

# The Assam Rising

Projecting the best of Northeast India everyday

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Twitter donates USD 15 mn  
for COVID-19 relief in India

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'No reason' Joshua v Fury fight in  
Saudi Arabia won't be finalised...

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Suspension of Flights

**Kathmandu, May 12:** The Nepal government has extended suspension on operation of international flights till May 31 as coronavirus cases continue to rise at an alarming rate in the Himalayan nation. The deadly virus has so far infected 413,111 people and claimed 4,084 lives in the country, which has a population of approximately 29.5 million. The suspension period of international scheduled flights has been extended till May 31, the Civil Aviation Authority said in a notification on Tuesday. However, two weekly flights on the Kathmandu-Delhi sector — one of Nepal Airlines and the other of Air India — will remain operational under an air bubble arrangement between Nepal and India, it said.

### Earthquake Hits Assam

**Guwahati, May 12:** An earthquake of magnitude 3.1 jolted Assam's Tezpur late Tuesday night. According to National Center for Seismology (NCS), the earthquake hit at around 12:27 am late Tuesday night. The epicentre of the earthquake is said to be 43km West of Tezpur in Sonitpur district. This is the third earthquake recorded in just a week. On May 10, an earthquake of magnitude 3.7 hit Sonitpur district at around 12:11 am. The following morning, another earthquake of magnitude 3.0 hit Nagaon at 7 am.

**Retail inflation**  
**New Delhi, May 12:** Retail inflation slowed to 4.29 per cent in April from 5.52 per cent in March, mainly due to easing food prices, government data showed on Wednesday. The Reserve Bank mainly factors in the retail inflation based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) while arriving at its monetary policy. As per the data released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, inflation in the food basket was 2.02 per cent in April, down from 4.87 per cent in the preceding month. Aditi Nayar, Chief Economist, ICRA, said given the high base related to the supply disruptions seen during the nationwide lockdown in April 2020, the CPI inflation dipped to a three-month low in April 2021, while printing somewhat higher than the expectations.

## Eminent litterateur Homen Borgohain died Last Rites Performed with full state honours

**Guwahati, May 12:** Veteran journalist and eminent litterateur Homen Borgohain passed away on Wednesday morning. Homen Borgohain passed away at the GNRC Hospital in Guwahati at

6:58am Wednesday. He passed away after suffering a cardiac arrest. Homen Borgohain was admitted to the GNRC in the early hours of Wednesday after he suddenly collapsed at his home. The

88-year-old celebrated writer and former president of the Assam Sahitya Sabha, had tested positive for COVID-19 on April 24. Later on May 7, he tested negative for COVID-19 and was discharged



from the GMCH. Homen Borgohain was working as the editor-in-chief of Assamese daily Niyomiya Barta. He was awarded the 1978 Sahitya Akademi Award in Assamese language for his novel Pita Putra. He returned his Sahitya Academy

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## NCLT Rejects Plea To Liquidate Assam Paper Mills

**Guwahati, May 12:** In a major breakthrough, the NCLT Delhi Bench has rejected the liquidator's plea for permission to liquidate assets of Hindustan Paper Corporation Limited which includes Cachar and Nagaon Paper Mills. In this

connection Joint Action Committee for Registered Unions (JACRU) showed its confidence that the newly sworn in chief minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma through "his dynamic leadership qualities will be

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## Revised COVID-19 SOP to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Assam

**Guwahati, May 12:** The Assam Government on Wednesday issued a revised COVID-19 SOP to contain the spread of COVID-19 in Assam. According to the new SOP, the Odd-Even car (registration plates) rule will be mandatory for plying on the roads. As per the new guidelines, all vehicles (other than government vehicles) will be allowed to move in accordance with an odd-even formula between 05:00 AM to 02:00 PM. However, personal vehicles used for medical emergencies will be allowed to move. "All Vehicles other than Government Vehicles will be allowed to ply in accordance with an

ODD-EVEN Formula to be decided by the Jurisdictional District Disaster Management Authority between 5 AM to 2 PM. However, this restriction shall not apply to Personal Vehicles used for Medical Emergencies," stated the new SOP. On the other hand, in case of two-wheeler pillion riding will not be allowed (except with women and children). Also, All public transport will be allowed to operate only up to 30% of seating capacity. Auto Rickshaws, cycle rickshaws, and taxis are allowed to operate with one driver and two passengers. The new SOP will come into force with effect from 5 AM of May 13 (Thurs-



day) until further orders. Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) has issued revised guidelines to tackle the

COVID-19 pandemic as the state has been witnessing a surge in positivity rate during last few days. According

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## Ministers To Monitor COVID-19 Situation Districtwise

**Guwahati, May 12:** The newly inducted ministers in the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led cabinet have been allocated two districts each to monitor the COVID-19 situation. The Chief Minister will monitor the district of Majuli while the other 13 ministers will monitor two to

three districts. Ranjit Kumar Dass, Minister of Panchayat & Rural Development has been allotted with Barpeta, Bajali, and Bongaigaon districts. Agriculture Minister Atul Bora has been allotted with Jorhat and Golaghat districts while Urkhao Gwra Brahma will look after

Kokrajhar, Chirang and Baksa district. Industries & Commerce Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary will look after Nalbari, Kamrup and Udalguri districts while Environment & Forest Minister Parimal Suklabaidya has been allocated the districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj to

monitor the COVID pandemic situation. Health & Family Welfare Minister Keshab Mahanta has been allocated with Nagaon and Hojai districts. Ranuj Pegu, Minister of Education has been allocated Dhemaji and Lakhimpur districts. Ashok

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## 35 Palestinians killed in Gaza, 3 in Israel, as violence escalates Beersheba

**Gaza/Jerusalem, May 12:** Hostilities between Israel and Hamas escalated overnight, with 35 Palestinians

killed in Gaza and three in Israel in the most intensive aerial exchanges for years. Israel carried out hun-

dreds of air strikes in Gaza into the early hours of Wednesday, as the Islamist group and other Palestinian militant groups fired multiple rocket barrages at Tel Aviv and Beersheba. One multi-storey residential building in Gaza collapsed and another was heavily damaged after they were repeatedly hit by

Israeli air strikes. Israel said it attacked Hamas targets, including intelligence centres and rocket launch sites. It was the heaviest offensive between Israel and Hamas since a 2014 war in Gaza and prompted international concern that the situation could spiral out of control. UN Middle

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## Media reports about WHO classifying B.1.617 as 'Indian COVID variant of concern' unfounded: Govt

**New Delhi, May 12:** The Government of India on Wednesday dismissed that media reports about the World Health Organisation (WHO) classifying B.1.617 as the "Indian COVID-19 variant of global concern" as utterly "unfounded and without any basis." "Several media reports

the B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus in its 32 page document. In fact, the word "Indian" has not been used in its report on the matter. The clarification from the Centre came in the wake of media reports that said that the WHO has classified B.1.617 as the Indian COVID variant of global concern. The report said that Dr Maria Van Kerkhove, COVID-19 Technical Lead at the WHO, has told that the B.1.617 virus variant has been classified as a variant of interest by the WHO. It was also reported that the B.1.617 variant of the coronavirus, first identified in India last year, has been found in 44 countries, citing



a report by World Health Organization. The UN body routinely assesses if variants of SARS-CoV-2 result in changes in transmissibility and severity, or if they lead to changes in public health and social measures' implementation by national health authorities. "As of May 11, over 4,500 sequences have been uploaded to GISAID and assigned to B.1.617

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## The Real Variant Risk From India's Covid Surge Is Being Missed

**New Delhi, May 12:** This particular Covid-19 variant is at least partly behind the overwhelming second wave in India, the current global epicenter of the pandemic. The World Health Organization has now raised B.1.617 from a "variant of interest" to a "variant of concern." Authorities like Public Health England are already treating it as the latter, meaning there's something worrying about one or more of the criteria on which a virus is judged - including how fast

it transmits, how many it kills, and whether it evades detection or makes vaccines less effective. The stakes underlying these threat thresholds have risen beyond guessing the true extent of the unfolding disaster in India. Whether daily fatalities and new cases are, as officially reported, around 4,000 and 400,000, respectively, or closer to 25,000 deaths and between 2 million and 5 million infections, as Brown University School of Public

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## Cyclone 'Tauktae' forms over Arabian Sea likely to intensify by May 16: IMD

**New Delhi, May 12:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Tuesday (May 11, 2021) issued a forecast about a



low-pressure area which is forming over the Arabian Sea and warned that it may intensify into a cyclone by May 16. The weather department stated that the low-pressure area is very likely to form over the southeast Arabian Sea around May 14 and likely to intensify gradually into a cyclonic storm over the east-central Arabian Sea around May 16, and continue to move north-northwestwards. Further, the weather agency suggests there is also the possibility of the storm changing its course towards

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# Districts assigned to ministers to monitor COVID situation

CM to monitor COVID situation in Majuli



**Guwahati, May 12:** With a view to arrest surging COVID-19 cases in the state through continuous monitoring of the situation and ensuring required guidance to district administrations, Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma assigned different districts to the

ministers of his cabinet today. Noteworthy that decision in this regard was taken in the first cabinet meeting chaired by Dr. Sarma, which was held on Tuesday. According to the government order which comes into force with immediate effect, Chief Minister Dr.

Sarma will monitor COVID situation in Majuli district. P&RD Minister Ranjit Kumar Dass has been assigned Barpeta, Bajali and Bongaigaon, while COVID situation at Jorhat and Golaghat will be monitored by Agriculture Minister Atul Bora, Kokrajhar, Chirang and Baksa by Handloom & Textiles Minister Urkhao Gwra Brahma, Nalbari, Kamrup and Udalguri by Industries & Commerce Minister Chandra Mohan Patowary, Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj by Environment & Forests Minister Parimal Shuklabaidya, Nagaon and Hojai by Health & Family Welfare Minister Keshav Mahanta, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur by Education Minister Dr. Ranuj Pegu, Sonitpur, Darrang and Biswanath by Urban Development Minister Ashok Singhal, West Karbi Anglong, Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao by Minister of Revenue & Disaster Management

Jogen Mohan, Tinsukia and Dibrugarh by Tea Tribes Welfare Minister Sanjay Kishan, Dhubri and Lakhimpur by Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, Morigaon and Goalpara by Water Resources Minister Pijush Hazarika and Sivasagar and Charaideo by Power Minister Bimal Bora. The ministers will monitor the trend in the number of COVID cases and compliance of COVID related restrictions in the districts assigned to them. They will also assess the adequacy of health care facilities to meet the present and anticipated number of COVID cases besides guiding and supporting the district administration by coordinating with the Health & Family Welfare and other departments. The ministers will keep the Chief Minister and Health & Family Welfare Minister informed about the situation on a regular basis.



NRL MD Mr. S K Barua today met the newly appointed Hon'ble CM of Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma in his office chamber in Dispur and wished him a successful tenure.

## CM condoles demise of eminent litterateur Homen Borgohain

CM attends funeral of Homen Borgohain at Nabagraha crematorium

**Guwahati, May 12 :** Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma condoled the demise of eminent litterateur, editor and columnist Homen Borgohain who breathed his last in a city hospital today morning. In a condolence message, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma said that late Homen Borgohain was an epochal figure in Assamese literature and with his death the state has lost a guiding light. He was a gifted writer who exhibited his prowess in all genres of literature with equal ease. Late Borgohain had deep understanding about human life and through his simple and unique style of writing eloquently highlighted its myriad facets. He has left an un-

paralleled legacy with his literary and journalistic contributions. His passing away is an irreparable loss and the Assamese society will continue to feel his void for all times to come, Dr. Sarma observed. The Chief Minister prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed his deep sympathy to the bereaved family. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma attended the funeral of the eminent author at Nabagraha crematorium and paid his tributes to the mortal remains of the literary doyen. Noteworthy that as per direction of the Chief Minister, last rites of the renowned litterateur was performed with full state honours.

## Govt. to preserve Homen Borgohain's creations and ideology

**Guwahati, May 12 :** Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the State government would take all necessary steps to preserve the creations and ideology of noted litterateur Homen Borgohain, who passed away in Guwahati today. The Chief Minister made this statement before the media after attending the funeral of the writer-journalist at Nabagraha crematorium. Chief Minister Dr. Sarma said that the demise of Homen Borgohain was a personal loss to him as he was a guardian who guided him at difficult times. Stating that he daily enquired about the health of late Borgohain while he was hospitalized, Chief Minister Dr. Sarma said that doctors released him from hospital as he deeply desired to return home. The Chief Minister further said that the Assam government would take all needful measures to keep Homen Borgohain's invaluable creations and ideology alive among the young generation. Dr. Sarma also informed that the government has already thought about a plan which would be finalized in consultation with the late author's family members and well wishers.

