chain about the conduct of these individuals that have now proved, according to Lord Dyson, to be unfounded and wrong." And therefore, the government does have a responsibility to look very carefully to see whether the governance of the BBC does need reform in the light of these devastating findings. "A former chair of the BBC, Michael Grade, meanwhile described Prince William's criticism of the BBC as "unprecedented" and called for "serious structural change" within the corporation. "I think there has to be an editorial board of independent, outside specialist non-conflicted journalists who can hold BBC journalism to account, and review its coverage of elections, Brexit, the Middle East and so on, but which will be a very good sounding board," he said. Grade said he did not believe any government would "use something as crude as this to bash the BBC with" because the public would not stand for it. But amid fears among others that the government

### 'Not a lot of trust': Taiwan wrestles with home working in wake of Covid surge

**Taipei, May 21** : When Amanda asked a colleague to bring her laptop home from their tech-company office, anticipating that Taipei was about to join the ranks of global cities suddenly working remotely, managers refused to release it. She told him to grab it anyway, and soon enough the Taiwanese capital was placed under restrictions amid a shock coronavirus outbreak. Her company soon sent an office-wide email saying that 50% of staff would be staying home. "But it still had reminders that working from home means you are working at home and your equipment must be connected at all times, and you're expected to work eight hours and this is not a holiday," she says. Taiwan has recorded more than 1,400 cases of the Kent Covid-19 variant since Friday, the first large outbreak the island has experienced since the pandemic began. On Wednesday the whole island was put on alert level 3 of a four-tier system, which includes people being asked to work remotely where possible. It has caught people unaware, and is forcing businesses to address a deeply entrenched culture of presenteeism, which demands that people must show up to be counted. "Taiwanese work culture is incapable of trusting that its employees can work effectively from home," says the Taipei writer Kathy Cheng, who collects anecdotes of various attempts at or refusals to allow working from home. There are many instances where working from home is not viable, such as in Taiwan's dominant manufacturing industry, and the issue often disproportionately affects lower paid and more vulnerable workers. The government says it does not want to impose a lockdown, and in the absence of a government order, companies that should be able to switch to remote working have struggled to develop concrete plans, or have instead implemented strict monitoring at work.



would seize the opportunity to move forward with controversial changes to the BBC, Buckland said "serious questions" were now being raised for the corporation on the morning after William launched a furious attack on the failings. Buckland told Sky News: "I think an apology is a start but I don't think it is the end of it, which is why, all of us, looking at its governance, looking at the way it operates, need to do that in order to make sure that this sort of behaviour, this sort of thing, doesn't happen again." His comments came as renewed pressure was heaped on the BBC on Thursday night in a televised statement by William, who said the "deceitful" way the BBC secured an interview with Diana had "substantially influenced" its content. "She was failed not just by a rogue reporter but by leaders at the BBC who looked the other way," he said, as a similarly scathing statement was released by his brother, Prince Harry, who said the deceptive practices exposed had played a part in their mother's death. There was also fresh criticism of the broadcaster from the graphic designer Matt Wiessler, who was commissioned by Bashir to create the mocked-up documents. He said there was a culture within the BBC whereby it admitted mistakes only "under duress". He told the Today programme: "I just feel that there is this culture within the BBC that the little people - me being the whistleblower - that we don't really need to be addressed." An inquiry, conducted by Dyson, a former supreme court judge, found that Bashir had engaged in "deceitful behaviour" by commissioning fake bank statements to land the interview - a "serious breach" of the BBC's editorial guidelines. In his 127-page report, Dyson also criticised the conduct of Tony Hall, the corporation's former director general, who was accused of overseeing a flawed and "woefully ineffective" internal investigation into the issue.

## UK like an 'enemy state' to EU nationals detained by Border Force



**London, May 21** : EU citizens living and working in the UK have revealed how they are being met with suspicion and threats that they will be refused entry at the UK border for the first time in their lives, fuelling fresh fears that Border Force officials have not been trained in the new Brexit rules. Wolfgang, a German national who runs an IT business, was detained at Heathrow airport despite having proof of settled status, indefinite leave to remain and a British passport on the way. He is furious that his rights were suspended on the whim of a Border Force official. "I have settled status," he said. "I have indefinite leave to remain. I am about to become a British citizen. How is it that a border official with one tick can suspend those rights?" UK detention document issued to German national who has settled status. "To be blunt, I am avoiding coming back to the UK now until I get my British passport," Wolfgang said from Germany. "I pay a large amount of tax there, I have never used the health service, I contribute to the economy, I own property there. London is my favourite city in the world, but I have no documents to show I can stay there," he said, referring to the fact that the government has voted against giving EU citizens a residency card to show employers, landlords or border officials. "They need to provide a document that guarantees that this is an irrevocable status unless you have some sort of major criminal offence," said Wolfgang. Hilary Benn, a Labour MP and the former chair of the now-disbanded Commons Brexit select committee, said cases such as Wolfgang's raise concerns about what is in store for

the 4.9 million EU citizens who have already been granted settled or pre-settled status, especially as they start to return from visits to their countries of birth when Covid restrictions are lifted. "It's worrying to hear of these incidents happening. The Home Office needs to make sure that all Border Force staff are fully trained in applying the new rules." Referring to a new Brexit body set up in January to protect EU citizens' rights, Benn added: "This is something that the Independent Monitoring Authority needs to look at." Among the other cases is that of Antonio, a Spanish airline worker who was made to wait for 45 minutes at Gatwick while border officials tried to decide if he was lying when he told them he had pre-settled status. He said: "My passport was not associated with the settled status. When I told them that is because I applied using my ID card which was perfectly acceptable to the Home Office, they told me that ID cards are no longer acceptable at the border." He was only let through after he produced his airline ID and his flight-attendant schedule to prove he was not an illegal migrant. "Because of my job I have flown to many destinations and I have been through border controls in different countries. I felt I had landed in some random enemy state." This is the first time I felt intimidated by a police officer asking me questions just for being a foreigner living in the UK," he added. For new arrivals with work visas, it is not plain sailing either. One Italian man, arriving for a new job at a top British bank, was confronted with officials unsure of the rules when he landed at London City airport. Marco was detained for hours while border officials, who had refused his request to stamp the arrival date on his passport, pondered over a letter from his lawyer telling him he needed the official marking on his passport in order to take up his new job. "I was escorted to a waiting room. After almost three hours I was called by an officer

who explained to me that it was 'a bit of a grey area' as my visa had been issued in electronic form and no guidance had been given by the government on how this would be formally recognised/recorded on one's passport," said Marco. When he arrived at his new job, the first thing the HR department required was the stamp on his passport for their 'right to work' check. Marco's case is one of half a dozen brought to the attention of the Guardian, which has reported how another cohort of EU citizens - those arriving to visit or to look for work - have been handcuffed, locked up and had personal belongings removed from them before being deported. If you have been affected or have any information, we'd like to hear from you.

## Israel-Gaza conflict: world leaders hail ceasefire after 11 days of attacks

**Gaza, May 21** : World leaders have hailed a ceasefire that took hold in the early hours of Friday morning, and vowed to help rebuild Gaza after an Israeli bombing campaign that killed more than 230 people and Palestinian rocket attacks that killed 12 in Israel. The United Nations secretary general urged Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers to observe the ceasefire and called on global leaders to develop a reconstruction package "that supports the Palestinian people and strengthens their institutions". Antonio Guterres said after Thursday's announcement of an end to 11 days of clashes that "Israeli and Palestinian leaders have a responsibility beyond the restoration of calm to start a serious dialogue to address the root causes of the conflict." Few analysts believe there will be progress towards resolving the fundamental issues in the immediate future. There were no signals of an end to Israel's decades-old military grip over the Palestinian territories and its blockade on the already-devastated Gaza enclave, within which 2 million people live under headline Hamas rule. However, Guterres said the UN was ready to work with Israel, the Palestinians, and others to return to "meaningful negotiations" on a two-state settlement based on territorial lines before the 1967 war. In a televised address from the White House, Joe Biden, vowed to continue what he called "our quiet and relentless diplomacy" towards a long-term settlement, adding: "I believe we have a genuine opportunity to make progress." In the short term, the international effort will be focused on ensuring the truce holds and beginning the task of humanitarian relief and reconstruction in Gaza. In the countdown to the ceasefire at 2am local time on Friday, Palestinian rocket salvos continued and Israel carried out at least one air strike. Each side said it stood ready to retaliate for any truce violations by the other. Cairo, which brokered the truce, announced it would send two delegations to monitor the ceasefire. In the early hours of Friday, celebrations were held in the streets of Gaza to mark the truce after a bombardment which Palestinian health officials say killed 232 people, including 65 children. Israeli authorities put the country's death toll to date at 12, including two children. Cars packed Gaza's main

streets, with drivers honking their horns and waving flags from the windows. Mosque loudspeakers hailed a "victory", and men fired rifles into the air, while others set off noise bombs or firecrackers. In Tel al-Hawa in Gaza City people said they were celebrating their safety, and what they viewed as their victory. Fireworks were also set off in Sheikh Jarrah, the East Jerusalem neighbourhood where a long-running legal battle by Palestinian families to stop their forced eviction by Israeli settlers was

"sincere gratitude" to Egypt's president, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, for his mediating role, and said the US would work together with the UN agencies and the Palestinian authority, but not Hamas, to rebuild Gaza. "I believe the Palestinians and Israelis equally deserve to live safely and securely, and enjoy equal measures of freedom, prosperity, and democracy. My administration will continue our quiet, relentless diplomacy towards that end," Biden said, in a brief televised statement. He did not take

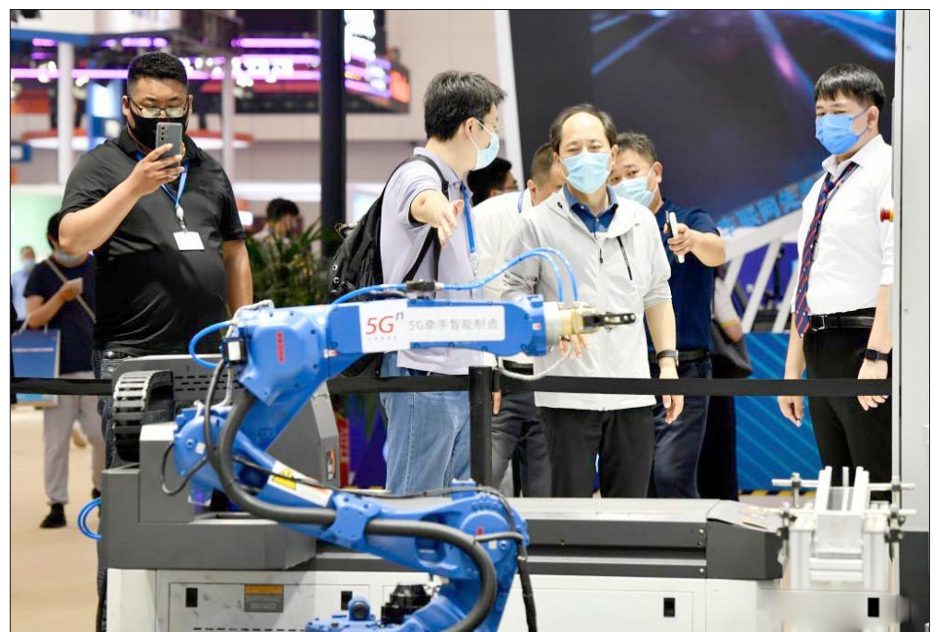


a key factor in mobilising protesters across the Old City and further afield during Ramadan. The truce took hold after the Israeli cabinet met to the "mutual and unconditional" ceasefire proposed by Egypt, Hamas and Islamic Jihad also confirmed the "mutual and simultaneous" agreement. In his first substantial remarks on the crisis after 11 days of bloodshed, Biden sent his "sincere condolences to all the families - Israeli and Palestinian - who have lost loved ones and my hope for a full recovery for the wounded." The president has been criticised around the world and in his own party for refusing to agree to a joint UN security council call for a ceasefire, and his failure to directly criticise Israel for the heavy civilian casualties from its bombardment of Gaza, in response to Hamas rockets. Biden commended Netanyahu "for the decision to bring the current hostilities to a close within less than 11 days". He also hailed Israel's air defence system, which the US helped develop, and which prevented hundreds of rockets from hitting Israeli towns and cities. Biden gave his "full support to replenish Israel's Iron Dome system to ensure its defences and security in the future". The president expressed

questions. In a tweet early on Friday, President Al-Sisi thanked Biden and said he shared the US president's emphasis on diplomacy for managing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. British foreign secretary Dominic Raab said: "All sides must work to make the ceasefire durable and end the unacceptable cycle of violence and loss of civilian life", adding that Britain supports "efforts to bring about peace". If it holds, the agreement will put an end to the heaviest fighting since 2014, in which Israeli airstrikes have inflicted widespread destruction in Gaza while militants have fired thousands of rockets into Israel. When it was over, both sides claimed victory. One Hamas official, Ali Barakeh, told the AP that the truce was a defeat for Netanyahu and "a victory to the Palestinian people." Israel's military similarly claimed "great accomplishments". In recent days, Israeli media had suggested the military believed its goals had largely been met and Hamas officials said a ceasefire was in reach. Senior Israeli defence officials recommended accepting the proposal after claiming "great accomplishments" in the operation, according to a statement from Netanyahu's office.

## Japan bullet train driver disciplined for leaving controls to go to toilet

**Tokyo, May 21** : A driver on one of Japan's shinkansen bullet trains is facing disciplinary measures after he abandoned his cab to go to the toilet while the train was carrying passengers and travelling at 150km/h. The 36-year-old driver, who has not been named, reportedly had a stomachache and asked a conductor to take his place while he went to the toilet. The conductor, who was not qualified to drive the Hikari-series train, sat in the driver's seat during his three-minute absence, but did not touch the controls, according to the Kyodo news agency. The incident happened last weekend as the train carried 160 passengers at high speed along the busy Tokaido line, which links Tokyo and Osaka. The driver might have got away with his unscheduled toilet break except for the fact that the train was subsequently one minute late, which prompted an investigation in a country famous for punctuality. Masahiro Hayatsu, a senior official of JR Central, which operates the train, apologised and told reporters the driver's actions had been "extremely inappropriate". Japan's super-efficient shinkansen rail network connects cities along the length and breadth of the country, with trains reaching speeds of up to 320km/h. The recent incident is thought to be the first in which a shinkansen driver left the cab while the passenger train was moving. A similar case in 2001 involved a driver who was operating an out-of-service train. Bullet trains have an enviable punctuality rate and an impressive safety record, with no fatalities due to a derailment or collision since they went into service in 1964, just before Tokyo hosted the summer Olympics.



People view an industrial robot at the World Intelligence Congress in Tianjin, north China



## THE ASSAM RISING

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## Increased surveillance across the world

The variant that threatens the British summer has already done far more damage in India. In October last year a sample from the western state of Maharashtra containing what would later be identified as the B.1.617.3 variant was sequenced and uploaded to Gisaïd, a global database of Covid-19 samples from across the world. The variant had multiple mutations located on the virus's spike protein that binds it to receptor cells in the human body. Some of these mutations were present in other variants, or seemed capable of evading immunity. All of this should have set off alarm bells in India and led to increased surveillance across the world. Instead, India's genome sequencing project continued to flounder through the rest of 2020. For most of last year, India did virtually no genome sequencing, Dr Gagandeep Kang, one of India's leading virologists, told me. While other countries submitted thousands of sequences to databases such as Gisaïd for scientists across the world to study, India submitted only a few hundred. This was partly due to a lack of funding. It was also possibly the result of a lack of interest; last year, India's Covid curve appeared to be falling. At the end of 2020, the Indian government announced it was setting up the Indian Sars-CoV2 Genomics Consortium (Insacog) to increase genomic sequencing through a network of 10 laboratories. Its aim was to sequence 5% of all new detected cases. By Tuesday, India had submitted a little under 13,000 sequences - 0.05% of its total reported cases. Despite reporting about 400,000 new confirmed cases every day through the first half of May, India collected and submitted just 280 sequences over the last 30 days. Again, it's worth putting these numbers in perspective: according to Gisaïd data, India has submitted 2,247 sequences of the variant first identified there in October 2020; the UK, where cases of the B.1.617 variant were first detected in February 2021, has submitted 3,706 to date. Epidemiologists across India have suggested the variant is driving the country's virulent Covid curve. This is also supported by data from Gisaïd, which shows this variant has become dominant in badly hit states such as Delhi, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The World Health Organization has classified the strain as a "variant of concern" because of its potentially increased transmissibility. But the question of whether this variant is linked to more severe cases of Covid-19 is more complicated. Experiments on hamsters suggest that infections with this variant result in a greater loss of body weight, higher viral load in people's lungs and pronounced lung lesions. The real-world evidence from India is harder to parse, in part because the sheer number of infections has overwhelmed India's health systems, leading to countless deaths from a lack of simple life-saving measures, including oxygen supply. In the western Indian city of Pune during the early days of the second wave, when there weren't shortages of beds and oxygen, there was no apparent increase in the death rate, the leading Indian immunologist Vineeta Bal told me. The question of whether this variant leads to more severe cases of Covid-19 is also closely related to vaccines. Over the last few weeks, at least three Indian states and two cities, including Pune, have shown signs of a vaccine effect - a decline in infections and deaths among elderly people, 40% of whom have now been vaccinated. Although some scientists and the WHO have suggested that antibodies acquired either from vaccines or from past infections might have reduced success in neutralising the new variant, the current consensus appears to be that the two vaccines being administered in India - the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and the Bharat Biotech/Indian Council for Medical Research's Covaxin - remain largely effective against the new variant as well. This new variant played a significant role in India's overwhelming second wave. But the suffering was also caused by India's costly mistakes. Religious and political mass gatherings such as a month-long election campaign and the Kumbh Mela festival went ahead. Such large gatherings resulted in increased social mixing and reduced adherence to distancing measures. The delays in genomic sequencing were potentially catastrophic, and not just for India. Meanwhile the country's vaccination drive, which already seems to be having a positive effect on the number of Covid cases, has been impeded by a combination of shortages stemming from insufficient planning, and hesitancy stemming from poor communication. There are already signs this wave could be peaking in India. To prepare for the next public health crisis, the country must learn the lessons from its second wave. In particular, the government must stop hiding behind a veil of nationalism. On Tuesday, one of India's most respected virologists, Shahid Jameel, resigned from his position as the chair of the scientific advisory group of the Insacog. Just days earlier, Jameel had written in the New York Times about the "stubborn resistance to evidence-based policymaking" that Indian scientists were facing, warning that "decision-making based on data is yet another casualty, as the pandemic in India has spun out of control". In place of data, there has been patriotic bluster.

## I'm still picking up the pieces after being sexually harassed by a fellow actor

Actors and crew need better protection from abuse and bullying on set. Too many powerful people get away with it. I started with comments on my first day of shooting, from one of the actors I was co-starring with: suggesting we have a drink, saying he was attracted to me, hugging me out of the blue and finally commenting on my physique while shooting a scene. It felt uncomfortable; I laughed it off. I was still getting into my stride on the production, which I had joined a little late, and I wanted to get on with this actor. We had several scenes that we were shooting together. At one point I told a friend about his behaviour, who suggested I report it. "Report what?" I replied. "I'm not even sure if anything's happened." Things escalated, ending up in a physical act of sexual misconduct that left me reeling, profoundly affecting my mental health and my relationships with others for a long time afterwards. I was left immensely anxious and blamed myself for not handling things better at that first sign of trouble. I considered leaving the industry, which seems extreme, but it was how I felt. I'd spent my life to that point building my career. I'm writing this anonymously.

As a young woman still relatively early in her career within the industry, I have an instinctive sense that I need to maintain a level of dignity and self-protection. And as nothing came of it when I did finally report the incident, what value would there be in exposing myself? It's sad that I feel I won't be identified from these words, because incidents such as this happen so much. So, while I was shocked by the allegations of sexual harassment made by 20 women against Noel Clarke last week, I wasn't surprised. Unfortunately, a culture exists within some sections of the film and TV industry that allows actors, directors and people in positions of power on sets to behave on a scale from "poor" to "unacceptable", with relative impunity, often leaving traumatised people in their wake. And that's bullying, as well as sexual abuse. I have long since learned that as long as producers and editors are happy with footage, nobody really cares what happened around it. "We got there in the end and isn't he/she marvellous: gosh what a nightmare. But brilliant." I have seen versions of this scenario play out multiple times in my career. I look

back to the beginning of my career and my time in acting school, just a decade ago, and think "that wouldn't happen now". But in the same breath I think so much of it does, and would. Jokes are cracked about X being "a bit of a Weinstein", while female actors and crew give each other sotto voce warnings: "Watch out for so-and-so." I feel for costume and make-up staff particularly, who are often young women left alone in the trailers with these people, frequently for intimate costume fittings. Film sets are ad hoc spaces, with very little privacy and people working together in close quarters without a set code of practice. Who are these young women meant to go to after a week's shoot has wrapped? Often the person just goes on to the next job to begin afresh. Sets are also places with clearly defined power dynamics. Often it's "talent" (those front of camera) versus everyone else (the crew). Egos abound and people are treated with reverence. There is also a hierarchy among the actors, based on the order of the call-sheet. My attacker was senior to me on the project. Some people act as if they could get away with anything. And it's not just actors: I've heard stories about directors and producers too.