## Hojai Zila Sahitya Sabha mourns the death of Homen Borgohain

**Hojai, May 12 :** Hojai Zila Sahitya Sabha mourns the death of former president of Assam Sahitya Sabha, eminent litterateur, veteran journalist, poet, writer, critic Homen Borgohain (89). In a press communique issued by the President Guneshwar Saika and General Secretary Anup Kumar Barthakur on Wednesday, HZSS have condoled the demise of Gohain and prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul. They have stated that Gohain

will always be remembered for his enormous contribution in the field of literature, journalism and social activities. As a mark of respect to the departed dignitary, HZSS has decided that the Flag of Sahitya Sabha be flown at half mast for three days. On the other hand, Marwari Samellan Hojai Unit have also condoled the death of the legendary figure and prayed before almighty for the eternal peace of the departed

**Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha condoles the death of Borgohain**

**Biswanath Chariali, May 12 :** Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha (ANSS) had condoled the death of eminent litterateur, journalist, editor, novelist, story writer Homen Borgohain in a condolence message issued by Durga Khatiora and Rudra Baral, its president and secretary. The socio-cultural and literary loss that was caused by the demise of Homen Borgohain was irreparable, stated the press release. The literary body of the state prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul.

## Oxygen Generation plant donated by UK has allotted to JBS Civil Hospital Kajalgaon, Chirang, Assam



**Guwahati, May 12 :** One 16 tonnes Oxygen Generation plant (Mobile Oxygen Concentrator offices) received in donation from UK to India has reached at Guwahati on 12 May 2021 afternoon. Further Oxygen Plant transported to Chirang district for installation of the system in JBS Civil Hospital Kajalgaon, Chirang, with assistance from the personnel of 01 Battalion National Disaster Response Force Guwahati who are responsible for the escort and management. India has received three oxygen generation units with producing capacity of 500 litres of Oxygen per minute as international assistance. Two other plants allocated to satellite Hospital JLN Medical College, Ajmer and Emergency building SRG Hospital Jhalawar Rajasthan. This is the first Oxygen generation plant in this JBS Civil Hospital in Chirang district, after installation of this it ensure smooth supply of oxygen to COVID patient. This plant is capable if generating 100 Cylinders per day. District authorities and Hospital administration expressed the pleasure over the arrival of the oxygen plant.

## POCSO Court Sentences 20 yrs Rigorous Imprisonment to Rapist of a six Years old Minor

**Basar, May 12 :** In a judgment passed by special Judge POCSO Court Basar, Tager Halley has sentenced Shri Bombe alias Bombay Riba, 25 yrs has been to undergo rigorous imprisonment of 20(Twenty) years and to pay a fine of Rs.3,000/- (Rupees three thousand) only U/S-376(3) IPC r/w

Sect-6 Of POCSO Act, 2012 on 06th May 2021. In default, convict shall be imprisoned for one (01) more year. The accused has also been convicted and sentenced to undergo three years of imprisonment and to pay a fine of Rs.1,000/- (Rupees one thousand) only U/S-363 IPC. In default, he shall further be imprisoned for six months. Meanwhile, fine amount imposed against the convict has been deposited to the court which shall be paid the minor victim through her parents/guardian at the earliest. Further, as per submission made by the Ld Special Public Prosecutor Smt. K. Angu, application submitted under Arunachal Pradesh Victim Compensation Scheme, 2011 through District Legal Services Authority Aalo, West Siang District has been reportedly approved by the concerned authority, Arunachal Pradesh State Legal Services Authority, Itanagar for payment of compensation to the victim of sexual assault in this case and for her rehabilitation. Hence, no more recommendation in regard to victim compensation has been made by the trial court. On 30.04.2020 father of the victim had lodged a written FIR to the effect that in the evening hour of the same day at around 1600 hrs his six years old victim daughter was forcefully kidnapped from his home by the accused-convict and after taking the minor victim to the nearby river, he raped her. On receipt of the FIR, the OC, PS, Basar registered the instant case vide Basar PS Case No.08/20 U/S 363/376 IPC R/w

Sect. 4 of POCSO Act, 2012 and investigation was launched. During investigation, it has been found that the accused and minor victim are neighbours of same village and thus knew to each other well from the very beginning. On the day of incident, while minor victim was playing in the premises of her house with her friends and siblings when all of a sudden accused arrived there and took her to the nearby river and raped her after removing all her clothes while shutting her mouth despite crying profusely. Due to forceful rape committed against the minor victim of hardly six years old, bleeding was ensued followed by severe pain in her private part for days together. After completion of investigation, the investigating officer filed his charge sheet No.04/2020 dated 20.05.2020 against the accused-convict U/S 363/376 IPC R/w Sect. 6 instead Sect. 4 of POCSO Act, 2012 was directly forwarded to the special court (POCSO), Basar by the Superintendent of Police, Basar vide letter No.BSR/SP/CS-FR-45/2021/183 dated 15.03.2021 for taking cognizance and trial. On the consideration of charge sheet filed, a prima facie case was found U/S- 363/376(3) IPC R/w Sect. 6 of POCSO Act, 2012. Accordingly, formal charge was framed against the accused vide order dated 05.05.2021 and substance of the charge was read over and explained to accused in the language he understand to which he pleaded guilty in the following words: "Victim is known to me we being from same village."

## Biswanath College condoles demise of Homen Borgohain

**Biswanath chariali, May 12:** Biswanath College organised a virtual condolence meeting on 12th May from 11:00 am to pay homage to Homen Borgohain who passed away in the morning of the day. In the meeting, attended by all the faculty members of the college, IQAC chairman and principal of Biswanath College Dr. Chinta Mani

Sharma, IQAC coordinator Dr. Nipam Kumar Saikia, Dr. Karabi Gogoi, associate professor and head of Department of Economics, Mr. Balin Bhuyan, assistant professor of Department of Assamese, and Mr. Taranath Mahanta, associate professor and head of Department of Philosophy, while praying to the almighty for the peace of the

## KRSS demands more vaccination

**Panigaon, May 11:** All Lakhimpur District Koch-Rajbonshi Sangram Sommitite has demanded that massive Covid vaccination in free of cost be carried out in all the health centres of the district to check the second wave of Covid transmission. Koch-Rajbonshi Sangram Sommitite (KRSS) Central Committee Vice-president Rupjyoti Dutta informed that All Lakhimpur KRSS submitted a memorandum to the Chief

Secretary of Assam through the Lakhimpur District Deputy Commissioner today, stating that the Government should supply Covid vaccines in large numbers, and carry out vaccination drive widely in Lakhimpur district to prevent transmission of the virus. It also urged the Government to block the process of online registration for Covid vaccination in Assam, since this process is a complex one which is not acceptable for a state like Assam.



Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma paying his tributes to eminent litterateur Homen Borgohain at the latter's last rites ceremony at Nabagraha crematorium in Guwahati

FORM A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT (Under Regulation 6 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) Regulations, 2016) FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE CREDITORS OF MEGHA GRANULES PRIVATE LIMITED	
RELEVANT PARTICULARS	
1. Name of Corporate Debtor	MEGHA GRANULES PRIVATE LIMITED
2. Date of Incorporation of Corporate Debtor	05.05.2005
3. Authority under which Corporate Debtor is incorporated / registered	Registrar of Companies, Shillong
4. Corporate Identity No.	U2419BAS2005PTC007734
5. Address of the registered office and principal office (if any) of Corporate Debtor	Registered Office: Industrial Growth Centre (AIDOC), Vill. Chabalan, Chaygaon-781123, Assam
6. Insolvency commencement date in respect of corporate debtor	05.05.2021 (Copy of the order received by IRP on 12.05.2021)
7. Estimated date of closure of insolvency resolution process	06.11.2021
8. Name and registration number of the insolvency professional acting as interim resolution professional	Name: Mr. Sandeep Khaitan IP Registration No.: IBI/IFA-01/IP-P00532/2017-18/193957
9. Address and e-mail of the interim resolution professional, as registered with the Board	Address: Sandeep Khaitan, 2nd Floor, Samrat Plaza, Christian Basti, G.S. Road, Guwahati-781005, Assam Email Id.: khaitansandeep@gmail.com
10. Address and e-mail to be used for correspondence with the interim resolution professional	Address: Sandeep Khaitan 2nd Floor, Samrat Plaza, Christian Basti, G.S. Road, Guwahati-781005, Assam Email Id.: khaitansandeep@gmail.com, ipgranules@gmail.com
11. Last date for submission of claims	26.05.2021
12. Classes of creditors, if any, under clause (b) of sub-section (5A) of section 21, ascertained by the interim resolution professional	Not Applicable
13. Names of Insolvency Professionals identified to act as Authorized Representative of creditors in a class (Three names for each class)	Not Applicable
14. (a) Relevant Forms and (b) Details of authorized representatives are available at:	(a) www.ibbi.gov.in/home/downloads (b) Not Applicable
Notice is hereby given that the National Company Law Tribunal, Guwahati Bench has ordered the commencement of a corporate insolvency resolution process of the MEGHA GRANULES PRIVATE LIMITED on 05.05.2021 (copy of order received by the IRP on 12.05.2021). The creditors of MEGHA GRANULES PRIVATE LIMITED, are hereby called upon to submit their claims with proof on or before 26.05.2021 to the interim resolution professional at the address mentioned against entry No. 10. The financial creditors shall submit their claims with proof by electronic means only. All other creditors may submit the claims with proof in person, by post or by electronic means. A financial creditor belonging to a class, as listed against the entry No. 12, shall indicate its choice of authorized representative from among the three insolvency professionals listed against entry No. 13 to act as authorized representative of the class (NA) in Form CA. Submission of false or misleading proofs of claim shall attract penalties.	
Date: 12.05.2021 Place: Guwahati	Sd/- Sandeep Khaitan Interim Resolution Professional IBBI/IFA-01/IP-P00532/2017-18/193957



## US millionaire CEOs saw 29% pay raise while workers' pay decreased - report



**Washington, May 12 :** Workers saw 2% decrease as companies gave leaders bonuses and forgiving performance benchmarks amid pandemic. Hilton's CEO, Christopher Nassetta, had a compensation package worth \$55.9m in 2020, the highest of the CEOs analyzed in the report, while median pay at the company was \$28,608, down from \$43,695 in 2019. The millionaire CEOs of some of the American companies with the lowest-paid workers saw an average pay raise of 29% in 2020 while their workers saw a 2% decrease, according to a report released Tuesday. The Institute for Policy Studies calculated that the average CEO compensation in 2020 was \$15.3m when looking at the 100 companies with the lowest median wage for workers in the S&P 500 index. The median worker pay was \$28,187. This means that CEOs saw a 29% pay raise compared to 2019, while workers saw a 2% decrease. For all 100 companies, median worker pay was below \$50,000 for 2020. The compensation hike came as companies gave their top leaders hefty bonuses and forgiving performance benchmarks during the pandemic, allowing the top executives to cash in while their low-wage employees were essential workers. Hilton's CEO, Christopher Nassetta, had a compensation package worth \$55.9m in 2020, the highest of the CEOs analyzed in the report, while median pay at

the company was \$28,608, down from \$43,695 in 2019. Since the pandemic affected the company's expected performance, and thus Nassetta's expected compensation, the company's board restructured its stock awards to give its CEO ample pay in 2020, according to the report. Other CEOs were met with friendly treatment from their respective corporate boards. Chipotle's board removed the company's poor financial results from the peak of the shutdown and excluded Covid-related costs when calculating CEO Brian Niccol's compensation. Niccol received \$38m last year, which is 2,898 times more than the company's median worker pay of \$13,127. David Gibbs, the CEO of Yum Brands, parent company to KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell, ended up with a \$1.4m cash bonus and stock grant valued at more than \$880,000 after the company changed his performance metrics. The bonus was over twice the \$900,000 of his salary Gibbs announced he would forgo to fund one-time \$1,000 bonuses to the general managers of his company's restaurants last March. Gibbs' 2020 compensation was \$14.6m while the company's median pay was \$11,377, according to the report. The authors of the report urge support for a bill introduced in March by Senator Bernie Sanders called the Tax Excessive CEO Pay Act, which would incentivize companies to narrow the pay gap between workers and top executives by imposing a tax rate on companies with high gaps. Publicly traded companies are required to report the ratio between their CEO and median worker pay to the Securities and Exchange Commission as part of the 2010 Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act.