# Animals are our overlooked allies in the fight against Covid



A few weeks ago, I received my first shot of a vaccine against Covid-19. As the newly vaccinated exited the clinic, there was a mix of relief and elation on people's faces. We exchanged little smiles of solidarity. If we could have burst into spontaneous applause, I'm sure we would have done. Recently, the lead scientist for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, Prof Sarah Gilbert, was honoured with the RSA Albert Medal. There are rumours that Gilbert's team, along with the pioneers of the mRNA vaccines, are up for a Nobel prize. It is quite right that gratitude should follow their game-changing achievement. But the success of the vaccines offers an opportunity to acknowledge a different constituency. If we think back to clap for carers, the ritual of recognition that marked those grim weeks of Britain's first lockdown, its value was in shining a light on the keyworkers who are kept from view by circumstances and sometimes snobbery. For 10 weeks of the pandemic, we reflected on those otherwise invisible individuals on whom society depends. Yet in every stage of our journey to create vaccines, we've had a large number of assistants we've neither appreciated nor applauded. Millions of animals have been a part of our rigorous process of drug safety and efficacy testing. The main reason we don't honour them is that

they possess an uncertain moral status in our eyes. That may be uncomfortable, but does that mean that the role of animals should be ignored? To take a few examples: *Limulus ameobocyte lysate* tests, the standard for screening vaccines for dangerous bacteria, are manufactured using the neon-blue blood of horseshoe crabs. Pretty much any vaccine you've had will have been safety-tested using this because it's chock-full of immune cells that are super-sensitive to bacteria. Acquiring this blood is not a pretty business. The crabs are harvested, often by fishers, and then strapped in rows and bled. And these spectacular creatures are already under threat due to fisheries and habitat loss. In the US, manufacturers are careful to try to secure the wellbeing and release of the crabs. Only about 15% die. But in China, where the regional species is endangered, nearly all will be killed in the process. There are synthetic versions of the test, but they haven't been taken up by many pharmaceutical companies at present and the US is yet to give regulatory approval. When it comes to pre-clinical trials of vaccine candidates (trials that aren't ethically permitted on humans), mice are the most popular animal. Early in the pandemic, scientists discovered that wild lab mice are largely unaffected by this coronavirus. So transgenic

mice have been bred, genetically engineered to simulate our immune response. And ferrets, which do show a similar progression of disease to ours, have also been used in early trials. Some of these animals will play a role in the development of the antiviral treatments the UK government hopes patients may be taking by this autumn. In Britain, the bar for using primates in biomedical research is very high. But scientists working on Covid-19 vaccines have used both rhesus and crab-eating macaques, along with common marmosets, especially for efficacy testing. Animal testing is largely justified by the idea of some hard moral border between us and other species. Using animals within our own order unsettles us: scientists choose primates precisely because they're genetically similar to us, but that closeness is disquieting. Primates have rich and complex social lives. They also experience their pain and captivity, and their inability to consent creates rather than resolves the ethical problems. Yet we are rarely given the chance to reflect on all this. The trouble is we often hide animal testing from public view. That is broadly true of the infrastructure that enables us to eat and wear animals, too. Many labs that run animal experiments are highly secretive because of the considerable threats they face from activists. And scientists and companies are also sensitive to the fact that public opinion is on the move. Before the pandemic, public acceptance of animal testing in biomedical research had been consistently trending downwards for decades. For now, the UK's Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986 is the strictest law governing research animals anywhere in the world. That is something to be proud of. Most research is conducted using the "three Rs". These principles of "reduction", "refinement" and "replacement" were initiated in 1959 by two British scientists, William Russell and Rex Burch. They have become the standard for minimising the use of animals and any associated suffering. Still, animal research is actually growing rather

than declining. New gene-editing technologies allow us to modify an animal's immune system so that it is more like ours, making it a better research model than it would be naturally. That has undermined the move towards replacement. And this pandemic has also intensified demand. There are some new initiatives, such as the Center for Contemporary Sciences, spearheaded by scientists Aysa Akhtar and Jarrod Bailey, set up to explore cutting-edge human-based methods: the "human-on-a-chip" model, for example. In essence, a human organ is used to produce a micro-version of itself on which tests can be conducted. This is exciting technology, but we're not yet at the point of substitution. This moment in history has prompted a reassessment of our relationship to the rest of nature, not least because the origins of this pandemic, in one way or another, lie in our invasive use of other animals and their habitats. At the same time, throughout the past century, the use of animals in biomedical tests has hugely reduced deaths from disease outbreaks. Forty years' worth of research using monkeys, rats and mice led to the polio vaccine in the 1950s, which saved millions of lives. Then there was the TB vaccine. The flu vaccine. To put it bluntly, countless animals have given their lives to save ours. On 12 May, the UK government launched its action plan to "reinforce its position as a global champion of animal rights". Key to this is the recognition by law of the sentence of other animals. It's a positive move. But the current plan is uneven in its rationale and silent on a number of fronts, including animal testing. Acknowledging the animals that have had a role in life-saving vaccines and treatments for Covid-19 is not to take a position for or against their continued use in research. It is instead to accept that there is something wrong in obscuring or forgetting their part and the price they pay. Supporters just as much as opponents of animal testing should recognise the magnitude of their role. It would be the mark of a conscientious - and grateful - society.

## The pro-Palestine movement is broad but it can't be a home to antisemitism

Last Sunday saw one of the most dramatic antisemitic incidents in the UK in recent years. A convoy of cars, flying Palestinian flags, drove through Jewish neighbourhoods in north London and their occupants were filmed shouting antisemitic and misogynistic threats (aimed at Jews, not just Israelis). An upsurge in violence in Israel-Palestine is always accompanied by an upsurge in antisemitic incidents in the Jewish diaspora, including in the UK. As well as the convoy incident, we have also seen a number of others, including graffiti on a messianic Jewish synagogue in Norwich. Many activists responded quickly in condemning the convoy and pointing out that such actions don't help the Palestinians themselves (although some dismissed it as trivial or even as a "false flag" operation). But regardless of whether activists condemn it, such incidents will only deepen the suspicion many British Jews have that pro-Palestinian activism is irredeemably antisemitic. Disagreements over whether the Palestinian cause dis-



proportionately attracts antisemitic views are related to an extent antisemitism, or even if it is intrinsically antisemitic, tend to be fractious and bitter. It is certainly hard to deny (although some do) that antisemitic discourse and violence has been propagated by some pro-Palestinian activists. There is also some evidence to suggest that anti-Is-

### Keith Kahn-Harris

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## Retain 'add' on Torrent Pharma with TP at Rs 2,940



**Mumbai, May 21 :** India growth strong, US underperforms: India business grew 9.8% vis-a-vis 5.0% growth in the industry. Torrent Pharma's (Torrent) Q4FY21 performance was better than estimates on Ebitda and PAT led by better gross margin and higher other income. Revenue declined 0.5% y-o-y to Rs 19.4 billion with international markets declining 7.7% offset by 9.8% growth in domestic market. US sales declined 5.9% q-o-q to \$37 million vs estimated \$40 million. Better revenue mix led to gross/Ebitda margin improvement of 150/180bps y-o-y. Adjusted PAT grew 24.1% to Rs 3.2 billion, driven by better margin and higher other income. Nifty, stocks to buy: Buy these two stocks for near-term gains; Nifty en route to test life-time highs soon. Analyst Corner: Maintain 'buy' on Tata Motors with TP at Rs 380. We are positive on the long-term outlook considering growth improvement in India business with chronic segment dominance, potential resolution of OAI/WL status at two facilities in FY22E, EPS CAGR of 17.0% over FY21-FY23E and strengthening balance sheet with improving FCF generation. Retain 'add' with a revised target price of Rs 2,940/share. India growth strong, US underperforms: India business grew 9.8% vis-a-vis 5.0% growth in the industry. Company should continue to outpace industry in terms of growth considering its significant exposure to the chronic segment and established product portfolio. US revenues declined 5.9% q-o-q to \$37 million due to price erosion and absence of new launches given USFDA issues. We expect US sales to improve hereon led by new launches from third party manufacturing and restart of Levittown facility.

## Rising crude oil prices boost Indian Oil Q4 profit



**CHENNAI, May 21 :** A substantial rise in crude oil prices gave Indian Oil Corporation's net profit a solid boost in the quarter ended March 31, 2021, with the state-run oil refining and marketing major recording inventory gains of Rs 8,622.25 crore during the period. The company's standalone net profit came in at Rs 8,791.9 crore for the quarter, compared to a net loss of Rs 5,185.32 crore during the corresponding period of last year and 49 per cent higher than the Rs 4,916.6 crore recorded in the previous quarter ended December 2020. Inventory gains are made when the value of crude oil stored by the company rises in tandem with market prices, while inventory losses happen when market prices of the stored crude falls. Over the period under review, International Brent crude oil prices rose around 23 per cent. The result was a 52 per cent jump in inventory gains from the Rs 5,622 crore recorded during the previous quarter. The company had recorded an inventory loss of Rs 744.6 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The company also recorded a robust rise in revenue at Rs 1.63 lakh crore against Rs 1.40 lakh crore in the corresponding quarter of last year and Rs 1.46 crore in the previous quarter ended December 2020. Indian Oil's gross refining margins (GRM), the amount of money the company makes from processing a barrel of crude, saw a jump during both the quarter and the full fiscal year-coming in at \$5.64 a barrel in FY21 against \$0.08 in FY20. In the March quarter, GRM stood at over \$10, said IOC Chairman S M Vaidya. On the impact of the second wave of the pandemic on fuel demand, Vaidya said that it has not been as severe as the first wave. "Demand destruction... is very much there but not to that extent," he added. According to the chairman, the second wave so far has resulted in petrol and diesel demand falling by around 15-20 per cent compared to the 49 per cent plunge in April 2020 after imposition of the nationwide lockdown.

## ChildFundIndia reaching 10 million in rural India with medical supplies and vaccination support

**India, May 21:** ChildFund India, in collaboration with Project HOPE, a global health and humanitarian aid group, is once again proactively responding to the COVID crisis for vulnerable communities in the states of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and other. Project HOPE and ChildFund India aim to ensure availability of basic medical equipment at local health systems - the Primary & Secondary health care centers, which serve as the COVID Care centers, in the highly vulnerable districts of these states, assist frontline workers with PPE and medical essential kits and improve access, affordability, and accessibility of the COVID-19 vaccination and related materials for all vulnerable groups. This initiative is a part of the overall response ChildFund India has devised to fight the 2nd wave of COVID-19 across the 15 states it works in. ChildFund India's overall efforts are aimed at reaching 1 million people, including children, across 15 states/UTs through vaccination drive and support at least 10 million people through overall response. In addition, the most vulnerable people are being supported with food baskets, hygiene kits and psychosocial support. ChildFund India is engaging with state and district health departments, corporates and community-based frontline workers to extend support efficiently.

To enable India to tackle the pandemic and prevent it from becoming more widespread in the hinterlands, conducting a large-scale vaccination drive is imperative. ChildFund India and Project HOPE are actively disseminating information material relating to the same, dispelling any myths, tackling misinformation, and undertaking mobile campaigns on vaccinations in coordination with the local governments. Additionally, efforts are being directed towards ensuring a steady supply of medical equipment and medicines, training of ASHA workers in primary and community healthcare centers and identifying and addressing the prevalence of COVID in communities. Neelam Makhlani, Country Director, ChildFund India said, "For the past one year, we have been working relentlessly in the field, helping semi-urban and rural communities handle the impact of pandemic. In responding to the 1st wave, we reached out to 1.5 million people, providing them with relief material, livelihood recovery opportunities, psycho-social support, and necessary medical aid. By virtue of our presence on ground, as the 2nd wave hit the vulnerable communities, ChildFund India collaborated with Project HOPE to ensure that the local primary health care centers have the necessary medical equipment to save lives at risk. Our next step is to protect our children from the impact of

## Rupee opens on flat note, rises 3 paise to 73.15 against US dollar in early trade

**MUMBAI, May 21 :** The Indian rupee opened on a flat note and inched higher by 3 paise to 73.15 against the US dollar in early trade on Thursday amid a muted trend in the domestic equities. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 73.16 against the dollar, then inched higher to 73.15, registering a gain of 3 paise over its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 73.18 against the US dollar. Choppy local equities, weak Asian currencies and a stronger dollar will weigh on the local unit. At the same time, anticipated dollar inflows and improving India pandemic situation could cap depreciation bias, Reliance Securities said in a research note. Meanwhile, the dollar index,

which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.07 per cent to 90.13. "The US dollar index was marginally weaker this Thursday morning in Asian trade. However, downside remained limited after minutes from the Federal Reserve's latest policy meeting revealed there was more talk of tapering their bond purchase than investors had thought," the Reliance Securities' note said. Global oil benchmark Brent crude futures rose 0.24 per cent to USD 66.82 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, BSE Sensex was trading 52.66 points or 0.11 per cent higher at 49,955.30, while the broader NSE Nifty fell 10.30 points or 0.07 per cent to 15,019.85. Foreign institutional in-



vestors were net sellers in the capital market on Wednesday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 697.75 crore, as per exchange data. Meanwhile, with 2,76,110 new coronavirus infections being reported in a day, India's total tally

of COVID-19 cases climbed to 2,57,72,440, while the daily deaths were recorded below 4,000 after four days, taking the toll to 2,87,122, according to the Union Health Ministry data updated on Thursday.

## Cipla launches RT-PCR test kit 'ViraGen' in India partnership with Ubio Biotech

**NEW DELHI, May 21 :** Drug major Cipla on Thursday announced the commercialisation of its RT-PCR test kit 'ViraGen' for COVID-19 in India, in partnership with Ubio Biotechnology Systems. "This launch will help address the current testing services and capacity issues while reaffirming the company's ongoing expansion in the diagnostic space," Cipla said in a regulatory filing. Cipla will launch ViraGen test kit in the country in partnership with Ubio Biotechnology Systems, the company

stated. The company will commence supply of the COVID-19 virus detection kit from May 25, 2021. Umang Vohra, MD and Global CEO, Cipla, said, "Cipla has been working relentlessly to ensure accessibility to treatments in this fight against COVID-19. Guided by our core purpose of 'Caring for Life', this partnership will enable us to reach out to more people across the country at a crucial time like now". ViraGen is Cipla's third offering in the COVID-19 testing segment.

## Storytel makes listening to audiobooks in Indian Languages pocket friendly

**Guwahati, May, 2021:** Demand for content in regional languages has gone up significantly in the last few years and continues to be on rise. With focus on regional languages, Storytel is expanding its starter subscription plan - Select - which allows customers to access audiobooks in 11 regional languages. Storytel had piloted Select services with thousands of audiobooks & ebooks in Marathi language only in 2020. Now the offering is expanded to 11 languages including Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Assamese, Gujarati, Odia & Kannada to choose from, at an affordable price point of ₹149 per month. You can subscribe for the plan here. Consumers will now get two paying options - "Select" payment option priced at Rs 149/- with access to regional languages and another one "Unlimited" priced at Rs 299 with access to all 11 languages along with English. The aim is to keep the offer choice to people who want to listen to Indian languages only or also the premium international titles in English. Book lovers and literary enthusiasts will find many popular titles on the Storytel app, from Classics like Miri Jiyori, Asmat, Jar Heral Sima, Burhi Aair Xadhu, as well as contemporary bestseller like Anuradha Desh, Xuruj Mukhirs Wopno, Nilar Karone Olop Bhalpuwa, Boroxunor Setar, Buddhajaya etc. Audiobook of award winning authors such as Mamoni Raison Goswami, Homen Borgohain, Syed Abdul Malik, Arupa Patangia Kalita, Apurba Sarma, Apurba Kumar Saikia, Manika Devi and many more are available on the app.

Storytel is associated with some of the best publishing houses of Bengal like Dey's Publishing, Patra Bharati, Dev Sahitya Kutir and many more. All time best-selling authors like Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Sunil Gangopadhyay, Bani Basu to contemporary authors like Pracheta Gupta, Debarati Mukhopadhyay and Abhijnan Roychowdhury, here you will find many titles from the best authors in Bengali literature. Expanding Storytel Select is the next step in Storytel's journey to offer customers options that they have been asking for, which is very much in sync with our strategy of going local and understanding customer needs better. "Our aim is to get people more and more closer to stories and literature that stems from their roots. With expanding Select as a product, we want to give users the power to choose and pay for what they actually consume. We were seeing doubled interest in the consumption of audiobooks in languages other than English, which is when we decided to launch an India specific plan - which lets one enjoy audiobooks in their language at an affordable pricing," said Yogesh Dashrath, Country Manager, Storytel India. Storytel is an audiobook and ebook app streaming service launched in India on 27th Nov 2017. The company is headquartered in Stockholm, Sweden and currently present in 25 markets across the globe. In India, the app currently hosts more than 2 lakh audiobooks and ebooks across 12 languages namely English, Hindi, Marathi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Assamese, Gujarati & Kannada.

## Beware! Here's why you can't win free Toyota car by clicking on '80th anniversary gift' link



**Mumbai, May 21 :** "Toyota 80th Anniversary Celebration! Through the questionnaire, you will have a chance to get a Toyota Corolla." If you come across this message on any of your social media platforms, beware! This message which has a link attached is doing the rounds on social media. It urges readers to click on the link and fill up a form that asks for their personal details. The questionnaire page also prominently displays fake comments seeming to be from people across the world. Some of the comments include: "I thought it was a joke but this morning I received a Toyota Corolla and would like to take more surveys!" and "I thought it was a joke, but it arrived this morning!". The red flags begin as they say right at the very beginning. Toyota was launched

on August 28, 1937. Hence, the company had completed its 80th anniversary on August 28, 2017 - not now. The carmaker had tweeted about its celebration back in 2017 too! It is evident from the link that it is not officially sent by

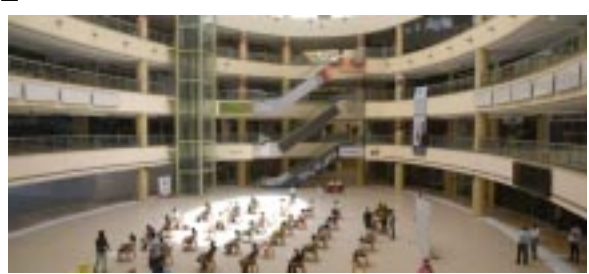
the company. The link 'http://freegifts.758-985.cn' does not contain the company's name or its domain. When The New Indian Express cross-checked the IP address on Geotek Datentech's IP checker, it revealed that '.cn' is a Chinese-registered domain. When readers click on the link, it takes them to another page that claims to give away a Toyota Corolla car if they take up the survey. If we take a close look at the page, we can spot many grammatical errors, which is something a well-established company like Toyota would not do. Also, it is said that in the history of Toyota, it has never given away cars for free. So, if you come across such a message or link, refrain from clicking on it and save yourself from falling prey to online fraud.

**Mumbai, May 21 :** BSE Sensex and Nifty 50 are once again looking to open in red on Wednesday, after ending nearly a per cent lower in the previous session. S&P BSE Sensex sits at 48,253, down 465 points while the Nifty 50 index closed just below 14,500. Trends on SGX Nifty were hinting at a gap-down opening for the domestic equity market indices. Technical analysts believe that Nifty 50 index has not broken the 14,400 level on a closing basis which means the support still holds. "If it cracks this level, Nifty could see levels closer to 14,000-14,100. On the upside, there is stiff resistance at 14,700 and until we do not get past that, we will not enter a bullish trend. It is a tight range and traders need to be cautious in their approach," said Manish Hathiramani, proprietary index trader and technical analyst, Deen Dayal Investments. Tata Steel, Adani Green Energy: As many as 20 BSE-listed companies including Adani Green Energy, Tata Steel, SRF, Adani Enterprises, Deepak Nitrite, Craftsmen Automation, and Angel Broking among others will announce their January-March quarter earnings on May

## PGCIL organises COVID-19 vaccination camps in NCR region; 2,600 people inoculated

**NEW DELHI, May 21 :** State-run Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) on Thursday said around 2,600 people have been inoculated at a vaccination drive organised by the company in the national capital region (NCR) of Delhi. Around 2,600 people have been vaccinated by PGCIL in three camps organised in the NCR territory. These

camps were organised for the age groups of 18-44 years and also for those above 45 years of age, a company statement said. PGCIL has organised vaccination camps in many locations for its employees at its establishments across the country like Kota, Bhiwadi, Misa, Namsai, Rourkela, Ara, Bihar Sharif, Saharsa, and Muzaffarpur etc.



5 stocks in focus, IDBI Bank, ICICI Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Kotak Bank, Adani Ports, ICICI Bank, Tata Chemicals, JSW Energy, L&T Tech stocks in focus. RIL, Kotak Bank, TCS, Maruti Suzuki, Yes Bank, SBI Life, auto stocks, Adani group, stocks in focus, sensex, nifty, stock market. RIL, Kotak Bank, TCS, Maruti Suzuki, Yes Bank, SBI Life, IndusInd Bank, autos, Adani group stocks in focus. RBL Bank: RBL Bank reported a 34 per cent on-year drop in net profit to Rs 75 crore as core income declined and provisions rose. The lender's net interest income (NII) declined 11 per cent on-year to Rs 906 crore. Steel stocks: Steel mills have raised prices by up to Rs 4,500 per tonne from the beginning of the month taking the benchmark hot rolled coil (HRC) price in the Mumbai market to a record high of nearly Rs 68,000 per tonne. Adani Total Gas: Adani Total Gas (ATGL) on Tuesday reported an 8.2 per cent on-year increase in net profit to Rs 471.9 crore in FY21 on a standalone basis, as the company utilised lower natural gas prices amid drop in demand during lockdowns. Coal India: With the second wave of Covid-19 affecting more than 5,400 Coal India (CIL) employees and their wards, including contractual workers across subsidiaries, operations have slowed down.



## Contd. From Page 1

**13 Naxals killed in encounter with**

(IGP) of Gadchiroli Gondia Range, confirmed to India Today TV that an encounter between the Naxals and the security forces is underway."Based on specific inputs, the police party, comprising C-60 commandos, had launched a search operation in the forest," he said. However, the ultras spotted the police party and opened fire, following which the C-60 commandos retaliated, in which 13 Naxals were killed. The security forces are conducting search operation as "more Naxals could be hiding in the area", according to the inputs. Some senior cadres of Naxals are suspected to be amongst those killed in the encounter. The encounter lasted around an hour, after which the remaining Naxals escaped into the dense forest, said Ankit Goyal, Superintendent of Police, Gadchiroli. Earlier, two Naxals including a woman were killed in an encounter with the security forces in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district. The gunbattle took place in the area under Sawargaon police outpost limits in Dhanora tehsil around 6 am, said an official. An SLR rifle, 8 mm rifle, 'cooker bomb', Improvised Explosive Devices and other material were seized by the police from the encounter site.

**Assam Govt. releases SOP to tackle**

with Necrosis (death of cells or tissue through disease or injury). The guidelines issued to prevent black fungus in COVID-19 patients suggested better control of the sugar levels during COVID with or without steroids, judicious use of steroids observing correct timing, correct dose and correct duration, use of clean or sterile water for humidifiers during the oxygen therapy. People were urged to use masks while visiting dusty construction sites, wear shoes, long trousers, long sleeve shirts, and gloves while handling garden soil, moss or manure, maintain personal hygiene and seek immediate medical attention in case they develop the symptoms. The death of a 27-year-old COVID-19 recovered patient due to black fungus in Assam on Wednesday was the first such case reported in the northeastern state.

**Akhil Gogoi allegedly 'Manhandled'**

also alleged that police were not letting him speak to the people. The Independent MLA, who was lodged in Guwahati central jail, is currently under treatment at Guwahati Medical College and Hospital. He was brought to the Assembly after being tested for Covid. He was accompanied by a team of police and security personnel, most of whom wore face shields and two wore PPE kits. "How can they do this? I have been tested but have you been tested for Covid?" Mr Gogoi asked those accompanying him. The 126 newly elected MLAs took their oath on the first day of the session today. The Governor is scheduled to address the House tomorrow. A motion of thanks to the Governor's Address is scheduled for May 24, the last day of the session. Mr Gogoi has been at the forefront of protests against forced evictions and big dam projects, among other issues, and has been arrested on several occasions, both during the previous Congress and the current BJP regime. He spearheads Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, which he founded with 60 other indigenous groups, to oppose the Citizenship Amendment Act that aims to grant Indian citizenship to six religious minorities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Mr Gogoi has been in jail since December 2019 when he was arrested after a protest rally against the Act. The matter was subsequently taken up by the National Investigation Agency and he was booked under the charge of sedition and provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. He could not campaign for the Assembly election on account of being jailed but still managed to defeat BJP's Surabhi Rajkonwari at Sibsagar. The NIA court in Guwahati recently granted him permission to attend the swearing-in ceremony.