## Golden Globes overshadowed by ethics controversy and criticism over lack of diversity

**London, May 12 :** An unusual awards season kicks off this weekend with the delayed Golden Globes, a ceremony that's long been the butt of many an industry joke but this year, its standing has gone from bad to worse after a flood of controversy. The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, a group of 87 international journalists who vote on the awards, has come under fire after the Los Angeles Times published two damning exposés on both the questionable credentials of members and the ease at which they are reportedly courted by studios. The non-profit organisation has been accused of "ethical lapses" with members reportedly flown to Paris in support of the Netflix comedy Emily in Paris, which received two nominations, while also being paid nearly \$2m by the group between 2019 and 2020. The lack of diversity (there isn't a single black member) has also been criticised in a year when a number of black performances, films and shows have been ignored. Michaela Coel's universally acclaimed drama I May Destroy You failed to secure a single nomination while One Night in Miami, Judas and the Black Messiah, Da 5 Bloods and Ma Rainey's Black Bottom were all ignored in the best picture category. "That I May Destroy You did not get one Golden Globe nod is not only wrong, it's what is wrong with everything," wrote Deborah Copaken, a writer for Emily in Paris. "How anyone can watch I May Destroy You and not call it a brilliant work of art or Michaela Coel a genius is beyond my capacity to understand how these decisions are made." On Thursday, the HFPA released a statement responding to criticism. "We understand that we need to bring in black members, as well as members from other underrepresented backgrounds, and we will immediately work to implement an action plan to achieve these goals as soon as possible," it read. The LA Times investigation comes soon after a lawsuit was filed against the HFPA by the Norwegian journalist Kjersti Flaas, who was denied membership and accused them of a "culture of corruption" with



members accepting "thousands of dollars in emoluments" from studios and celebrities. The suit was dismissed by a judge, partly because Flaas could not prove any economic or professional hardship as a result. The HFPA's lead lawyer called it "a transparent attempt to shake down the HFPA based on jealousy, not merit". Sunday's ceremony itself will be yet another combination of the physical and the virtual, with Covid-19 safety precautions requiring all nominees to stay at home. The HFPA has also warned against any unsupervised gatherings, with California this week becoming the first US state to cross 50,000 virus-related deaths. The night will be hosted by Tina Fey in New York and Amy Poehler in Los Angeles with presenters, including Kristen Wiig and Joaquin Phoenix, appearing in person following strict protocols. "It's full-on weird," Poehler said to the New York Times. "And we're hoping that the weirdness, which people are unfortunately used to at this point, will translate into something fun and interesting." The film field is led by David Fincher's Mank, an ode to old Hollywood made for Netflix, including a best actor in a drama nomination for star Gary Oldman, who previously referred to the Globes as "fucking ridiculous" and "90 nobodies having a wank". Oldman is predicted to lose out to Chadwick Boseman, for his role in Ma Rainey's

Black Bottom. Boseman died in 2020 from colon cancer and his two final performances, in Rainey and Da 5 Bloods, have so far won him 20 posthumous awards with more on the way. It could well be a big night for British talent, after last year saw Fleabag, Chernobyl and 1917 win big, with Carey Mulligan primed to pick up the best actress in a drama prize for her role in fiery rape revenge thriller Promising Young Woman. Daniel Kaluuya set to be named best supporting actor for the Black Panthers biopic Judas and the Black Messiah and Sacha Baron Cohen favourite to win best actor in a comedy for Borat Subsequent Moviefilm. Within the TV categories, it's likely to be a strong showing for Netflix's chess drama The Queen's Gambit and star Anya Taylor-Joy, while the recent seasons of The Crown and Schitt's Creek should also perform well. While the lack of racial diversity has come under fire, the nominations did break new ground for female film-makers with a record three women nominated for best director: Regina King for One Night in Miami, Chloé Zhao for Nomadland and Emerald Fennell for Promising Young Woman. Only five female directors have ever been nominated in the Globes' 78-year history. The ceremony comes just a week before voting begins for this year's Oscars, which will take place on 25 April.

## Cali is the cockpit of chaos as Colombia protests threaten to spiral out of control

**Colombia, May 12 :** The presence of armed civilians attacking protesters has added a worrying dimension to a wave of unrest that has claimed 47 lives. On a recent evening, Andrés pulled on his gas mask and helmet and headed for the barricades at the entrance to his rundown neighbourhood in Cali, a city which has become the center of Colombia's anti-government protests. But as he approached the roadblock of rocks, rubble and barbed wire, he saw a motorcycle speeding towards him. In an attempt to turn the vehicle back, another demonstrator shone a laser pen in the driver's eyes. Others screamed "the way is closed", but still the bike wove past burning piles of rubbish towards the protesters. Then, the masked pillion rider drew a handgun and opened fire. "No one was hurt, thank God," said Andrés, in the neighbourhood known as Puerto Resistencia. "But others will come." Cali is the focus of a nationwide wave of demonstrations against poverty and inequality exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. But a string of incidents in which men in civilian clothing have brandished assault rifles and opened fire on protesters has prompted fears that the country - which is only just clawing its way out of war - is heading for broader conflict. In the last 24 hours, indigenous protesters blocking roads have been shot at by assailants, fresh

skirmishes have erupted between demonstrators and riot police, and residents have been trapped in their homes by clashes on the streets. On Monday, Lucas Villa, a 37-year-old protestor in the city of Periera, was declared brain dead after being shot eight times by men in civilian clothing last week. Hours before the attack he had been filmed dancing at a march. On Monday, two police officers were arrested in connection with the death of Santiago Murillo, a 19-year-old

citizens". The demonstrations, which began with a general strike on 28 April, quickly descended into violence after a heavy-handed response by riot squads from the militarized police force. According to Temblores and Indepaz, two local watchdogs, 47 people have died during the unrest, with 35 deaths in Cali. But protesters in the city show no sign of backing down. "We've been forgotten forever," said Carmen Rosa Bejarano, 38, who has lived in



protestor who was killed on May 1 in Ibagué, a central city. "Armed civilians fighting against each other is one of the most serious manifestations of the crisis so far," said Katherine Aguirre, a security expert at the Igarape Institute in Cali. "The state needs to find innovative ways to solve the crisis, both maintaining public order while pursuing dialogue at the local level." CA demonstrator holds a makeshift shield near a barricade blocking the Panamerican highway in Cali, Colombia, on Monday. On Sunday night, Colombia's president, Iván Duque, announced that more soldiers and police officers would be dispatched to the city to lift blockades. Chillingly, he also instructed indigenous protesters to "return to their reservations" in order to "avoid violent confrontations with

Puerto Resistencia for her most of her life. "If they want us to back down, they'll have to come here and ask - and if they come in shooting first, they won't stand a chance." On Sunday night, tensions at the barricade were high. Lookouts a few blocks away reported that Esmad, Colombia's feared riot police, were on the way. "We are children of war," said Carlos, another frontline protester, as he picked up a shield cut out of an oil drum. "We're ready to fight." Drivers and motorcyclists wait their turn to fill up at a gas station in Cali. Elsewhere in the city, streets that would usually be bustling were empty; the dance halls of the world's salsa capital were boarded up. Among the few signs of life were the endless queues for fuel, which has been desperately scarce since the

protests began. Álvaro Pérez, who runs a small logistics business, had been waiting for six hours in a queue that snaked around the neighbourhood, and was losing patience. "We need to go back to work, to be able to move around freely," he said. "I supported the protests at the beginning - most of us did - but this is never-ending now." Earlier on Sunday, a blockade set up by indigenous protesters outside the wealthy Ciudad Jardín neighbourhood was attacked by men in civilian clothes. Disturbing videos appear to show members of the police allowing the gunmen through. Other clips show vigilantes wielding handguns and assault rifles in broad daylight. Members of the LGBT community march in support of the national strike in Cali on Sunday. "It's unacceptable that the authorities have not immediately heeded the urgent calls on them to prevent armed violence," said Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas director at Amnesty International. The violence has been especially dispiriting for those who hoped for a peaceful future for Colombia when the country signed a historic deal with rebels of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) in 2016. That deal ended five decades of civil war and also raised hopes that new political spaces would finally open in a country where leftwing politicians and activists are routinely accused of collaborating with rebel groups. Instead, the government has smeared protesters as "vandals" and "terrorists", and the claims have been echoed by rightwing US politicians such as Marco Rubio. Out on the streets, such rhetoric has only raised tensions. "The police or their hitmen will attack and we'll push them back," said Andrés, between updates on his walkie-talkie from the lookouts. "We're ready."

## Melinda Gates began divorce moves at time Bill's meetings with Jeffrey Epstein revealed

**London, May 12 :** Reports suggest that Bill Gates's dealings with Jeffrey Epstein were one source of concern for his wife, Melinda. Melinda French Gates had concerns about her husband's dealings with the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein when she consulted lawyers to explore the option of divorcing the Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates, according to reports. The billionaire philanthropist announced their decision to divorce last week after declaring their marriage "irretrievably broken" - but did not explain why. The Wall Street Journal reported that in 2019 Melinda, 56, hired a team of lawyers from several high profile law firms to discuss a possible divorce. The Journal said several of its sources had said Melinda was concerned about her husband's business dealings with Epstein, who killed himself in jail in 2019 while awaiting trial on federal charges related to sex trafficking. Melinda is said to have expressed unease at Bill's relationship with Epstein since at least 2013. Her meeting with divorce lawyers in October 2019 is said to have taken place at roughly the same time as a New York Times article detailed Bill's meetings with Epstein, which included an overnight stay at Epstein's New York mansion. The article, which detailed Epstein's connections with the rich and

powerful, said none of them "compared in prestige and power to the [then] world's second-richest person, a brilliant and intensely private luminary: Bill Gates. And unlike many others, Mr Gates started the relationship after Mr Epstein was convicted of sex crimes." The Daily Beast reported that Melinda, who has recently introduced her maiden name, French, into her social media profiles, warned her husband about associating with Epstein in 2013. The website said Melinda was furious with Bill for meeting with the wealthy sex offender and it proved to be "a turning point for the Gates' relationship". A spokesperson for Bill told the Journal he stood by a statement about Epstein given to the New York Times in 2019. In that statement he said: "I met him. I didn't have any business relationship or friendship with him." "I didn't go to New Mexico or Florida or Palm Beach or any of that. There were people around him who were saying, 'Hey, if you want to raise money for global health and get more philanthropy, he knows a lot of rich people.' Every meeting where I was with him were meetings with men. I was never at any parties or anything like that. He never donated any money to anything that I know about." The Journal said its sources claimed that Bill and Epstein first met in 2011, several years after Epstein reached a deal with authorities and was

sentenced to 13 months confinement for soliciting prostitution from underage girls. The conditions of that 2008 deal were a source of controversy 11 years later, when Epstein was charged with sex trafficking. Found dead in a New York jail, he was deemed to have killed himself. Melinda could become the world's second-richest woman, with a fortune estimated at \$73bn. According to the Bloomberg billionaires index, Bill Gates is currently ranked as the world's fourth-richest person, with wealth totalling about \$146bn. A 50-50 split is possible because the divorce petition filing also reveals that the couple - who married in 1994 after first hitting it off playing Cluedo (she won) - did not sign a prenuptial agreement, and under Washington state law divorcing couples are expected to share their assets equally. The current richest woman is Françoise Bettencourt Meyers, the 67-year-old L'Oréal owner, whose inherited fortune is now worth about \$83bn. "After a great deal of thought and a lot of work on our relationship, we have made the decision to end our marriage," the pair said in a joint statement announcing the divorce last week. The Gateses have said that they plan on remaining co-chairs and trustees of the \$43bn Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

## Body of arrested Myanmar poet Khet Thi returned to family with organs missing

**Yangon, May 12 :** Myanmar poet Khet Thi, whose works declare resistance to the ruling junta, has died in detention and his body was returned with the organs removed, his family said. A spokesperson for the junta did not answer calls to request comment on the death of Khet Thi, who had penned the line "They shoot in the head, but they don't know the revolution is in the heart." His Facebook page said he was 45. Khet Thi's wife said both of them were taken for

interrogation on Saturday by armed soldiers and police in the central town of Shwebo, in the Sagaing region - a centre of resistance to the coup in which elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi was ousted. "I was interrogated. So was he. They said he was at the interrogation centre. But he didn't come back, only his body," his wife, Chaw Su, told BBC Burmese language news. "They called me in the morning and told me to meet him at the hospital in Monywa. I thought it was just for a

broken arm or something ... But when I arrived here, he was at the morgue and his internal organs were taken out," she said. She had been told at the hospital he had a heart problem, but had not bothered to read the death certificate because she was sure it would not be true, Chaw Su said. Reuters was unable to reach the hospital for comment. Chaw Su said the army had planned to bury him but that she pleaded with them for the body. She did not say how she knew her husband's

organs had been removed. "He died at the hospital after being tortured in the interrogation centre," the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners activist group said in a bulletin that put the toll of civilians killed since the coup at 780. The group, which monitors details of killings, did not identify the source of its information. Khet Thi was at least the third poet to die during protests since the 1 February coup. Poet K Za Win, 39, was shot dead during a protest in

Monywa in early March. Cultural figures and celebrities have been prominent supporters of opposition to the coup with protests daily in different parts of the south-east Asian country in spite of the killings and thousands of arrests. Khet Thi had been an engineer before quitting his job in 2012 to focus on his poetry and to support himself by making and selling ice-cream and cakes. "I don't want to be a hero, I don't want to be a martyr, I don't want to be a weakling, I

don't want to be a fool," he wrote two weeks after the coup. "I don't want to support injustice. If I have only a minute to live, I want my conscience to be clean for that minute." More recently, he wrote that he was a guitar player, a cake baker and a poet - not someone who could fire a gun. But he implied his attitude was changing. "My

people are being shot and I can only throw back poems," he wrote. "But when you are sure your voice is not enough, then you need to choose a gun carefully. I will shoot."