**Tarun Tejpal's Acquittal Likely**

the then editor-in-chief of Tehelka magazine, of sexually assaulting a woman who was his colleague at that time in an elevator of a five-star resort in 2013. Women rights activist and cyber safety expert Aancha Srivastava said Tejpal himself admitted that he attempted to assault her. "Half of these cases don't even go in court and those which reach court and are fought and then to have this judgement is extremely demotivating. When a person has already accepted that he has misbehaved, then on what grounds has he been let off. If he is saying he did then he did it," she said. "When we set precedent with such verdicts then we deter more and more victims from coming forward to filing cases and fighting it," she said. All India Progressive Women's Association secretary Kavita Krishnan said the judicial system lets down another woman and the survivor had to go through hell. "The judicial system lets down another woman. No wonder women do not want to file a complaint with the police, she said in a tweet. Krishnan said Tejpal penned several apologies admitting to the incident. Goa police took suo motu notice, got FIR filed. Since then the survivor has been dragged through hell, she tweeted. The hell of being yanked around by police, courts, repeatedly to Goa. The hell of having this case tied to her neck like an albatross. The hell of systematic slander campaigns against her by TT (Tarun Tejpal) and Friends. Her integrity being smeared in court and in social parties," Krishnan said in another tweet. She said at the end of it all, the courageous woman did not get even a tiny taste of justice. Rape trials are deeply violent towards survivors. Yet again, a survivor has been demeaned, humiliated, and let down, she tweeted. Chhavi Methi of the Bharatiya Samajik Jagritik Sangathan said the judgement was disappointing. "It is disappointing for the whole humanity because it sets the precedent that someone who has power can get away with anything without any repercussions for their actions, Methi said. The Goa police had registered an FIR against Tejpal in November 2013, following which he was arrested. The Goa crime branch had filed a charge sheet against Tejpal, who has been out on bail since May 2014. He faced the trial under IPC sections 341 (wrongful restraint), 342 (wrongful confinement), 354 (assault or criminal force with intent to outrage modesty), 354-A (sexual harassment), 354-B (assault or use of criminal force to woman with intent to disrobe), 376(2)(f) (person in a position of authority over women, committing rape) and 376(2)(k) (rape by a person in a position of control).

**Chipko movement leader**

premier hospital. Condoling the death, Chief Minister Tirath Singh Rawat described it as a big loss not just for Uttarakhand and India but for the entire world. "It was he who made the Chipko movement a movement of the masses," Rawat said. Assam chief minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma condoled the demise of renowned environmentalist and Chipko movement leader Sundarlal Bahuguna, who succumbed to COVID-19 infection at All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in Rishikesh on Friday. "He so passionately championed the Chipko Movement and taught the value of forest conservation to many generations of us. In Sunderlal Bahuguna today, we have lost India's most iconic & ardent champion of environment. My humble tribute to the legend," CM Sarma tweeted. The 94-year-old, Padma Vibhushan and Padma Shri awardee was admitted to the hospital after his oxygen levels started fluctuating on May 8. The environmentalist had fought for the preservation of forests in the Himalayas for years. He is hugely credited for the success of the Chipko movement that began in 1973 at the foothills of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand (then a part of Uttar Pradesh). The environment activist was also actively involved in the Anti-Tehri Dam movement.

**PM Narendra Modi gets**

going to be a long fight," he told the frontline health workers at a virtual conference. "In our ongoing fight against COVID-19, a new challenge of Black fungus has surfaced. We must focus on taking precaution and preparation to deal with it," the PM added. He praised Varanasi and said it has "set a great example by the way it has equipped Pandit Rajan Mishra COVID hospital and increased the number of oxygen beds and ICU beds in the city, in such a short span of time." He also appreciated the role of ASHA and ANM workers for their contribution in managing coronavirus infection in the villages. "We have controlled the pandemic to a great extent, thanks to our common efforts. But there is no time to relax as we have to fight a long battle. We have to shift our focus towards villages in Purvanchal and Varanasi," the PM said.

**Delhi's COVID-19 positivity**

4. With this drop in positivity rate, it is being speculated that the lockdown imposed in the national capital may be revoked. Delhi also registered 252 more deaths on Friday. The national capital has till now recorded 14,12,959 Covid cases and 22,831 deaths. At the peak of the ongoing surge, Delhi reported over 28,300 new cases on April 20. Before this wave, the highest number of cases in a day was around 8,500 during the third wave of infections in November. As per the World Health Organisation, if COVID-19 positivity rate drops below 5 per cent it is considered within the safe zone. With this there will pressure on the Arvind Kejriwal government to lift the lockdown in place in Delhi. The number of daily cases recorded in the past 24 hours is also the lowest since April 1. Meanwhile, India's daily positivity rate has declined to 12.59 per cent, the Union health ministry said on Friday. Over 20.61 lakh tests COVID-19 tests were conducted in a span of 24 hours in the country, the highest-ever tests done in a single day.

**686 IIT Guwahati Students**

Public Sector Undertakings (PSU) this year. The maximum offers were made from the IT/Software sector, where the highest package offered was Rs 70 Lakh per annum. Students from Computer Science and Engineering received the highest number of offers, followed by Electronics and Communication Engineering, Mathematics and Computing, Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering, the release informed. According to the statement, IIT Guwahati has witnessed an increase in the pay packages offered to students during the academic year of 2020-21, despite the challenges of the pandemic. The average salary offered to B.Tech and B.Des students increased to Rs 21.41 Lakh Per Annum (LPA) during 2020-21 compared to Rs 20.62 LPA in the preceding year. Similarly, M.Tech and M.Des students were offered up to Rs. 17.92 LPA compared to Rs. 16.22 LPA in the preceding year. In an ongoing process of internships for M.Tech students, initiated this year, the institute has so far helped 260 students. The maximum stipend the students are receiving for the internship is Rs 2 Lakh per annum. "It has been a tumultuous year for everyone, but the students and the faculty have given their best to move forward in this academic year which has been laden with challenges. Thanks to all the employers who participated in the virtual Placements and made it a success," Dr. Abhishek Kumar, Head, IIT Guwahati Centre for Career Development, said while speaking about the numerous challenges the institute faced during this Campus Placement. "The students have been remarkable in coping with the current situation and the results of the placement drive are testament to the success. We have seen a trend in our recruitment process this year as a significant number of start-ups displayed interest in our students and made several offers", Dr. Bithiah Grace Jagannathan, Faculty Coordinator (Placements), IIT Guwahati, added. According to the statement, IIT Guwahati has an active ecosystem to support the entrepreneurial ambitions of students who opt-out of the Campus Placements to establish start-ups. Students who wish to pursue higher studies or prepare for civil services also opt-out of this drive.

**India prepares for Cyclone Yaas**

evacuation, rescue and restoration work in states affected by Cyclone Tauktae on the western coast are being called back, they said. The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Director General S N Pradhan tweeted that the force has decided to "airlift" West Bengal and Odisha-based teams of the force in view of Cyclone Yaas and its "possible impact" in the coastal districts of the two states. The exact number of NDRF teams to be earmarked for the latest cyclone will be decided as per inputs received from the India Meteorological Department. The situation is developing, the officials said. The central force had earmarked a total of 101 teams for the extremely severe cyclonic storm Tauktae that developed in the Arabian Sea and mainly affected the coastal areas of Gujarat and states like Maharashtra and Goa, apart from a few others on the western coastline of the country. Tauktae made landfall on Monday night near Una town in Gir Somnath district of Gujarat and wreaked havoc for around 28 hours before it weakened into a depression. Each NDRF team has 47 personnel who are equipped with tree and pole cutters, communication gadgets, inflatable boats and basic medical aid. Due to the COVID-19 spread, these teams have been provided orange-coloured full-bodied personal protection gear that includes a face shield for each rescuer. The NDRF has earlier said that most of its troops deployed for these operations have been vaccinated for coronavirus. Talking about Yaas, the IMD had on Thursday said that a low-pressure area is very likely to form over the north Andaman Sea and adjoining east-central Bay of Bengal around May 22. "It is very likely to intensify gradually into a cyclonic storm during the subsequent 72 hours. It is very likely to move northwestwards and reach West Bengal-Odisha coasts around 26th May evening," the Cyclone Warning Division of the IMD had said. The name Yaas has been given to the potential cyclone by Oman, as per a standard protocol of naming such cyclonic storms in rotation by affected countries in the same area. The name Tauktae was given by Myanmar, and it means gecko or a small lizard.

**World's Oldest Tea Executive**

the same period in 2019. The industry, which has still not recovered from last year's Covid-19 lockdown and paralysis, may now witness a 40% crop deficit in the first five months of this year due to poor rainfall across the state, says a study carried out by the North Eastern Tea Association (NETA), an organisation of tea producers. "The year 2021 has been an unusual year so far for the Assam tea industry as far as production is concerned. A study has been carried out to assess the crop loss due to the impact of a prolonged drought-like situation. It took into account the rainfall received in the last few days," said Bidyananda Barkakoty, adviser, NETA. "As per our study, the crop deficit from January to May this year will be about 60 million kg compared to the same duration in 2019. We have not compared crop figures with the year 2020 because last year the crop deficit from January to May was 78 million kg due to Covid lockdown. In percentage terms, the crop deficit from January to May this year will be about 40% compared to the same period in 2019." The average rainfall deficit is about 45% from January to April this year compared with the same period last year in the key tea-growing districts of Assam: Golaghat to Tinsukia. Comparative studies also reflect that these days the rainfall distribution is highly localised and there is a vast difference in the quantum of rainfall within a few kilometres. During the Covid-hit 2020, Assam lost around 78 million kilograms of tea compared to January-May 2019. The revenue loss was to the tune of Rs 1,128 crore, according to the study carried out by NETA. "Last year the crop deficit was at least commensurate by price initially even though it faltered towards the end of the season. But this year, we are yet to see the price appreciation which has added to the industry's woes of production loss," said Dipanjal Deka, secretary of the Indian Tea Association. Extreme weather fluctuations, both in terms of temperature and rainfall, have impacted the growth of tea leaves severely. A temperature drop from 34 to 19 degrees Celsius coupled with hardly any sunshine for the past one week, preceded by temperatures above 34 degrees Celsius is catastrophic for the crop in its peak production phase, say industry people. "We do not remember facing such a prolonged drought in the last 30 years. Apart from the huge loss of crop due to rainfall deficit, the drought at the very beginning of the tea season has also delayed the application of fertilisers by around two months.

**'Ensure health facilities stocked**

taking immediate necessary measures, in all coastal districts. He directed officials to ensure adequate power back up arrangements for all the hospitals, labs, vaccine cold chain and Oxygen generation units (MLO, PSA plants) other supportive medical facilities. "It needs to be ensured that health facilities are stocked with adequate essential medicines and supplies to meet any exigencies arising due to disruption on movement of vehicles, due to high wind and heavy rainfall", the letter read. He also pointed out that availability of water, electricity and fuel for the health facilities in affected districts should be ensured. "As per information provided by IMD, a low pressure area is very likely to form over North Andaman Sea and likely to intensify into a cyclonic storm by May 24, likely to move northwestwards and reach near Odisha, West Bengal coasts around morning of May 26, as of now," Bhushan told Chief Secretaries.

**BSF Apprehended 01 Bangladeshi Cattle Smuggler And Rescued The Cattle From Indo-Bangladesh Border**

**Guwahati, May 21 :** In yet another success in its crusade against smuggling activities, 47Bn BSF under the aegis of Guwahati Frontier of Border Security Force apprehended 01 Bangladeshi cattle smuggler and rescued 06 cattle heads on 20th May 2021 from bordering area of village-Salbari, PS-Sitalkuchi, Distt- Coochbehar (West Bengal). 02. Acting on tip off, on 20th May 2021, the troops of Border outpost Salbari of 47Bn BSF under Sector headquarter Gopalpur carried out a special operation in the general area of village Salbari and apprehended 01 Bangladeshi cattle smuggler and rescued 06 cattle heads while being smuggled from India to Bangladesh. 03. Details of apprehended Bangladeshi smuggler is as under:- Md Bablu Hossain (26 Yrs), S/o Md. Mominur Hussain, R/o Vill- Guri Tari (Dhabalguri), PO-Sarkarhat, PS- Patgram, Distt- Lalmonirhat, (Bangladesh). 04. Apprehended Bangladeshi cattle smuggler and rescued cattle are being handed over to PS-Sitalkuchi, Distt- Coochbehar (West Bengal) for further legal action. 05. Keeping in view of the vulnerability of border, heightened activities of the smugglers and anti-national elements on the border, BSF troops are always alert towards the issues of trans-border crimes & illegal infiltration and are making all out efforts to prevent commission of such crimes.

**441 fresh cases recorded, three more people die of COVID 19 in Nagaon district**

**NAGAON, May 21:** 441 more fresh cases were recorded today, taking the total cumulative active COVID positive cases in the district to 3224 while three more people died of COVID 19 today. Including these three death cases, a total of 39 people have been died of COVID 19 in the district, sources said. Meanwhile total 288 COVID positive patients have been recovered from the virus today, taking the total recovery cases in the district to 4019, sources further added. Sources claimed that among those who tested positive today, 70 positive patients were immediately admitted to Nagaon COVID hospital as well as to COVID Care Centres set up in the district while the rest were put in home quarantine. Rapid Antigen Test was conducted on 4471 people today while RT-PCR test was conducted on 55 swab samples, sources said adding further that the district administration today declared three villages - Teliagaon, Dolapani under Kaliabor revenue circle, Bogoriguri village under Nagaon Sadar revenue circle and Amsoi tea estate under Raha revenue circle as containment zones today due to rapid spreading of novel corona virus in those areas so far. Meanwhile, one centenarian woman, hailing from Jajari Bogoriguri village in the district, tested positive for COVID 19 today. The woman was immediately admitted to Nagaon Dhakial Phookon College based special women COVID Care Centre today. Talking to this correspondent here this afternoon, Dr Surajit Bhagabati, the principal of Nagaon ADP College said that the college authority in association with the district administration set up a special women COVID Care Centre in the Indoor stadium of the college campus only for asymptomatic women COVID positive patients. In this special CCC, there are seventy beds with almost all medical facilities including sufficient physicians as well as nursing assistants. Total 30 asymptomatic women patients have been already admitted to the CCC and the centenarian woman is one of those 30 asymptomatic women patients. Dr Bhagabati said adding that the health condition of the centenarian COVID positive patient was still stable and almost fine. He however said that all facilities including medicine, health check up and energetic food items were being supplied to them time to time from the college canteen under special care.

**Omprakash Pramila Devi Memorial Chairtable Trust comes forward to aid the needy**

**Hojai, May 21 :** Amid the second wave of Covid 19 pandemic, an Lanka based Chairtable Trust viz., Omprakash Pramila Devi Memorial Chairtable Trust have come forward to help the needy people. Talking to this Correspondent, The Chairman cum Managing Trustee of the trust Mr. Rohit Agarwalla said, "during this unprecedented global crisis and partial Lockdown, our trust, with the help of the Hojai District Administration and Lanka Police, is trying to help needy poor people who are facing serious scarcity of food or medicines. He said, "We have decided to provide Meals for Free for the home quarantined/ isolating Corona patients and their family members in and around Lanka Municipal area. " "Such needy Patients May contact us on WhatsApp or by Regular Calls on contact numbers 7896603640 (Please contact between 1 PM to 7 PM) and 6001606559 (Please use Regular call only if Whatsapp is not available) by giving details like address, number of person for whom food is required etc. We will start delivery of fresh healthy vegetarian food packets (for Dinner only) to their door step by next evening," he added. He further added, "We will also deliver medicines to them on receipt of request on WhatsApp with proper prescription. Such medicines will be provided Free of Cost to the needy, and those who can afford, can pay the cost of the same. " "Our appreciation also goes to the doctors, nurses, hospital staff, conservancy workers, Police, suppliers of essential goods and services and all others who have been tirelessly working to keep us safe. As a mark of respect to Covid Warriors, we will be providing healthy home cooked lunch to the health department staff and Police staff who work in the Vaccination and Covid testing centres in the Lanka area." Agarwalla added.

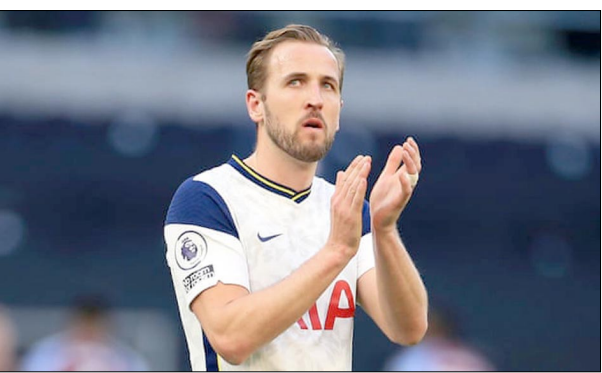
**DCPU Rescues Two Children Rescued and Handed over to Family on Coomplaint-**

**Aalo, May 21 :** Acting on a complaint regarding two children on 16th May 2021 through Child Helpline, a detailed inquiry was conducted by Shri Mijum Doke, Legal cum Probation Officer under Child Welfare Committee, District Child Protection Unit, Aalo and two children were rescued and restored to the family member in the presence of Child Welfare Committee (CWC) on 20th May 2021. While citing the matter Shri Mijum Doke, Legal cum Probation Officer (LPO) West Siang District, Aalo requested all citizens of West Siang District not take law in their hands as child Labour in any form and child trafficking are strictly prohibited by Indian constitution and Child Labour Laws. He also requested to go through proper adoption process if any prospective parents want to adopt. Merely keeping a child without proper process is invalid as per relevant law.





# Harry Kane claims Spurs could be wise to sell and he will decide own future



**London, May 21 :** Harry Kane has suggested that Daniel Levy may be wise to sell him this summer because his value is at its peak, and the Tottenham striker has mentioned £100m as a potentially acceptable figure. Kane, who is determined to get a move away - most likely to Manchester City - also feels he should not be held against his will after giving his all for Spurs since joining as an 11-year-old."As players, you don't know what the chairman's thinking," Kane told the Sky pundit Gary Neville in an interview for The Overlap podcast. "I mean he might want to sell me. He might be thinking: 'If I can get £100m for you, then why not?' You know what I mean. I'm not going to be worth that for the next two or three years." "I hope ... I mean, we have a good enough relationship. I've given the club - well, I've been there 16 years of my life. So I hope we can have a good honest conversation and see where we're at in that aspect." Kane's interview with Neville, which will be released in full on Friday, was recorded at the start of the month and some of it has been overtaken by events - not least the fact it is now public knowledge that the player wants a transfer, the story having broken on Monday night. Kane says that "I never said I'd stay at Spurs for the rest of my career; I'd never say that I would leave Spurs," and also says he is "not rushing anything, I'm not desperate to do anything". The England captain talks about needing a meeting with Levy, rather than having had one. It is still unclear

whether he has had the conversation in person, although it is known his desire to leave has been communicated. Neville asks Kane, who is desperate to win trophies having failed to do so, whether he is approaching a crossroads. "I think so," Kane replies. "I think it's definitely a conversation to be had with the club. I want to be playing in the biggest games, the biggest moments. This season I'm watching the Champions League, the English teams in there doing amazing, and they are the games I want to be involved in." "So for sure it's a moment in my career where I have to reflect and see where I'm at and have a good honest conversation with the chairman. I hope we can have that conversation. I'm sure he'll want to set out the plan of where he sees it. But ultimately it's going to be down to me and how I feel and what's going to be the best for me in my career at this moment in time." The last assertion is questionable, with Levy against the notion of selling a player who remains under contract for three years. What the Neville interview does represent is the latest step in Kane's exit strategy. The timelines are a little blurred and at no point does the player say explicitly that he wants to leave, but it does not take much to read between the lines. "I don't want to come to the end of my career and have any regrets so I want to be the best I can be," Kane said. "I'm at that stage where you could say people might look at it as though he's desperate for trophies, he needs trophies. I still feel like I've got almost another career to play. I've got seven, eight years ... kind of what I've had so far in the Premier League. I've still got so much more to give." "I'm not afraid to say I want to be the best. I'm not afraid to say I want to try and get on the level that Ronaldo and Messi got to. That's my ultimate goal - to be winning trophies season in, season out; scoring 50, 60, 70 goals, season in, season out."

# Wayne Mardle: 'I wanted to be a clown. No one wants that any more'

**London, May 21 :** A couple of months ago, Wayne Mardle was filming a celebrity episode of the ITV gameshow Bullseye when he was gripped by a strange and unfamiliar sensation. You might think that, as a former professional darts player and now one of the sport's most recognisable commentators, performing on television is the last thing that would faze him. But as he prepared to go on stage in tandem with the former Coronation Street actor Angela Griffin, some old demons began to resurface. In an instant, Mardle remembered why he had given up the game more than a decade ago. "I can honestly say I was fraught with the pressure, with the tension," he says. "My head was swimming, my arm was tight, my hand was cold, my feet were freezing. I don't want to be that pressurised ever again. And you know what? I absolutely hated it." It is a recollection that may surprise those who remember Mardle as one of the sport's consummate showmen. Back then it was the loud Hawaiian shirts and the dancing on stage; these days it is his strident, surgical punditry for Sky Sports. But over the course of an hour-long interview, and the memoir it is promoting, what becomes clear is that behind the flamboyant character of "Hawaii 501" lies a man defined as much by reflection and regret as by pride and big-time swagger. He was some player in his heyday, emerging out of the pubs of Essex to become one of the sport's superstars. Like his mentor Bobby George, Mardle threw with a street fighter's heart and a conjuror's flourish: playing up to the crowd, grinding out the big moments, milking the spotlight for all he could. He reached five world

championship semi-finals between 2001 and 2008. Then, suddenly, it evaporated. At the start of 2009, Mardle was still a top 10 player. By 2011 it was all over: his game in pieces, his self-esteem at rock-bottom, retired before age 40. In retrospect, he realises now, his game never really recovered from an excruciating bout of mumps that put him out of action for six months. "My wife said it finished me off," he says. "She said I lost my fight

to the unfancied Kirk Shepherd in the last four. "My attitude was terrible," he admits. "I knew I was miles better than him. I was mocking him in the practice room about his lack of ability - jovial, but behind it there was a nastiness that I'd never really shown before. Or since." Still, Mardle's colourful persona made him a natural fit for television, where - along with the likes of Gary Neville, Will Greenwood and Nasser Hussain - he became one of a new

often fraught cultural transformation by which a pub game becomes a global multimillion pound industry. For thousands of aspiring tour players, darts is now a viable career option. And yet, Mardle observes, with increased professionalism something has perhaps been lost too: the characters, the showmen, the sense of lawless hedonistic fun that characterised his own era. "I wanted to be a clown," he says. "I don't think anyone wants to be a clown any more. It is frowned upon. Players are afraid of letting their guard down. You go up there, you concentrate, you do not muck around, you play to win. Peter Wright, Dimitri Van den Bergh, Michael van Gerwen, Gerwyn Price, that's as close as we've got today. But as for me and Bobby, I don't think that'll happen ever again." Not that he misses the life. Far from it. Partly it is a result of seeing the social media abuse many players cop these days, and of which he attracts his own share. "Sometimes I can hack it," he says. "But at the moment I'm having a personal hiatus. The last year of my life has been horrendous. My mum died of lung cancer last July. My dad's got advanced dementia. Sometimes I don't need to pick up my phone to see 'Wayne Mardle is a C-U-N-T' for no apparent reason. And I know from being a professional sportsman: the highs and lows can take you to the edge." Mardle's book, in keeping with his life, reflects those highs and lows. Parts of it - the predictably bawdy stories of life on tour - are extremely funny. Parts are reflective and sad. Professionally speaking, life is good now. Darts is going from strength to strength; the work keeps rolling in; he knows himself better than he ever did. But if there is a note of wistfulness there, it is perhaps that the lessons he learned from darts came too late to save his career. "I remember being that kid on the up," he says. "The 20-year-old turning up at Pontins, winning £1,000 and skipping home. But then I remember that downward spiral. I've always got slightly stressed. It's why I wore the Hawaiian shirts. It was why I danced. It was why I was that clown. I was deflecting importance. And you know what? It worked."