## THE ASSAM RISING

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## Multiple variants of the virus

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time. Sometimes new variants emerge and disappear. Other times, new variants emerge and persist. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 have been documented in the United States and globally during this pandemic. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a type of coronavirus, a large family of viruses. Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surfaces. Scientists monitor changes in the virus, including changes to the spikes on the surface of the virus. These studies, including genetic analyses of the virus, are helping scientists understand how changes to the virus might affect how it spreads and what happens to people who are infected with it. Multiple variants of the virus that causes COVID-19 are circulating globally and within the United States. In collaboration with a SARS-CoV-2 Interagency Group (SIG), CDC established 3 classifications for the SARS-CoV-2 variants being monitored: Variant of Interest (VOI), Variant of Concern (VOC), and Variant of High Consequence (VOHC). There are currently five VOCs in the United States: B.1.1.7: This variant was first identified in the US in December 2020. P.1: This variant was first detected in the US in January 2021. P.1 was initially identified in travelers from Brazil, who were tested during routine screening at an airport in Japan, in early January. B.1.427 and B.1.429: These two variants were first identified in California in February 2021 and were classified as VOCs in March 2021. Learn more about SARS-CoV-2 Variant Classifications and Definitions. These variants seem to spread more easily and quickly than other variants, which may lead to more cases of COVID-19. An increase in the number of cases will put more strain on health care resources, lead to more hospitalizations, and potentially more deaths. So far, studies suggest that antibodies generated through vaccination with currently authorized vaccines recognize these variants. This is being closely investigated and more studies are underway. Rigorous and increased compliance with public health mitigation strategies, such as vaccination, physical distancing, use of masks, hand hygiene, and isolation and quarantine, is essential to limit the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19 and protect public health. Scientists are working to learn more about these variants, and more studies are needed to understand. Public health officials are studying these variants quickly to learn more about how to control their spread. They want to understand whether the variants spread more easily from person-to-person. Cause milder or more severe disease in people. Are detected by currently available viral tests. Respond to medicines currently being used to treat people for COVID-19. Change the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines. coronavirus to run its course in a population of 1.4 billion would be morally reprehensible. It would also be dangerous: The longer it takes to tame India's second wave, the higher the risk of a variant that does escape vaccine protection. One-sixth of humanity can't be ignored without a massive hit to a global economy that's impatient to reopen. Ask Silicon Valley managers supervising large software projects for global corporations: Their engineering teams in India are in disarray. Or take last week's Group of Seven meetings in London, billed as the first face-to-face powwow in two years. Two members of the Indian contingent, invited as guests, tested positive, leading to self-isolation for Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the foreign minister. A PR disaster for the host, but also a reminder that it can't be business as usual for the world until the Indian situation comes under control. For neighboring Asian economies, the risk is far greater. Thailand has extended its ban on travelers from India to Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. Australia was so alarmed it controversially refused entry for even its own citizens coming home from India. Hong Kong got spooked when 51 passengers on a single flight from New Delhi early last month tested positive — for 43% of them, the disease showed up two weeks into their mandatory hotel quarantine.

## Why ABRDN's loss of vowels is not such a 'rdcls' rebrand

Once upon a time, at the mouth of the river Don on the Scottish coast, there was a town called Aberdeen. Somewhere along the way, without any fanfare, its final vowel changed. Today we call it Aberdeen. Once upon last week, there was a company called Standard Life Aberdeen. With a flourish, it changed its name to ABRDN. The company spokespeople tell us it's pronounced "Aberdeen". The internet pronounced it a disaster. Now, I am as cynical as the next Guardian reader about corporate rebrandings. They feel like something companies do in lieu of actual business and, at worst, seem like cover-ups. But I'm also cynical about the rush to condemn. Many industry commentators see wisdom in the motive for change, which follows the company's sale of the Standard Life brand and brings five subsidiaries under one name. But the complimentary notes were drowned out by waves of "Meaningless!", "Illiterate!" and, inevitably, "Rdcls!" As the naming consultant Nancy Friedman has noted, "It's a phenomenon as curious as it is predictable: introduce a new brand name, brace for criticism - even out-

rage - from all corners." (Friedman herself has described ABRDN as "lightweight".) The Financial Times, among others, has diagnosed ABRDN as "at risk of joining the category of brand changes that do not stick", such as the short-lived rebrands of the Post Office (Consignia) and PwC (Monday). More often than not, name changes are benign. The disproportionate public reaction is rooted in a petty bias against superficial change. Media outlets fuel the fire for a guaranteed source of clicks and comments. If the company can

**Lynne Murphy**

hold its nerve, all will be forgiven. "Within three months, six months, or a year, [a new] name will be shrugged at - or even esteemed," Friedman observes. The excuses found for disparaging ABRDN make evident that reactions to new words are led by the gut and not the head, illustrating the routine shallowness with which language is considered in Anglophone culture. Looking more deeply at ABRDN raises interesting comparisons and staves off any worry that the change signals linguistic, corporate or cultural dissolution. Dropping letters makes ABRDN look like an old

person trying to "get down with the kids" a bit too late - or at least that's what self-consciously middle-aged commenters seem to worry about, citing pop singer HRVY. Un-spelling a single barely pronounced vowel - as in Tumblr, Scribd and Toggl - is a bit five-years-ago, but ABRDN has done more than that. It fits into a long tradition of reduced-vowel spelling - from Im-Bru (1946) to any number of Xpresses. Others have pointed out that it might be natural to read it as "a burden". The capital A should attract emphasis,

so that even without knowing which vowels to insert, we'd expect a stress pattern more like Ab-r-dn than a-BR-dn. The greater risk is that BR will be perceived as a consonant cluster, making the middle "bred" rather than "berd". That might flummox those unfamiliar with Aberdeen, but not for long. Just as we learned to recognise tmrw as "tomorrow" and rllly as "really", those who deal with ABRDN will know it when they see it. Adept readers do very little sounding-out of the printed word. Once a spelling is known, we recognise it as a unit, not a series of sounds. And good thing, too, because English spell-

ing is spectacularly unhelpful. Those who tell us that ABRDN is "vowelless" or "unpronounceable" are suffering under the impediment of English literacy, conflating the language and its printed form - as if vowels are letters rather than sounds. Whole writing systems, such as Hebrew and Arabic, skip vowels as a matter of course. (Linguists call them "abjads", in contrast with vowel alphabets.) English readers are just as able to see the word through the consonants, as proved by the many cmntrs wrtng lk ths whn dcsng ABRDN. If we know to pronounce Ltd as "limited" and FTSE as "footsie", we can easily adjust to seeing ABRDN and pronouncing it "Aberdeen". We're left with the claim that ABRDN is "meaningless", as if names need dictionary-style meanings. Names don't mean; they simply denote. Ask my family what "Lynne" means and they won't be able to tell you. But they will be able to point to me. "Aberdeen" already refers to a city, a university and a football team. The ABRDN solution conveys the company's corporate and geographical heritage while ensuring it comes first in any web search for the name.

## Fears of a coup in France are exaggerated, but a far-right president is a real possibility



A recent open letter to French president, Emmanuel Macron, signed by almost 50 retired army generals so far and more than 24,000 (predominantly former) servicemen, was occasion for many on the French left to raise the alarm, believing a coup d'état was either in the making or a future possibility. The top brass signatories, led by generals Antoine Martinez and Christian Piquemal, say the country is on the verge of collapse because of immigration and crime, as well as Islamism and the support it gets from some on the left. They are angry at "cancel culture" and at any intellectual attempt to criticise the country's colonial past. These generals warn that if the situation worsens, their fellow soldiers on active duty may choose to intervene and take control. Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right Rassemblement National party, endorsed the generals' call. A survey by Harris Interactive, which found that 58% of respondents agreed with the open letter's statements, stoked further fear. This gives the impression that the far right is stronger than ever. Some political pundits go as far as to say that while Macron is predicted to win another term in 2022 against Le Pen, there's a very real possibility that Le Pen will win by

a small margin, **Jean-Yves Camus** have the technical capacity to engineer a coup. This would require the support of active-duty soldiers, at least the passive support of a few politicians and the complicity of a segment of the higher state administration. That the letter appeared in the 21 April issue of the weekly rightwing magazine Valeurs actuelles, on the 60th anniversary of the failed 1961 coup staged against Gen Charles de Gaulle in Algiers added to the suggestion the open letter was announcing imminent military action. But it's not: the 1961 coup involved hundreds of the most seasoned generals and officers on active duty, and the active involvement of four elite units of what is known today as the special forces. The purge ordered by Gen de Gaulle against the felonious supporters of French Algeria was so strong it left many scars and bad memories within the military community, so much so that would-be putschists will probably think twice before they go to the streets in arms. However, there's much to worry about when 58% of the population seemingly think the country is on the brink of collapse and Le Pen is predicted to poll up to 48% on the second ballot of the presidential election. The

dential election, although it's uncertain whether he will meet the necessary criteria to run. His main rallying call is the fight for traditional French identity, which he says is threatened by "Islamisation", multiculturalism and antiracism. General Piquemal, who began his career in 1962, when Algeria became independent, founded a political movement named "Cercle des citoyens-patriotes" (or Circle of Patriotic Citizens) after he retired. He was thrown out of the reserve army in 2016 for taking part in a banned demonstration against immigration in Calais. Contrary to the suggestion contained in some of the overexcited reporting of the letter, the group of

Harris survey, which found that 49% of respondents would support the army seizing power, comes at a time of distrust of the president, who finds himself taking the blame for what he and his predecessors have failed to achieve: stopping Islamist terrorist attacks and tackling crime. The Harris survey was published a few days after an Islamist radical killed a female administrator in an attack on a police station. It also followed a huge crowd of 20,000 demonstrating in Paris, demanding that the murderer of Sarah Halimi, an Orthodox Jewish woman, stand trial, despite a higher court ruling that he was insane and should instead be sent to a mental-health institution. The ruling sparked outrage, as the murderer was known to hold antisemitic views and shouted "Allahu Akbar" as he killed his victim. Around the same time, a gang of thugs who had set fire to a police car in the suburbs of Paris, inflicting life-changing burns to two officers, received mild sentences, with some of the members even being released without charge. Those events were interpreted by the Rassemblement National and the Conservative right as proof that French legislation and French magistrates were too lenient, and that immigration and crime were linked, an idea that the left and the centre-right cabinet rejects. The situation in France was best assessed in a study by the progressive thinktank, the Fondation Jean-Jaurès, which concluded that Marine Le Pen may win in 2022, provided she continues to become more mainstream: only 34% have a very negative opinion of her, an all-time low. She would also need conservative right voters to back her on the second ballot, against Macron, and for Macron's popularity to continue to decline. In other words, while France is not ripe for a coup d'état, the coming to power of a far-right president, elected with the votes of conservatives, is a definite possibility.

## Labour keeps pushing the 'same old Tories' line - but voters have moved on

Keir Starmer is trying to ignite flames of public indignation by blowing on 25-year-old embers. It's a redundant strategy. It is exactly 16 years since Labour last won a general election - an anniversary the party does not celebrate. On 5 May 2005, Tony Blair beat Michael Howard. The Conservatives responded by listening (with varying degrees of enthusiasm) to David Cameron's gospel of brand decontamination. By electing Cameron as Howard's successor, the Tories showed they had understood what Theresa May first told them in a party conference speech back in 2002 - that they were seen as the nasty party. Cameron's modernisation project was neither thorough nor profound, but it worked well enough to require a shift in electoral strategy from Labour. The



challenge goes unmet to this day. Labour still campaigns against the "nasty party" be-

**Rafael Behr**

cause it is the one they can beat. There have been many lines of attack against a parade of Conservative leaders, but the underlying message is consistent: same old Tories. That is the background music when Keir Starmer challenges Boris Johnson over mystery donations that funded the Downing Street makeover. In the Commons last week, Starmer called the prime minister "Major Sleaze". The allusion reaches back to the Tories' mid-90s slide into rancid disrepute and out of office. It is right for the opposition to hold the government to account over corruption, but there is a nostalgic inflection in the way Labour hammers at the word "sleaze" - and it speaks of insecurity. Starmer is trying to ignite flames of public indignation by blowing on 25-year-old embers. Local and devolved elections on Thursday might show that the message is getting through, but Labour MPs and activists who have been knocking on doors in marginal areas are not optimistic. They say the rotten smell has reached the public nose but is not overpowering. It does not beat the prospect of restored local and national esteem that many former Labour voters heard two years ago in Johnson's invitation to "get Brexit done", and which resonates even though the UK has left the EU. It doesn't help that Labour is also battling a perception in its former heartlands that the party has been captured by snooty metropolitans, far-left fanatics or both. That cohort of angry ex-loyalists does not feature on Labour's old mental map of Conservative voters. The standard model depicts the Tories as a machine for servicing the rich at the expense of the needy: hardwired for cruelty. When

Tories show a compassionate streak, the automatic left response is to dismiss it as a cynical feint. When Conservative governments flirt with egalitarian policy - as when Johnson speaks of "levelling up" - the left predicts failure through ideological rigidity. Callous free-market capitalism is too deeply ingrained, it is said, and the Tory imagination is closed to social justice. There is enough truth in that picture for the opposition to avoid dwelling on the gaps. But it is not the whole truth, which is why Britain keeps electing Conservative prime ministers. The left can account for those results without enduring the psychological trauma of admitting that good people have sincere reasons to reject a Labour leader. Aggressive media bias is the most reassuring explanation. That, too, is true enough. It satisfies anyone who would rather not interrogate the causes of opposition failure for too long. You can point to rightwing tabloid hysteria and call off the search. But blaming the media slips easily into blaming the electorate for being too stupid to see past the headlines. Labour does not endear itself to voters by treating the ballot paper as an exam and tutting when people give the wrong answer. A strategy based on telling voters to look again, look harder, because they missed the point last time is doomed, as anyone involved in the campaign for a second Brexit referendum can attest. A variant of the same problem is the habit of pointing at Tory prime ministers and claiming their "mask is slipping". Starmer used that line against Johnson over nurses' pay in March. It is what Ed Miliband used to say of Cameron. The mask metaphor is how opposition leaders say "I told you so" to voters. (Never an attractive look.) Calling out the slippage implies that Labour, in its superior wisdom, knows truths that lie hidden from the credulous electorate. A newer source of Labour denial is to exaggerate Johnson's charisma. The prime minister is imbued with ineffable mesmerism that hypnotises voters into forgetting their horror of the Tory brand. Once again, true enough. Without the extra spark of the "Boris" persona, the 2019 election might have been closer. But that doesn't explain how Conservatives won the Tees Valley and West Midlands mayoralities in 2017, when May fought a weird, self-sabotaging campaign reminding voters of Tory nastiness more efficiently than Labour could.



# Will India's second wave shatter hopes of a V-shaped economic recovery?

**Mumbai, May 12 :** The Ministry of Finance's April 2021 economic review expects the economic impact of the second wave to be lower than the first wave, as "economic activity has learnt to operate with COVID-19." Indian economy, economic growth, economic recovery, World Bank, ADB, IMF, COVID-19, V-shaped economic recovery India's second wave of COVID-19 hit at a time when the country's mood was optimistic. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and International Monetary Fund were forecasting India's FY22 growth to be upwards of 10%. The Economic Survey 2020-21 boldly stated that since June 2020, India has experienced a V-shaped economic recovery. MSP, wheat procurement, rabi crop, crop harvesting season, farm laws, MSP system End of MSP? Far from it, rabi wheat purchases at brisk pace. XLRI professor and noted labour market expert KR Shyam Sundar said since around 21 states have resorted to restrictions, including stricter curfews, it was but natural that the urban unemployment rate breached the double-digit level. Covid effect: Weakened economy can't produce jobs, unemployment rate at 19-week high. That was the story in February 2021, but today, India is an entirely different landscape. With the spread of infection escalating and more than 20 States enforcing some form of lockdown, an economic impact is inevitable. The Ministry of Finance's April 2021 economic review expects the economic impact of the second wave to be lower than the first wave, as "economic activity has learnt to operate with COVID-19." However, this assertion is based on the experiences of other countries with a low correlation between mobility and economic activity. Multiple studies have shown that in 2020, as household incomes fell, poverty and income inequality became heightened. Bertrand, Krishnan, and Schofield of the Chicago Booth School found that 84% of Indian households experienced a fall in household income in April 2020. Additionally, per capita spending on basic food items remained 23% lower in August 2020 vs. August 2019. The State of Working India 2021 report by the Azim Premji University illustrated that 230 million additional individuals fell

below the national minimum wage poverty line from March - October 2020. Furthermore, the Pew Research Centre estimates that the pandemic pushed 32 million Indians out of the middle class, and 35 million from low income groups into poverty. As Indians grapple with lower incomes and decreased job insecurity, recent data from the Centre for Monitoring the Indian Economy provides early insight that unlike the first wave, the second wave will lead to far greater



economic distress in rural areas. First, rural women formed nearly 80% of job losses in the second wave. Job losses amongst men were only a fraction of total losses experienced last year, amounting to 1.6 million between March - April 2021, vs. 100 million between March - April 2020. On the other hand, 15 million women lost their jobs between March to April 2020, with an additional 5.6 million between March to April 2021. All of women's job losses were in rural areas. Second, farmers have been impacted most in April 2021. Farmers suffered almost no job losses between March to April 2020, and saw employment increase over the year. However, in April 2021, 6 million farmers fewer farmers were employed than in March 2021, and 3 million fewer were employed in April 2020. Third, agriculture was the sector worst hit by the second wave. Following the first national lockdown in March 2020, employment rates in the industrial sector fell by 68%, in the services sector by 22% and in the agricultural sector by 10% in April 2020. However, in April 2021, services and industrial employment remained the same, while agricultural employment fell by 5%, vs. March

2021. Fourth, employment in rural healthcare decreased by 50% in April 2021. Healthcare sector employment increased by 42% in urban and 28% in rural areas between March to April 2020. In April 2021, though urban healthcare employment increased by 1%, jobs in the rural healthcare sector fell by 49%. Fifth, unemployment rates increased sharply amongst rural youth. Unlike the situation in 2020 where unemployment increased



amongst those aged above 30 years, the second wave has seen far higher rates of unemployment amongst rural youth. Urban areas, too, are seeing higher rates of youth unemployment, but this increase is lower than in the first wave. Agriculture, the sector which cushioned the impact of the first wave during 2020-21, is showing signs of slowdown. Moreover, job losses are likely to worsen in industrial and services sectors in May 2021 as more stringent lockdowns have been announced across States. In this scenario, India's economic revival strategy must utilise limited fiscal space efficiently so that public investment can spur job creation, and bridge inequalities. Governments should increase spending on cash transfer programs to women, farmers, and other vulnerable groups. Public and private investment in the health sector, and in the care economy (including childcare, elderly care and long COVID care work) needs to be increased simultaneously through methods such as CSR spending. Several measures have been taken to enhance the liquidity of micro, small and medium enterprises through easier borrowing initiatives. MSMEs, especially

those in rural areas, can be offered expanded wage subsidies, cash support for apprenticeship and training, and fiscal incentives for the production of goods supporting the COVID-19 response, such as masks, sanitisers, PPE, oxygen concentrators, and pharmaceutical and vaccine related goods. For the manufacturing sector, the production linked incentive scheme announced in November 2020 has begun by identifying 10 Champion sectors. However, expanding industrial activity in rural areas requires an efficient ecosystem. This includes increased infrastructure investments, particularly through public private partnerships to (i) reduce logistics costs and improve port-hinterland connectivity; (ii) enable a shift towards renewable sources of energy and; (iii) incentivise production of recycled water for industrial purposes. India also needs to expand investments in digital infrastructure from the current \$20-22 billion, or 0.7% of GDP (2018), to enhance rural connectivity and achieve the target of broadband access to all under the National Broadband Mission. This must be complemented by increasing digital literacy efforts currently underway at ~275,000 training centers under the PM Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan. Digital skilling needs to be mainstreamed into school curriculums, especially for first generation school-goers. It should also be offered to adolescents and youth below 30 years of age to improve their employability. Most importantly, a long-term revival plan must be formulated for the agricultural sector. Building on the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund announced in 2020, State governments need to provide fiscal incentives for the use of innovative techniques with respect to seeding, fertiliser and pesticide substitution, water conservation, and crop diversification in consultation with farmer groups. In the absence of targeted public investment, India risks moving from a V-shaped economic recovery towards a K-shaped one, characterised by increasing poverty and inequality amongst some groups, even as others recover. As the second wave ravages the country, the focus must remain on bridging the growing rural-urban economic divide.

## Twitter donates USD 15 mn for COVID-19 relief in India



**Mumbai, May 12 :** Microblogging giant Twitter has donated USD 15 million to help address the COVID-19 crisis in India which is battling the unprecedented second wave of the deadly pandemic. Twitter donation to India, microblogging site twitter, India Covid crisis, tech giants donation to India covid fight, Jack Dorsey, Care, Aid India and Sewa International USA. Microblogging giant Twitter has donated USD 15 million to help address the COVID-19 crisis in India which is battling the unprecedented second wave of the deadly pandemic. Twitter CEO Jack Patrick Dorsey on Monday tweeted that the amount has been donated to three non-governmental organisations Care, Aid India and Sewa International USA. While CARE has been given USD 10 million, Aid India and Sewa International USA have received USD 2.5 million each. "Sewa International is a Hindu faith-based, humanitarian, non-profit service organisation. This grant will support the procurement of life-saving equipment such as oxygen concentrators, ventilators, BiPAP (Bilevel Positive Airway Pressure) and CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machines as part of Sewa International's 'Help India Defeat COVID-19' campaign," the San Francisco-based company said in a statement. Financial Software and Systems, integrated payment products, contactless cards, contactless payment, FSS, ZWIPFSS and Zwipe to offer contactless cards globally. Standalone solar price has fallen to the record-low level of Rs 1.99/unit, buoyed by lower interest rates, declining solar panel prices, improved technology and assurance of power purchase. Maharashtra invites bids for 500 MW wind-solar hybrid power. "Equipment will be distributed to government hospitals and COVID-19 care centers and hospitals," it said. Reacting to the announcement, Sewa International's vice president for Marketing and Fund Development Sandeep Khadkekar thanked Dorsey for his generous donation, saying it is gratifying that Sewa's work has been recognised. "We are a volunteer-driven non-profit organisation, and we believe in serving all, following the sacred Hindu benediction, 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah' - 'May all be happy'," Khadkekar told. "Our administrative costs are about five per cent, meaning that every dollar a

donor offers, we spend 95 cents of it on the work that it is earmarked for. In these past two weeks, we have seen how overwhelmed India's healthcare system is, and we want to do as much as we can to come to the aid of people who are deeply affected. Twitter's generosity will go a long way in helping us do the work we want to do, and that we need to do," he said. With this, Houston-headquartered Sewa USA has so far raised USD 17.5 million towards its India COVID-19 relief efforts. CARE is a leading humanitarian organisation fighting global poverty. Twitter said the grant of USD 10 million will support CARE's urgent action to help address the deadly second wave of COVID-19 infections devastating India. "Funds will be used to supplement government efforts by setting up temporary COVID-19 care centers; providing oxygen, PPE kits and other critically needed emergency supplies for frontline health workers; and addressing vaccine hesitancy and helping ensure that people get vaccinated, particularly in remote, marginalised communities in India," it said. Association for India's Development (AID) is a volunteer movement promoting sustainable, equitable and just development. AID partners with grassroots organisations in India on interconnected areas of education, health, agriculture, livelihoods, environment, and human rights, Twitter said. "This grant will help under-resourced communities identify COVID symptoms, prevent spread, access care and treatment, benefit from medical equipment including oxygen, oximeters, thermometers, protective gear and vaccination, survive lockdowns, regain livelihoods and will strengthen hospitals and NGOs that serve rural and low-income communities," Twitter added. India has been severely affected by the unprecedented second wave of the coronavirus and hospitals in several states are reeling under the shortage of health workers, vaccines, oxygen, drugs and beds. After recording over four lakh fresh cases for four consecutive days, India witnessed a single-day rise of 3,66,161 COVID-19 cases on Monday, which pushed its tally to 2,26,62,575, according to the health ministry. The death toll due to the viral disease climbed to 2,46,116 with 3,754 more people succumbing to it, the ministry's data showed.