after that. My form went pretty quickly, and I just thought it would turn around. It doesn't. You have to really work at it. Unfortunately you live and learn, and I learned that bit too late." Wayne Mardle reacts during his 2009 Whyte & Mackay Premier League match against James Wade. What did he learn? "My problem," he explains, "is that I thought I'd be doing it for ever. And you keep wasting opportunities. Sometimes it's through being unprofessional, like when I went on a 48-hour gambling and drinking bender before the Desert Classic final [in 2005]. But there's times when you just lose and think: 'I'll be all right.' I just wasn't that driven." "I really loved the game. I still do. But in a sad way, now I look back, it's a regret that winning or losing wasn't that much to me. I never had it in me to be this relentless winning beast. I've known [16-time world champion] Phil Taylor for 20 years, and that man would do anything in his power to be better than anyone else. I was all right just being me." "This is why his playing career is defined by those what-ifs. Perhaps the biggest came in 2008, when Mardle beat Taylor at the world championships only to lose

generation of Sky commentators offering not just opinions but intelligent, granular analysis. Mardle himself drew inspiration from the likes of Butch Harmon in golf, whose forensic punditry catered to a more engaged, knowledgeable audience. "Back in my day, there was no such thing as darts coaching," Mardle says. "Now we live in a more analytical world. Everything is driven by proof of performance. People want to know why the dart's going low-left, or flying high-right. Back in my day, apart from averages, there was none of that." "Not everyone feels the same way. Even now, large swathes of the sport remain stubbornly disdainful of the idea that darts can or even should be analysed. "I've heard pros say on TV they don't believe in coaching, that it's in our nature to just throw," says Mardle, who combines his TV work with a coaching school. "And that breaks my heart. That kind of backward thinking, it's nonsense. In golf, amateurs and pros swear by coaching. Come 10-15 years, the new breed of darts players will have coaches travelling with them. The barriers are being knocked down." "In part, you sense this is a product of heritage, the gradual and

# US PGA: Corey Connors takes overnight lead with Brooks Koepka in contention

**London, May 21 :** Those taking interest in Brooks Koepka's preview press conference at this US PGA Championship may have sensed an unwitting stumble into an episode of Grey's Anatomy. Some 16 out of 17 questions posed to Koepka related in some way or other to matters of injury. Therein lies the reason it has been easy to forget Koepka's one-time - and recent - specialism on these platforms. Fitness woes, apparently prolonged by knee surgery just weeks before the Masters, have threatened to undermine the Floridian's quest for greatness. Two of the 31 year old's major triumphs to date came in this event. Koepka missed the cut at Augusta National last month. He should have no such problems on Kiawah Island. Koepka's 69 meant early prominence in the second major of 2021. By close of play, he was two adrift of the inspired Corey Connors, who claimed the overnight lead. The Canadian hit six birdies and just one bogey to card a five-under-par 67. Koepka ends the first round in joint-second with five other players - 2011 winner Keegan Bradley, Viktor Hovland, Aaron Wise, England's Sam Horsfield and Australia's Cam Davis. His showing was all the more admirable given the double bogey he produced at the 10th, his 1st. Bullish Brooks is back, even if it is easy to infer at least an element of on-course discomfort. "I'm ready to play," he said. "I've been itching to do this since Augusta. I feel so much better now. I don't need to be 100% to be able to play good. In my mind, it's just a major week. Just show up. That's all you've got to do." The thing is, for a spell Koepka did actually make it look that easy. Koepka arrived in South Carolina as the world's 13th-ranked player. He spent 38 consecutive weeks at No 1 from May 2019. Various ailments explain what happened next but this slide would have been no less easy for Koepka to handle. For so long, he talked the talk and walked the walk. An attritional day one at Kiawah pulled Koepka back towards his psychological comfort zone. "I love it when it's difficult," Koepka added. "I think that's why I do so well in the majors. I just know mentally I can grind it out. Like when it's windy like this, it's not so much putting, it's more about ball striking. I felt like I struck it really well today." Save for that first hole, where he thrashed a three-wood into a grass bank. "I deserved every bit of that double bogey," Koepka said. Rory McIlroy,



playing with Koepka, watched his opening tee shot sail high, wide and not very handsomely into a water hazard. McIlroy's 75 was notable for the hitting of just seven from 14 fairways and 30 putts. Context is important - this was a brutally tough day on a brutally tough course - but McIlroy has bemoaned slow starts in major championships. Playing late on Friday, when gusts are likely to be severe, is unlikely to give the Northern Irishman much scope to recover ground. Earlier, Bradley cracked his drive at the 18th into a grandstand before admitting an element of method behind the madness. "It's definitely comforting that it's there," Bradley said. "It's the right side of the hole, the bunkers are so dead over there. I wasn't trying to hit it in there by any means but definitely from that tee, it's in play." Collin Morikawa, the defending champion, signed for a 70 - the same score as Phil Mickelson who made a late surge up the leaderboard. US Open champion Bryson DeChambeau admitted he was "out of sorts" after a 72. His was a strange day that included five bogeys. "The wind kicked my butt," said DeChambeau. "This is the most difficult golf course that I've played on tour, and that is a straight-up fact for me. That requires a lot of energy." There were minor rumblings of discontent as Rickie Fowler was handed a special exemption to compete here. Fowler's 71 proved a fine start in respect of justifying the PGA of America's generosity. "I have a little extra motivation, maybe," Fowler said. "Obviously I am very appreciative to have the opportunity to be here. Prior to getting the special invite, we were already under the assumption that I was in. I'll take the invite and be here in a

heartbeat but I think there is a little more motivation to go take advantage of it." Tyrrell Hatton, Paul Casey, Louis Oosthuizen and the 2013 champion Jason Dufner were among those to match Fowler's 71. Dufner, who is renowned for his swing knowledge, was wonderfully candid when asked whether he might fancy coaching at the conclusion of his playing career. "Never," Dufner said. "First off, there's no money in it, and second off, dealing with four players is a nightmare. You don't want to be part of it. That's just fact. Ask any of the teachers."

# Adam Gemili 'would take a knee' in Tokyo and warns IOC over protest ban

**London, May 21 :** Adam Gemili has vowed to take a knee in support of Black Lives Matter if he wins an Olympic medal in Tokyo - and warned the IOC that "all hell will break loose" if it tries to ban athletes from protesting on the podium. The British sprinter also accused the International Olympic Committee of double standards for hailing athletes who made Black Power salutes at the Mexico Games in 1968 while preventing modern-day stars from doing the same. "For sure I would be happy to take a knee if I was successful at the Olympics and I had that opportunity," said Gemili, who finished fourth in the 200m at the Rio Olympics in 2016 and has won multiple world 4x100m relay medals. "I would definitely protest. The fact

the IOC is telling athletes 'no, you can't do it' is only going to make people more angry. If the opportunity came, I wouldn't shy away from it." Under Rule 50, athletes are banned from protesting on the podium, field of play or at ceremonies - although the IOC is yet to reveal what sanctions rulebreakers in Tokyo will face. Gemili said he was puzzled by the IOC's stance. "This is what I don't understand: the IOC are so quick to use Tommie Smith, the picture of his fist raised, but they are saying 'actually, no one is allowed to do that'. It doesn't make sense. I don't think you can ban an athlete for protesting. And if they do all hell would break loose and it could go south and sour very quickly. They will be very naive

to even try to do that." The Olympics is not a place to be political, it's a place for sport and to bring the whole world together but the whole BLM movement is more than political. It's about being a good human, and equal rights for everyone. It's not something which should be turned away so easily like the IOC is doing. I find it quite astounding that the IOC is telling people it is going to ban them from Olympics, or medals, or whatever." Last month the IOC said 67% of the athletes it surveyed backed keeping Rule 50 in place. Gemili questioned the IOC's methodology, however, saying he did not believe it accurately captured the dissent from athletes of different races and ethnicities.

# Ford inspired by Foxes' FA Cup victory as Leicester Tigers tackle Montpellier

**Leicester, May 21 :** It says a lot about the decline of Leicester Tigers that George Ford struggles to remember how old he was the last time they won a major trophy. It was the last of their 10 Premiership titles in 2013 - for the record, he was 20 - and, barring a negligible Anglo-Welsh Cup in 2017, the subsequent eight years have been barren. In the interim Leicester City have been crowned Premier League champions, last weekend they won the FA Cup and it is hard to escape the feeling the Tigers have been left behind. Back at Twickenham on Friday night, however, they contest their first Challenge Cup final against Montpellier - Leicester are traditionally used to dining at Europe's top table - and if victory would not exactly herald a return to the glory days it would be something tangible to demonstrate

improvement in Steve Borthwick's first full season in charge. They have finished the two previous Premiership seasons in 11th - decline had turned to decay - but under Borthwick there is a hard edge about the Tigers, exemplified by power runners such as Ellis Genge and Jasper Wiese, even if it is not always pretty to watch. Ford, for his part, does not feel like the current side is living in the shadows of those which dominated in the late 90s and first decade of this century, winning back-to-back Heineken Cups and seven of their Premiership titles. But had anyone at the time suggested the 2013 triumph, when Ford came off the bench to steer Leicester past Saracens before spending four years at Bath, would be their last significant bit of silverware, they would have been laughed all the way back down

the M1. "The first part of my time here we won the Premiership trophy [in my last season]," says Ford. "That's one of the highlights of my career so I don't get sick hearing about it at all. That's why Leicester is the club it is, it's well followed because of the history. But we're a different team, different personnel, different coaches, a different era. We've got to work hard to keep improving and try and win things ourselves and build a memory bank we can be proud of." Ford and

Borthwick both see Leicester as underdogs against Montpellier but though the 10,000 tickets available had not sold out as of Thursday luncheon it is a safe bet that the majority of those in attendance will be Tigers fans.