## Gold trades flat, follows international trends; check intraday strategies

**Mumbai, May 12 :** Gold Rate Today, Gold Price in India on 11 May 2021: Gold prices in India were trading flat with a negative bias on Tuesday, following international rates as a retreat in US Treasury yields countered a slight rebound in the dollar. In the previous session, gold prices hit a three month high as the yellow metal got support from slumping US dollar index that hit 2.5 month low. Gold Price Today, Gold Price Outlook, Gold Price Forecast: Gold prices in India were trading flat with a negative bias on Tuesday, following international rates as a retreat in US Treasury yields countered a slight rebound in the dollar. On MCX, gold June futures were trading Rs 24 down at Rs 47,927 per 10 gram, as against the previous close of Rs 47,951. Silver July futures were ruling at Rs 71,373 per kg, down Rs 171 or 0.24 per cent on Multi Commodity Exchange. In the previous session, gold prices hit a three-month high as the yellow metal got support from the slumping US dollar index that hit 2.5 month low yesterday. "Hedge funds have reduced their bearish bets as gold prices are trading comfortably above \$1800 but now the prices have remained steady and unable to move above its important 200 day moving average around \$1872," Bhavik Patel, Senior Technical Research Analyst, Tradebulls Securities, told Financial Express Online. Physical gold demand in India dived last week as shops were shut and people turned cautious due to surging coronavirus infections across the world's second-largest bullion consumer. On the technical charts, MCX gold has resistance around Rs 48,500 and Rs 49,200 where 200 day moving average is. "Momentum oscillator RSI\_14 is still at 62 indicating prices are not in overbought state and there is room on the upside. The Rs 46,500 is the immediate support as prices have taken support twice in short period around that level. We believe gold will trade in range of Rs 47,000- Rs 48,500 this week," Patel added. Gold price today Gold, silver rates may continue climbing higher; bullion prices at 10-



week high gold, gold rates, gold prices, silver, mcx gold Gold price today: Yellow metal trades higher, follows international trends; may touch Rs 48,500 soon Analysts said that the markets were still reverberating from the surprising US jobs report for April which saw lower than expected numbers and putting cold water on the notion that US Fed may be forced to increase interest rates. Last year in August, MCX gold touched a record high of Rs 56,191 per 10 grams. Globally, spot gold was steady at \$1,836.26 per ounce, after hitting its highest since February 11, 2021, at \$1,842.91 on Friday. US gold futures were down 0.1 per cent at \$1,836.40 per ounce. The dollar index was

up 0.1 per cent, making gold more expensive for other currency holders, according to Reuters. Benchmark US 10-year Treasury yields

were pinned below 1.6 per cent. On the technical charts, prices are forming the Higher-High pattern on daily chart.

## Google does it again, leaks the unannounced Pixel Buds A-Series early by accident

**London, May 05 :** Google Pixel Buds A-Series, Google Pixel Buds A-Series launch, Google Pixel Buds, Google Pixel, Google This is the second time that Google has let the Pixel Buds A-Series slip ahead of schedule. "The new Pixel Buds A-Series have arrived," the official Android account tweeted on Tuesday. Except, they were never really meant to "arrive" this early. Someone, somewhere at Google probably got a little ahead of themselves accidentally scheduling what might otherwise be classified as confidential information at this point of time. The tweet was taken down within 10 minutes, according to media reports, suggesting this wasn't one of those instances where Google sim-

ply tweeted out its next product. It was an actual mistake. That is not to say that this is fresh information. This is in fact the second time that Google has let the Pixel Buds A-Series slip ahead of schedule after seemingly confirming their existence in a marketing email in early April. Only this time, their imminent launch seems all but inevitable in the days to come, quite possibly at the upcoming Google I/O 2021 developer conference that kicks off May 18. Fake COVID-19 vaccine registration SMS, COVID-19 vaccine registration, COVID-19 vaccine Fake COVID-19 vaccine registration SMS can trick you into installing malicious app, steal your contacts to inflict more damage Apple releases

iOS 14.5.1 for iPhone, iPadOS 14.5.1, macOS Big Sur 11.3.1 and watchOS 7.4.1: Why you should update immediately While the previous leak confirmed the Pixel Buds A-Series truly wireless earbuds will come in a new green colourway, the latest reveal drops a few vague technical aspects such as "quality sound" and "quick Bluetooth pairing." They look more or less like the second-gen Pixel Buds launched in 2020 though the "A-series" tagline hints at a more affordable price tag that is always something to be excited about especially since Google has built quite a fan following for itself through its value-focused Pixel A-series smartphones.

## Big Bazaar brings 2 hours home delivery to Guwahati to offer safe shopping experience, in the second wave of Covid-19

**Guwahati, May 12 :** To offer a safer shopping experience amid the second wave of the pandemic, Big Bazaar - The flagship hypermarket retail chain from Future Group is bringing to "Guwahati" 2-hour Doorstep Delivery initiative. Customers in Guwahati can now choose from a wide assortment of grocery, clothing, home and kitchen utilities. These include daily essentials like fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, breads, Rice, atta, dal, salt, sugar etc. Customers can also order freshly baked bread, cupcakes, kulchas, dairy products. Big Bazaar stores are also delivering infant and

kids essentials like formula, feeding bottles, activity books, notebooks etc. Home cleaning products, kitchen utensils as well as clothing items also form part of the home delivery model. The orders can be placed on the website shop.bigbazaar.com or the mobile app of Big Bazaar. The mobile app can be downloaded on Google Play and Appstore. The service will be available from 8 AM to 8 PM. Customers can place a minimum order of Rs. 500 and avail this service for a delivery fee of Rs. 49. Orders above Rs. 1000 will be delivered free of charge. "Our customers' well-being and safety has always

been our top priority especially during this pandemic. We want our customers to stay home and stay safe. Customers can choose the products, place their orders from the comfort and safety of their homes and get them delivered within just 2 hours. Big Bazaar will bring all the savings and value that every household needs on their monthly and weekly shopping to their doorsteps said Kishore Biyani, Founder & CEO, Future Group. Big Bazaar's 2-Hours Home Delivery service is now available in more than 150 cities and towns across India. This makes Big Bazaar the first retailer in the coun-

try to offer instant home delivery on almost every consumer product ordered online. With stores in every state of the country, the country's truly national retailer, Big Bazaar, has been at the forefront of pioneering new and modern services for every customer. Within every city and its suburbs, the central location of Big Bazaar allows it to serve customers in almost every pin code in urban India. Future Group's extensive network of Distribution Centres spread across India, will also play a key role in replenishing the stock and in ensuring high availability and freshness.

About Big Bazaar Big Bazaar is the flagship retail chain operated by Future Retail Limited. It is present in over 150 cities across the country and is available on digital platforms such as mobile apps and shop.bigbazaar.com. Big Bazaar is proud to serve diverse communities in the country and has curated special shopping initiatives for senior citizens and people with disabilities. Big Bazaar has been consistently adjudged as the Most Trusted Retail Brand for more than a decade by ET Brand Equity-Nielsen annual study.



Contd. From Page 1

### 3-Day Assam Assembly Session

the Rajjor Dal chief, granted him the permission for taking oath as a legislator at the Assam Assembly complex. "This is not a bail. Akhil Gogoi has been granted permission only to attend the oath taking ceremony. He has to return to judicial custody again," his advocate Santanu Borthakur said. Akhil Gogoi, lodged in jail after arrest by NIA for alleged sedition and terror charges, had defeated BJP's Surabhi Rajkonwari by a convincig 11,875 votes in Sibsagar seat in the recently held Assam Assembly polls. Akhil Gogoi, who contested as Independent, became the first Assamese to win an election from behind the bars. His victory has been hailed as the "most spectacular" after that of former union minister George Fernandes, who won the 1977 Lok Sabha election by over three lakh votes from Muzaffarpur in Bihar while being in jail since June 1976 during Emergency. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had arrested the Rajjor Dal chief in December 2019 for his alleged role in violent protests against the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Act across the state. Akhil Gogoi was admitted to Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) in 2020 for treating COVID-19 and he remains there for other ailments.

### Eminent litterateur Homen

award in 2015 in protest against the lack of tolerance being created at the Indian society. Homen Borgohain was born on December 7, 1932 in a small village in Dhakuakhana in Lakhimpur district of Assam. Homen Borgohain joined Cotton College in Guwahati for higher studies after completing matriculation from Dibrugarh Govt boy's higher secondary school. Homen Borgohain also worked as an Assam Civil Service (ACS) officer for a brief period. "Deeply pained to hear about the demise of eminent litterateur, a stalwart & veteran journalist Homen Borgohain who poured in massive contributions towards constructive positivity in various aspects of Assam," said Assam Minister Parimal Sulabaidhya. Ace athlete Hima Das said: "Saddened to learn about the demise of our prominent litterateur and veteran journalist of Assam Homen Borgohain sir. He was a former president of Asom Sahitya Sabha, the apex literary body of the state and lost his battle to Covid-19. My heartfelt condolences to his family. RIP" The last rites of eminent litterateur and journalist Homen Borgohain has been performed with full state honours at Navagraha crematorium on Wednesday. Chief Minister of Assam Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma attended the funeral at Navagraha along with other dignitaries. The last rites have been performed with COVID-19 protocol. Homen Borgohain breathed his last today morning at around 6.58 AM at GNRC hospital after suffering a cardiac arrest. He was 89 and survived by two sons. He has been separated from his wife Nirupama Borgohain, also a noted litterateur and journalist, for several years. Borgohain was found to be COVID-positive on April 24 and admitted to the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital, from where he was released on May 7 after testing negative. He fell from the bed in his sleep last night and was rushed to the hospital where he died at 6.58 am, doctors who attended him said. A prolific author and columnist, Borgohain received the Sahitya Akademi award in 1978 for his book 'Pita-Putra' (Father and Son), which he returned in 2015 in protest against the rising religious and social intolerance in the country. At the time of his death, he was the Editor-in-Chief of Assamese daily 'Niyomiya Barta'. He began his career as an Assam Civil Service officer. He later took to journalism, editing popular dailies, weeklies, and magazines that include 'Aamar Asom', 'Asom Bani', 'Nilachal', 'Sutradhar', 'Nagorik', 'Satsori' and 'Niyomiya Barta'. Homen Borgohain was also the president of Asam Sahitya Sabha. His noted literary works include 'Saudor Puteke Nau Meli Jay', 'Haladhiya Soraye Baudhan Khai', 'Astarag', 'Subala' and 'Matysagandha'. Besides novels, he has several books of short stories, poetry and non-fiction to his credit. Some of his books like 'Haladhiya Soraye Baudhan' were also made into award-winning films. His autobiographical works include 'Atmanusandhan', 'Mur Sangbadik Jibon', 'Dhumuha Aru Ramdhenu' and 'Mur Hriday Ekhn Juddhokshetra'. He also received the Assam Valley Literary Award, Srimanta Sankardeva Award and the Nilamoni Phukan Award, among others. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the people of Assam lost a guardian with his death. "We are deeply hurt by the passing away of a bright star who had enriched the rich galaxy of Assamese literature. His death has created a void amidst us," he said.

### Revised COVID-19 SOP

to the official order, the new Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) will come into force from 5 AM of May 13 until further orders. All shops and commercial establishments shall shut down at 1 PM on all days. Weekly haats/bazaar shall not be allowed for 15 days. Restaurants, Dhabas and other eateries can entertain dine-in guest only up to 1 PM after which only home delivery of food will be allowed. Restaurants operating within a Hotel or Resort can allow outside guests up to 1 PM only after which only in-house guests of the Hotel/Resort may be given room service. Delivery of essential goods through e-Commerce may continue with observance of COVID appropriate behavior. Cold storages and warehouses may continue after 1 PM. However, sale counters, showrooms etc attached to these warehouses or cold storages shall not operate after 1 PM. Pharmacies, Hospitals, Animal Care Centres and Veterinary clinics may operate without restrictions being providers of essential and emergency services. All Educational Institutions including Schools/Colleges/Universities must provide quality virtual options. No physical classes shall be allowed for 15 days. All offices both Government and Non-Government shall shut down for 15 days. Government/semi government officers in the rank of Deputy Secretary and above and senior executives in Non-Government sector along with their key support staff will be allowed to attend office upto 1 PM for emergency and essential works. However, 9 and 10 above will not be applicable for organizations rendering Essential/Emergency Services. Law Enforcement Services and Elections work. In case the test positivity of COVID-19 in any area reaches 5% or more in the last one week, District Magistrate will notify such areas as containment zone and ensure necessary containment measures for COVID-19 as envisaged in MoHFW, Gol advisory dates 25th April, 2021 annexed with MHA order dated 29th April, 2021. 12 Marriages and religious functions will be only private affairs and be allowed with presence of maximum of 10 (ten) persons. No reception parties will be allowed post or pre marriage. Funeral/last rites related gatherings shall not be more than 10 persons. All religious places shall remain closed for 15 days. However, the religious head of a religious place or his representative may perform minimal religious rituals/prayers. All public transport will be allowed to operate only upto 30% of seating capacity. Auto Rickshaws, cycle rickshaws and taxis shall operate with one driver and two passengers. Pillion riding will be totally prohibited in two wheelers, except with women and children. All vehicles other than government vehicles will be allowed to ply in accordance with an odd-even formula to be decided by the jurisdictional District Disaster Management Authority between 5 AM to 2 PM. However, this restriction shall not apply to personal vehicles used for medical emergencies. There shall be total ban on movement of individuals from 2 PM to 5 AM daily except for exemptions specified in the order dated May 4, 2021.

### Cyclone 'Tauktae' forms over

Kutch and South Pakistan. If it does, then coastal Gujarat will be hit by the cyclone on May 17 or 18. As per IMD, areas like Lakshadweep, the coast of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra are likely to be impacted. The name 'Tauktae' has been given by Myanmar and if it reaches the Indian coast, it will be India's first cyclonic storm of this year 2021. The Coast Guard of Karnataka issued instructions to fishing boats to not venture out into the sea in the wake of forecast from IMD. The ICG Ships and CG Dornier aircrafts on patrol also relayed the weather warning to fishermen at sea to return to nearest shores. The cyclone could adversely disrupt daily life at a time when the country is already battling a second wave of COVID-19.

### 35 Palestinians killed in Gaza

East peace envoy Tor Wennesland tweeted: "Stop the fire immediately. We're escalating towards a full scale war. Leaders on all sides have to take the responsibility of de-escalation." The cost of war in Gaza is devastating & is being paid by ordinary people. UN is working w/ all sides to restore calm. Stop the violence now," he wrote. Into the early hours of Wednesday morning, Gazans reported their homes shaking and the sky lighting up with Israeli attacks, outgoing rockets and Israeli air defence missiles intercepting them. Israelis ran for shelters or flattened themselves on pavements in communities more than 70 km (45 miles) up the coast and into southern Israel amid sounds of explosions as interceptor missiles streaked into the sky. Hamas's armed wing said it fired 210 rockets towards Beersheba and Tel Aviv in response to the bombing of the tower buildings in Gaza City. In Tel Aviv, air raid sirens were heard around the city. For Israel, the militants' targeting of Tel Aviv, its commercial capital, posed a new challenge in the confrontation with the Islamist Hamas group, regarded as a terrorist organisation by Israel and the United States. The violence followed weeks of tension in Jerusalem during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, with clashes between Israeli police and Palestinian protesters in and around Al-Aqsa Mosque, on the compound revered by Jews as Temple Mount and by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. These escalated in recent days ahead of a - now postponed - court hearing in a case that could end to establish a government, with a new election - and another chance for Netanyahu to retain power - likely if he fails. The Arab League, some of whose members have warmed ties with Israel over the last year, accused it of "indiscriminate and irresponsible" attacks in Gaza and said it was responsible for "dangerous escalation" in Jerusalem. Hamas named its rocket assault "Sword of Jerusalem", seeking to marginalise Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and to present itself as the guardians of Palestinians in Jerusalem. The militant group's leader, Ismail Haniyeh, said Israel had "ignited fire in Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa and the flames extended to Gaza, therefore, it is responsible for the consequences." Haniyeh said that Qatar, Egypt and the United Nations had been in contact urging calm but that Hamas's message to Israel was: "If they want to escalate, the resistance is ready, if they want to stop, the resistance is ready." The White House said on Tuesday that Israel had a legitimate right to defend itself from rocket attacks but applied pressure on Israel over the treatment of Palestinians, saying Jerusalem must be a place of coexistence. The United States was delaying U.N. Security Council efforts to issue a public statement on escalating tensions because it could be harmful to behind-the-scenes efforts to end the violence, according to diplomats and a source familiar with the U.S. strategy. State Department spokesman Ned Price urged calm and "restraint on both sides", saying: "The loss of life, the loss of Israeli life, the loss of Palestinian life, it's something that we deeply regret." He added: "We are urging this message of de-escalation to see this loss of life come to an end." Israel said it had sent 80 jets to bomb Gaza, and dispatched infantry and armour to reinforce the tanks already gathered on the border, evoking memories of the last Israeli ground incursion into Gaza to stop rocket attacks, in 2014. More than 2,100 Gazans were killed in the seven-week war that followed, according to the Gaza health ministry, along with 73 Israelis, and thousands of homes in Gaza were razed by Israeli forces. Video footage on Tuesday showed three plumes of thick, black smoke rising from a 13-story Gaza residential and office block as it toppled over after being demolished by Israeli air strikes. The Israeli military said the building, in Gaza City's Rimal neighbourhood, housed "multiple" Hamas offices, including ones for military research and development and military intelligence. The existence of one Hamas office, used by political leaders and officials dealing with the news media, was widely known locally. Residents in the block and the surrounding area had been warned to evacuate the area before the air strike, according to witnesses and the Israeli military. A second residential and office building in the same neighbourhood was heavily damaged in Israeli attacks shortly before 2 a.m.

### NCLT Rejects Plea To Liquidate

able to revive the paper mills". In a press release issued by JACRU on Wednesday stated that, the bench has not only rejected the plea of the liquidator Kuldeep Verma but it has also ordered the liquidator to follow the order of Appellate Tribunal NCLAT passed on May 29, 2019 to ensure that HPC remain an ongoing concern. Notably, due to nonpayment of Rs 98 lakhs claims of Alloy & Mental Pvt Ltd, the NCLT ordered liquidation of assets of government owned HPC. The release mentioned that the NCLT Delhi Bench pronounced an Order on April 26 this year and the union received the copies of the order on May 11, which clearly rejected the petition of the liquidator. "This Order is a hope for revival of the industries regains momentum," JACRU mentioned. The release also stated that the union, "is confident that the government in Centre and State will take all initiatives on war footing strategy to release pending dues of the workers to arrest further deaths and will revive the Industries to reestablish lakhs of employments for the unemployed youths". "The test time begins for Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma to prove his credibility as dynamic and unparalleled," and the union believes, "All will be well in this new era of governance and the issues would be resolved without further delay". Cachar Paper Mill and Nagaon Paper Mill have been non-functional since October 2015 and March 2017 respectively and the workers have not received their salaries for more than three years. Moreover, 85 workers have attained untimely deaths and over two lakh families have lost source of employments. It may be further mentioned that the Sarbananda Sonowal led-Assam government vide their application dated 10-09-2020 expressed their interest to take over the assets but besides repeated adjournment, the Government failed to submit their final plan or proposal to the liquidator or before NCLT, the release added.

### Media reports about WHO

from 44 countries in all six WHO regions," the global health body reportedly said in its latest weekly epidemiological update published on Tuesday. GISAID is a global science initiative and primary source that provides open access to genomic data of the novel coronavirus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic. In its report, the WHO has characterized the lineage B.1.617 as a variant of concern (VOC). Variants of concern are those considered more dangerous than the original form of the virus first seen in China in late 2019. That danger stems from a variant's higher transmissibility, lethality and resistance to vaccines, or either of them, it said. B.1.617 contains three sub-lineages, which differ by few but potentially relevant mutations in the spike protein - this helps the virus enter the human cells, as well as the prevalence of detection globally, the UN health agency said in its report. At the present time, WHO has designated B.1.617 as a VOC based on early evidence of phenotypic impacts compared to other circulating virus variants, the agency said. According to it, B.1.617 sub-lineages appear to have higher rates of transmission, including observed rapid increases in prevalence in multiple countries. Viruses in the B.1.617 lineage were first reported in India in October 2020. The resurgence in COVID-19 cases and deaths in India have raised questions on the potential role of B.1.617 and other variants such as B.1.1.7 in circulation. A mutation means a change in a nucleic acid base or amino acid molecule, and a virus containing this change is termed a mutant. Mutations eventually accumulate to generate variants that differ from the original virus more and more, and so, a variant can have limited or even cumulative mutations. A recent risk assessment of the situation in India conducted by WHO found that resurgence and acceleration of COVID-19 transmission in India had several potential contributing factors. The prevalence of several VOCs, including the B.1.1.7 and B.1.612 sub-lineages, increased concurrent to the surge in COVID-19 cases were reported in India, according to WHO. "While B.1.1.7 and B.1.612.1 variants have begun to wane in recent weeks, a marked increase in the proportion of viruses sequenced as B.1.612.2 has been observed over the same period," it said.

### The Real Variant Risk From India's

Health's Ashish Jha estimates, the rest of the world needs to help the country combat this menace. Out of pure self-interest. Of the many changes in the pathogen, the two of greatest concern affect a portion of the spike protein, called the receptor binding domain, that's key to the virus getting into human cells. A new study has found that an entry driven by the B.1.617 spike protein was "partially resistant against neutralization by antibodies elicited upon infection or vaccination with the Comirnaty/BNT162b2 vaccine." That's the official name for the Pfizer-BioNTech shot. Although not in use in India, it's one of the main lines of defense in developed countries. India, too, needs to do its part. Even as it struggles to provide hospital beds, oxygen and antivirals to its gasping citizens, New Delhi must step up genome surveillance to figure out - for itself and the rest of the world - what exactly is going on. Plans being laid for reopening and economic recovery everywhere could depend on it. The efficacy of vaccines in dealing with variants isn't a new concern. Researchers have fretted about everything from B.1.1.7 in the U.K. and B.1.351 in South Africa to P.1 in Brazil and B.1.429 and B.1.232 in California. (Yes, the naming system is completely bonkers.) So far, the news has been mostly good. As Sam Fazeli, a pharmaceuticals analyst for Bloomberg Intelligence, recently noted, there is some evidence from nonhuman studies that booster shots will neutralize both the original virus and its altered version. As for reports of "break-through infections" in Israel, or vaccinated people being struck by the new variant, as Fazeli notes, we shouldn't worry too much as long as symptoms are mild or nonexistent and hospitalization isn't required. A small-scale study of 123 doctors, nurses and other medical staff at a specialized diabetes treatment center in New Delhi discovered that of the 113 employees vaccinated (107 with the required two doses), 18 got infected with Covid-19, though only one person had to be hospitalized. The individual was later discharged, I learned from one of the researchers. It's not known if this group was exposed to B.1.617. That's just one more thing we don't know amid the reigning chaos in India. People are scrambling to find a hospital bed or an oxygen cylinder. Or - if they're well - a vaccine shot. Crematoriums are full, and scared villagers are dumping bodies into the river, just as their forefathers did during the 1918 Spanish Flu, a scene economic historian Chinmay Tumbe describes in his book, The Age of Pandemics. Simply allowing the coronavirus to run its course in a population of 1.4 billion would be morally reprehensible. It would also be dangerous: The longer it takes to tame India's second wave, the higher the risk of a variant that does escape vaccine protection. One-sixth of humanity can't be ignored without a massive hit to a global economy that's impatient to reopen. Ask Silicon Valley managers supervising large software projects for global corporations: Their engineering teams in India are in disarray. Or take last week's Group of Seven meetings in London, billed as the first face-to-face powwow in two years. Two members of the Indian contingent, invited as guests, tested positive, leading to self-isolation for Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, the foreign minister. A PR disaster for the host, but also a reminder that it can't be business as usual for the world until the Indian situation comes under control. For neighboring Asian economies, the risk is far greater. Thailand has extended its ban on travelers from India to Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. Australia was so alarmed it controversially refused entry for even its own citizens coming home from India. Hong Kong got spooked when 51 passengers on a single flight from New Delhi early last month tested positive - for 43% of them, the disease showed up two weeks into their mandatory hotel quarantine. The city decided to conduct genome sequencing to gauge the threat. More recently, a 29-year-old Indian engineer coming into Hong Kong from Dubai was charged by authorities for allegedly giving misleading information after 1,200 residents had to be quarantined because of the variant threat he represented. Singapore's largest active cluster, at one of the city's big hospitals, is being chalked up to B.1.617.2. This sub-lineage of the Indian variant is more infectious and "causing larger clusters than before," the Straits Times reported. Education Minister Lawrence Wong as saying. As countries help India with everything from vaccine stocks to oxygen, they should in return ask for honest reporting of case and fatality data - and much greater genomic scrutiny of the emerging variants than is currently being conducted. In a country that takes pride in being the world's pharmaceutical capital, local labs are more than capable.


### Ministers To Monitor COVID-19

Singhal, Urban Development Minister will look after Sonitpur, Darrang and Bishwanath districts while Jogen Mohan, Minister of Revenue & Disaster Management will monitor the COVID-19 situation of West Karbi Anglong, East Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao. Sanjay Kishan, Minister of Welfare of Tea Tribes will monitor Tinsukia and Dibrugarh districts while Ajanta Neog will cover the districts of Dhubri and Lakhimpur. Water Resource Minister Pijush Hazarika will monitor Morigaon and Goalpara while Bimal Bora, Minister of Power will monitor Sivasagar and Charaideo districts. The order issued by the Office of the Chief Minister said that each minister will monitor the trend in the number of COVID-19 cases and the positivity percentage in a district. They will also assess the adequacy of health care facilities in terms of hospital beds, manpower, ICU facilities, medicines, oxygen availability, ambulances to meet the present and anticipated number of COVID cases. The ministers will also monitor compliance with COVID-19 related restrictions in the district and will guide and support the district administration by coordinating with the Health & Family Welfare and other departments as required. Moreover, the ministers will have to keep the Chief Minister and Health minister informed of the situation on regular basis. The Kamrup (M) district has recorded the highest number of COVID-19 deaths in the last 24 hours with 43 people succumbing to the disease on Tuesday, informed Superintendent of Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH) Dr. Achyut Baishya. The superintendent further stated that the COVID cases in the state are increasing at an alarming rate and in the last 24 hours, the state recorded the second highest number of cases with 6,258. Out of the new cases detected in the last 24 hours, Kamrup (M) reported 1585 cases. Dr. Baishya further stated that the ICU beds in MMCH, Kalapahar COVID hospital are almost full but there are alternate arrangements for ICU beds. He said that 20 ICU patients have recovered on Tuesday and have been discharged. It may be mentioned that with the new cases recorded on Tuesday, the active caseload of the state stands at 39,264. The positivity rate is 9.13 per cent. The overall caseload of the state is 3,04,429. The new cases were conducted out of 68,572 tests, and Kamrup (M) registered 1,585 cases, Kamrup Rural at 527, Dibrugarh at 507, and Nagaon at 313. A total of 4,409 patients were discharged today. The recoveries have touched 2,61,980 with a recovery rate of 86.06 per cent. The death count of the state has surged to 1,838 with 85 new fatalities. The death rate is at 0.60 per cent. District-wise deaths also included: Dibrugarh (7), Nagaon (6), Kamrup Rural (5), Barpeta (4), Sivasagar (4), Sonitpur (4), Jorhat (3), Tinsukia (3), Cachar (2), Goalpara (2), Hailakandi (2), Nalbari (2), Bongaigaon (1), Dhemajai (1), Dhubri (1), Golaghat (1), Hojai (1), and Karbi Anglong (1). On the other hand, India has reported over 4,205 COVID-related deaths in the last 24 hours. The total number of deaths stood at 2,54,197. This was stated in the data provided by the union health ministry. Meanwhile, 3,48,421 new cases of coronavirus were detected in the last 24 hours, taking the total number of cases to 2,33,40,938.