# This run's for you, Will : losing a friend and learning not to hate jogging

**London, May 21 :** "Distance. One kilometre" says the computerised Strava voice into the wireless headphones. "Time. Five minutes. And 48 seconds." Almost six minutes? That must be wrong. Please no more than five. It felt fast. Suddenly my calves start burning. My lungs

you, and that's before you factor in the extra energy required to briefly hop off the kerb. It's less fluid movement, more a set of individual completed actions. Land. Stop. Lift leg. Land. Stop. Repeat. Your face crimson after eight seconds. It's slow motion. Walking on the moon. The

and further apart. I remember hobbling through the 18th - huge number 18s flanking a yellow Flora archway. Balloons everywhere. Eight to go. What seemed like hours later I saw the next marker in the distance. Eighteen miles. The huge number 18s. Again. Not a 19 in sight. My mind had added a mile. It broke me. By the end I was going so slowly I could talk to the crowd. "Don't ever do this. It's not worth it." I finished. But I didn't run it. There's a difference. Never again. I promised myself. And then the following year 16 of my friends decided to tie themselves together to get a world record. I signed up; I wanted the attention. Colin Jackson interviewed us on Tower Bridge on BBC1. Five and a half hours. I made a solemn promise with one of the others. Remember this pain. Never again. Never. Then a few months ago, buoyed up by a competitive WhatsApp group of pretty much those same friends I was tied to 15 years earlier, and the Strava app to continuously tell you when everyone else has gone running - something finally clicked. Running has succeeded in helping us in some small way remember the importance of our friendships. It turns out the pain of running relatively quickly is identical to the pain of running incredibly slowly - it just takes less time. My 5k personal best fell from almost half an hour to under 21 minutes; 10k in less than 44 minutes. I discount the Strava glitch that gave me the women's 400m world record the other day. I didn't love running. But for the first time, I didn't hate it. In February this year we lost one of our best mates, Will. He had been ill for a while. But his final descent was sudden and unexpected. Or at least we never wanted to expect it, so we never did. Your school mates are invincible, and he was the best

of us. WhatsApping a final goodbye video to a mate is an impossible task. As many readers will sadly know too well, a funeral under Covid restrictions, with so many watching only on Zoom, is heart-breakingly sad. Perhaps more for us than for anyone else, we embarked on a running challenge. To cover the distance from the village Will grew up and lived in, Shelford near Cambridge, to Cartago in Colombia, where his wife was born - 8,640 km - raising money for the hospice that looked after him so incredibly well in his last two weeks. For the past three months, a group of us have gone out in all weathers, at very different speeds, and have run very different distances to remember our mate. Each run popping up on the app - #Run4Will #Shelford2 Colombia. Feame Cotton's Sounds of the 90s podcast has got me through almost every step. Memories of sixth-form discos or a "free house" - Oasis, Alex Party, TLC - can really give you that push when there's nothing in your legs. People all over the world have donated money and donated miles - both enormously appreciated. While the hardest is past 500km, I broke the 200 mark this week. That's more than I'd run in the previous decade. I still sometimes revert to my pre-pandemic running attitude. I like to think Will would forgive me for jumping on an e-bike after 6km the other day because my knee felt a bit sore. And our challenge is nothing compared to those running marathons after marathon, day after day. Fundraising gets more and more extreme with every year. This time the physical pain doesn't outweigh the emotional. But running has succeeded in helping us in some small way remember the importance of our friendships and more importantly to keep remembering our friend.



tighten. Psychologically defeated by an app. Nine more of them? There's no way. I could just do 5k. I didn't sign a binding contract before I left the house. No one will know. There are those runners who glide, or even bounce, along the pavement. Innsbruck Marathon finisher 2009 T-shirt. Tiny shorts. A laid-back, almost indifferent expression - commuting with a rucksack, little straw poking out of it. Some even capable of conversation - managing to take pleasure in someone else's company while they run. On the same streets - the rest of us. Every step is heavy - the ground feels it - no give in the ankles or knees or hips. Cartilage ebbing away with every stride. Something always niggles: is that a calf strain? Is that a tendon? Have I got shin splints? Is that headphone rubbing a bit on my ear? Terrified about the pedestrian 40 yards ahead because even a slight sideways move will take that little bit out of

run is always in charge, eating away at your willpower with every second until you reach the end and somehow you're still alive, holding yourself, panting in enthralled relief. Like the tedious cliché I am, I discovered jogging in lockdown - or more accurately I discovered it was actually bearable. I had been aware of the pursuit for some time. I'd seen people do it. But faced with literally nothing else to do, for the first time I actually tried to run - to turn it from an ordeal into a hobby. I had completely avoided anything of the sort until I was 25 years old, when a girlfriend left me and the physical agony of running was the only thing that outweighed the emotional angst of my first broken heart. I signed up for the London Marathon. I hated it. I went to Goa six weeks beforehand and got dysentery. Not ideal preparation. I was overtaken by a cream bun on the Mall. The mile markers got further

## Surrey collapse against Middlesex county cricket-as it happened

**London, May 21 :** A remarkable mid-afternoon collapse saw Surrey surrender an excellent start to the London derby against Middlesex at the Oval, losing six wickets for just seven runs as a handsome 135-0 melted into 146-6 at stumps. For as long as Rory Burns and Mark Stoneman remained at the crease life appeared breezy for Surrey - even if it was blowing a gale throughout, the weather refusing to offer a warm welcome as paying spectators returned to the Oval. But Middlesex came out after lunch with renewed purpose, the interval followed by eight overs in which just two singles were scored. They did not lose their focus when that period brought no reward, the batsmen regrouped and in successive overs both completed half-centuries. After being put in to bat in tough conditions, under leaden skies with the floodlights on and that vicious wind whipping across the ground, Burns survived an uncomfortable opening over from Tim Murtagh but settled from there, and

it was off Murtagh that he reached his half-century, for the fifth innings in succession, with a lovely straight drive. Stoneman had narrowly beaten him to the milestone, also with a four, and less happily their dismissals also came in successive overs. Stoneman was the first to go, extremely unfortunate to be given out after the ball flicked a pad on its way through to John Simpson,



the Middlesex keeper. Ethan Bamber soon had Burns lbw, and over the following quarter of an hour Ollie Pope, Ben Foakes and Jamie Smith were dismissed with-

out scoring and Jordan Clark managed just a single. In the circumstances, Surrey will have been grateful that it was not only tea that poured at the next interval, with rain giving them until the morning to regroup. With similar conditions across the country the only team to choose to bat were Warwickshire, who were swiftly shown the error of their ways at Chelmsford. Will

Sibley's resolute 120-ball 43 slowed Essex's progress, and Tim Bresnan cemented his unlikely place at the top of Warwickshire's batting averages with an unbeaten 47 as the visitors ended the day on 159-7. It took until 4.30pm for Kent's match against Glamorgan to get under way because of overnight downpours, with four other matches completing less than their 22 overs, so many teams will start day two with an almost clean slate. Nottinghamshire would have been among them, but lost two wickets in the final seven deliveries at Trent Bridge to stumble to 51-3 against Worcestershire. At the Ageas Bowl, where play started on Wednesday, Hampshire ended the day on 223-7 against Leicestershire with Ian Holland top-scoring with 82 and Ed Barnes, for the first time in his career, taking three wickets. The ECB meanwhile has confirmed that Jofra Archer will have surgery on his right elbow tomorrow, after which they will provide an update about his prognosis.

## Wizards roll over Pacers in NBA play-in game to book playoff date with 76ers

**Washington, May 21 :** Russell Westbrook and Bradley Beal did what they do a near triple-double for one, 25 points in just 29 minutes for the other and the Washington Wizards reached the NBA playoffs as the Eastern Conference's No 8 seed by overwhelming the Indiana Pacers 142-115 in the play-in round Thursday night. Washington led by as many as 38 points and advanced to face Joel Embiid and the No 1 seed Philadelphia 76ers in the first round, marking quite a turnaround for coach Scott Brooks' crew, who were 17-32 in early April. Indiana's run of five consecutive playoff appearances ended in coach Nate Bjorkgren's debut season. A little more than a week after breaking Oscar Robertson's career record for most regular-season triple-doubles, Westbrook finished Thursday with 18 points, 15 rebounds and eight assists, and it was Beal second in the NBA in scoring two years in a row whose three-pointer opened up a 30-point lead at 98-68 with about four minutes left in the third quarter. Beal skipped the fourth quarter entirely. Westbrook sat out the last eight

was Beal who has been dealing with a strained left hamstring wind-milling his arms as he and his teammates poured it on, hitting 58.1% of their shot attempts; the visitors only finished above 40% thanks to some fourth-quarter baskets long after the outcome was decided. Malcolm Brogdon led Indiana with 24 points. Pacers All-Star Domantas Sabonis had a triple-double with 19 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists before fouling out early in the fourth quarter. They now head into the offseason, while the Wizards are back in the postseason after missing out the past two years before acquiring Westbrook in a trade that sent John Wall to Houston. Washington dealt with a Covid-19 outbreak that affected more than half of its roster and led to a two-week hiatus. The team also lost two starters for the season with injuries: first-round draft pick Deni Avdija (broken right ankle) he took shots in the paint while seated on a black folding chair before Thursday's game and center Thomas Bryant (torn left knee ligament). Denver's Nikola Joki? finished ninth in the MVP voting last season.



minutes and tossed his shoes to a fan. The backcourt mates both heard "M-V-P!" chants during trips to the foul line, as did reserve center Robin Lopez in an appreciative if more tongue-in-cheek way, from a giddy crowd capped at 5,333 a quarter of the arena's capacity because of Covid-19 concerns. The coronavirus pandemic is also why the season consisted only of 72 games, instead of the standard 82, and the league created the play-in format involving teams that were 7-10 in each conference. The Wizards went 17-6 over the last six weeks of the season to finish with the eighth-best record in the East, but then lost the 7-v-8 game at the Boston Celtics 118-100 Tuesday. The Pacers won the 9-v-10 game at home against the Charlotte Hornets 144-117 that night. Washington averaged 139.7 points while sweeping the three-game season series against the Pacers and, well, this one had much the same feel. It was close until a little more than one and a half minutes elapsed in the second quarter, when the score was 34-all. From there, Westbrook took over for a bit, bullying his way through the lane and mean-mugging Pacers players. A 16-0 run fueled by six points from Lopez made it 50-34 and prompted the Pacers to take a timeout. They never recovered. Heading to the sideline for the break, Westbrook paused on the court to raised a hand and wiggled his fingers while looking into the stands, pleading for more noise. Later, it

Philadelphia's Joel Embiid and Golden State's Stephen Curry didn't get listed on a single ballot a year ago. A year later, one of them will walk away with the NBA's highest individual prize. Joki?, Embiid and Curry were revealed Thursday night as the three top votegetters for this year's NBA MVP award, one that will be presented sometime during the playoffs. Curry is a two-time winner, Joki's best previous finish was fourth in 2019 and Embiid's best MVP showing was seventh in 2019. Joki? would be the first Denver player to win MVP. Embiid would be Philadelphia's first winner since Allen Iverson in 2001 and Curry could become the ninth player in NBA history to win the trophy three times. The 18 top-three vote-getters in six award categories - MVP, coach of the year, most improved player, rookie of the year, defensive player of the year and sixth man of the year - were announced Thursday. The Utah Jazz, who finished with the NBA's best record and home-court advantage throughout the playoffs, had a league-best four finalists. New York, back in the playoffs for the first time since 2013 as the No. 4 seed in the Eastern Conference, had three award finalists. The Jazz and Knicks swept the top-three spots in the sixth man of the year category, with Jordan Clarkson and Joe Ingles both making the list from Utah and former NBA MVP Derrick Rose from New York getting a finalist nod there as well.

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