### Nepal Prime Minister K P Oli loses vote of confidence

**Kathmandu, May 12 :** K P Oli will be submitting his resignation to President Bidhya Devi Bhandari who in turn will ask Parliament to explore formation of the new government within a week. Nepal's Prime Minister K P Oli has lost the trial of strength in Parliament. The vote of confidence that he placed before the House secured 93 'Ayes' votes against 124 'Nos'. Altogether 15 members abstained. There were only 232 members of 271 present in the House. Those who abstained or absented included 28 dissident members from the Ruling Nepal Communist Party — Unified Marxist Leninist abstained. This was the first vote of confidence unsuccessfully sought by the first government elected under the new constitution promulgated in September 2015. Oli faced the defeat in Parliament and exit from power after leading the government for 38 months.





Tottenham. He is Manchester City's leading Premier League scorer with 12. We have the cleverness and the basic sporting joy of this team on the one hand. And on the other the fact City have the largest wage bill and the deepest squad, and can operate without financial constraints at a time when every other club is being squeezed by force majeure and their own wastefulness - not including the weird, talent-hoarding spree at Stamford Bridge. This is a season when being exceptionally rich has conferred a very obvious advantage, when so many teams have looked ragged, drained and undercooked. In this context City's early season chafing looks like false dramatic tension, a gratuitous car chase. Oh look, Lex Luthor has discovered some kryptonite. Will Superman be able to somehow recover and win the day because he's much stronger and essentially indestructible? As it turns out, yes. Presented with a tide that sinks all ships, City always had the players, and indeed the most stable setup. Does this devalue their achievement? The unarguable quality of this team was evident in the second-half evisceration of Paris Saint-Germain. It has in many ways been a perfect season. Foden's emergence as an outright academy-reared A-lister is a supporter's dream, east Manchester's gift to the England team, and a project-legitimising coup de theatre. De Bruyne has, despite absences, been the key part, a footballer so good he makes first principles - a pass, a run, a set piece - look like his own property, something he can refine and reinvent off the cuff. Even joining (and then leaving) the Super League has somehow turned out to be a PR coup. But it is also clear that the real triumph of the Premier League this year is getting it on at all. Outside the champions the standard has not been high. Liverpool, forced to explore their own brittle second string, have produced a poor title defence. Tottenham, this droopy Tottenham, were top of the league with a third of the season gone.



# Serena Williams and Rafael Nadal still unsure of playing in Tokyo Olympics



**London, May 12 :** Rafael Nadal has added his voice to the chorus of tennis players expressing doubts about either their presence at the Olympic Games this summer or whether the event should be held under current circumstances. "Honestly, I can't give you a clear answer because I don't know," Nadal said at the Italian Open in Rome. "I don't know my calendar. In a normal world I will never

see about missing the Olympics, of course. There is no doubt about that. Everybody knows how important it has been for me to always play in the Olympics. "I normally know my schedule almost 100% since the first of January till the end of the season. This year is something a little bit different, no? We need to be flexible. We need to adapt about the things that are happening." Serena

Williams, who will turn 40 two months after the Games, has already expressed her own reservations about going to Tokyo. Her doubts stem primarily from the possibility of not being able to travel with her three-year-old daughter, Olympia. "I haven't spent 24 hours without her, so that kind of answers the question itself. We're best friends," said Williams, who has won four Olympic gold medals. "I think there are other reasons. I haven't really thought much about Tokyo, because it was supposed to be last year and now it's this year, and then there is this pandemic and there is so much to think about. Then there are the grand slams. It's just a lot. So I have really been taking it one day at a time to a fault, and I definitely need to figure out my next moves." The two leading Japanese players both revealed conflicted emotions about whether the event should go ahead: "I want the Olympics to happen, because I'm an athlete and that's sort of what I have been waiting for my entire life," said a recently vaccinated Naomi Osaka. "But I think that there is so much important stuff

going on, and especially the past year, I think a lot of unexpected things have happened. For me, I feel like if it's putting people at risk and if it's making people very uncomfortable, then it definitely should be a discussion, which I think it is as of right now." Now a four-time grand slam title champion, Osaka is one of the faces of the Tokyo Olympics and her words were echoed by the former No 4 Kei Nishikori, who expressed doubts about whether the Olympic village would be able to contain the virus: "It's tough to really say right now. I think they should really hold [the decision] right now, and they should decide it like before. If it's now, I think it's really tough." Andy Murray and Liam Broady received a welcome slice of luck as they were granted a late entry into the doubles main draw after withdrawals. Murray had only travelled to Rome in order to build his level by training with top opposition including Novak Djokovic. Britain's Cameron Norrie, a recent finalist in Estoril, continued his strong form with a 6-4, 6-4 win against Roberto Carballés Baena.

## Novak Djokovic loses cool, wins match against Taylor Fritz in Rome rain

**London, May 12 :** With conditions worsening during the second set and rain getting heavier, the defending champion's temper boiled over and he roared, "How much more do you want to play?" at the umpire. He added: "I asked you three times and you are not checking anything." Top-ranked Novak Djokovic shouted at the umpire before regaining his cool to see out his rain-delayed second-

round match against Taylor Fritz in the Italian Open on Tuesday. With conditions worsening during the second set and rain getting heavier, the defending champion's temper boiled over and he roared, "How much more do you want to play?" at the umpire. He added: "I asked you three times and you are not checking anything." Djokovic, who has won the Italian Open five times, went on to beat the American 6-3, 7-6 (5). "I was stressed out in the end obviously, but I think it was the right call to stop the match," Djokovic said. "When I came back, I thought we were quite even actually till the last point. I'm glad that I managed to finish off this match in straight sets. I know I can play better." Djokovic, back in action after sitting out the Masters tournament in Madrid, was leading by a set and a break but was unable to serve out at 5-4 in the second set. Play was then suspended for approximately three hours. Fritz held his service game after the resumption to force the tiebreaker, but Djokovic closed out the win on his first match point. "It was a very strange match with strange conditions," Djokovic said. "Obviously ... it is challenging for both me and him." I thought that I had an advantage there because the conditions were slower which allows me



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fier in either Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, who upset 16th-seeded Grigor Dimitrov 6-4, 7-6 (2), or Cameron Norrie. Daniil Medvedev's scheduled showdown with fellow Russian Aslan Karatsev was among the matches postponed Tuesday. Earlier, ninth-seeded Matteo Berrettini rallied to beat Nikoloz Basilashvili 4-6, 6-2, 6-4 - less than 48 hours after losing the final in Madrid. Fellow Italian Lorenzo Sonego also advanced, celebrating his birthday by beating 14th-seeded Gael Monfils 6-4, 5-7, 6-4. Kei Nishikori was handed a walkover in his second-round match against 11th-seeded Pablo Carreno Busta. Eighth-seeded Diego Schwartzman was beaten 6-1, 6-3 by Canadian Felix Auger-Aliassime, who moves into the third round. In the women's tournament, former French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko ousted 16th-seeded Johanna Konta 6-3, 6-1 and Kristina Mladenovic upset 10th-seeded Belinda Bencic 6-3, 6-4. Madison Keys rallied to win an all-American derby against Sloane Stephens 4-6, 6-2, 7-5. Fans are being kept out of the Foro Italico during the early rounds of the tournament as part of restrictions during coronavirus pandemic, but the main arenas will be up to 25% filled from the round of 16.

## MLB orders A's to look at relocation from Oakland as stadium search continues

**London, May 12 :** Major League Baseball instructed the Athletics to explore relocation options as the team tries to secure a new ballpark it hopes will keep the club in Oakland long-term. MLB released a statement on Tuesday expressing its longtime determination that the current Coliseum site is "not a viable option for the future vision of baseball." "MLB is concerned with the rate of progress on the A's new ballpark effort with local officials and other stakeholders in Oakland," MLB said. "The A's have worked very hard to advance a new ballpark in downtown Oakland for the last four years, investing significant resources while facing multiple roadblocks. We know they remain deeply committed to succeeding in Oakland, and with two other sports franchises recently leaving the community [the NBA's Warriors and the NFL's Raiders], their commitment to Oakland is now more important than ever." In November 2018, the A's announced they had found a waterfront location for their ballpark, with picturesque views toward San Francisco, the Bay Bridge and Port of Oakland. The goal had been to open in 2023. A's owner John Fisher said in a statement Tuesday he will honor MLB's instructions but remains committed to continuing to pursue the waterfront ballpark proposed for construction in the city's Howard Terminal location, close to the popular Jack London Square neighborhood. "The future success of the A's depends on a new ballpark," Fisher said. "Oakland is a great baseball town, and we will continue to pursue our waterfront ballpark project. We will also follow MLB's direc-

tion to explore other markets." The proposed ballpark site is about six miles from the Coliseum and there is no mass transit. The A's and city have said they plan to build a gondola that would go from the waterfront area of the ballpark over Interstate 880 to downtown Las Vegas, which already took the Raiders from Oakland a few years ago, is the most likely destination of the A's did relocate. Portland, Oregon; Nashville, Tennessee; and the Canadian cities of Vancouver and Montreal are other possibilities. The Athletics have moved twice since the franchise was founded in Philadelphia, arriving in Kansas City for the 1955 season and in Oakland for the 1968 season. Just two MLB teams have moved in the past half-century: the expansion Washington Senators became the Texas Rangers for the 1972 season and the Montreal Expos trans-

formed into the Washington Nationals for the 2005 season. The Braves also moved twice, switching from Boston to Milwaukee for the 1953 season and to Atlanta for 1966. There were a flurry of switches in the 1950s and 60s: the St Louis Browns became the Bal-

timore Orioles (1954), the Brooklyn Dodgers moved to Los Angeles for 1958, the New York Giants moved to San Francisco for 1958, the original Washington Senators became the Minnesota Twins (1961) and the Seattle Pilots became the Milwaukee Brewers (1970).



## German football chief urged to resign over Nazi remark

**Berlin, May 12 :** German football federation president Fritz Keller is facing calls to resign after comparing one of his vice presidents to infamous Nazi judge Roland Freisler. The federation said Sunday that the presidents of its state and regional associations withdrew their confidence in Keller and asked him to step down "to avert further damage to the federation." The associations also withdrew their trust in general secretary Friedrich Curtius, who has been involved in a long-standing power struggle with

Keller, at their extraordinary conference in Potsdam over the weekend. The 64-year-old Keller has faced heavy criticism across German sport since comparing vice president Rainer Koch to Freisler at a federation meeting on April 23. "Such a statement is completely unacceptable and stunned us," the associations said in the statement published by the federation on Sunday. "It is condemned in the strongest possible terms. The regional and state associations of the DFB stand for a democratic, tolerant and diverse society.

The president's statement is incompatible with the principles and values of the associations." Freisler, as a participant in the Wannsee Conference of 1942, was one of the Nazis responsible for the organization of the Holocaust. He became president of the People's Court, where he issued around 2,600 death sentences to opponents of the Nazi regime. Koch, who did not accept Keller's apology, also works as a judge at the higher regional court in Munich. Keller was appointed head of the federa-

tion in September 2019, when he was seen as the best candidate to help it emerge from years of scandal. Keller's predecessor, Reinhard Grindel, resigned after accepting a luxury watch amid allegations of undeclared earnings and general discontent with his leadership. Former federation presidents Wolfgang Niersbach and Theo Zwanziger were both forced out amid allegations of corruption concerning Germany's 2006 World Cup bid. Germany is due to host the European Championship in 2024.



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