

IN BRIEF

Petrol crosses ₹97 in Delhi, diesel ₹88

New Delhi: Petrol price in the national capital crossed ₹97 a litre and diesel neared ₹88 after fuel prices were raised yet again. Petrol price was hiked by 29 paise per litre and diesel by 28 paise, according to a price notification of state-owned fuel retailers. The hike — 27th in seven weeks — pushed fuel prices across the country to new historic highs. In Delhi, petrol hit an all-time high of ₹97.22 a litre, while diesel is now priced at ₹87.97 per litre. Fuel prices differ from state to state depending on the incidence of local taxes such as VAT and freight charges. And because of this, petrol retails at over ₹100 per litre mark in eight states and union territories — Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. Among the metros, petrol is already above ₹100 in Mumbai, Hyderabad and Bengaluru. In Mumbai, petrol now costs ₹103.36 a litre and diesel comes for ₹95.44. Sri Ganganagar district of Rajasthan was the first place in the country to see petrol hitting ₹100 a litre mark in mid-February. — PTI

■ Accused were also involved in black marketing of fake injections: Cops

Fake Covid drug unit busted, 2 doctors among 10 arrested

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

With the arrest of 10 people including two doctors, the Delhi Police's Crime Branch has busted a manufacturing unit of 'fake injections' in the National Capital. Police said that the accused were also doing black marketing of fake injections meant for treatment of Covid-19 and black fungus infection.

The accused have been identified as Mayank Taluja, Waseem Khan, Mohammad Faizal Yasin, Shoaib Khan, Afzal, Shivam Bhatia, Mohammad Aftab and Faizan. Police said that two doctors, Dr Aamir and Dr Altamas Hussain have also been arrested.

According to Monika Bhardwaj, the Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP), Crime Branch, Mayank Taluja worked as a Covid-19 volunteer for two-three months.

"He came in contact with Waseem Khan who worked as a salesman at



Crime branch officials present 10 persons arrested for involvement in manufacturing of fake injections and drugs for Covid-19 and black fungus treatment at PHQ in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

M/s Al Khidmat Medicos. Soon Taluja started advertising his mobile number as a contact for availability of injections for the treatment of black fungus disease on different WhatsApp groups," said the DCP.

"The matter came to notice on June 17 after a tip off was received about Taluja from Atul Kumar Nasa, Head of Office, and Drug Control Department

of Delhi government," said the DCP.

"Waseem was arrested from near Jamia Metro station when he came there to deliver Liposomal Amphotericin-B injection at the behest of Taluja. Based on his disclosure, raid was conducted at M/s Al Khidmat Medicos from where 10 vials of Liposomal Amphotericin-B injections were recovered and sent for test by

the Inspector of drug department," said the DCP.

"The owner of M/s Al Khidmat Medicos, Shoaib Khan and his two salesmen Mohd. Faizal Yaseen and Afzal, who were involved in the deal, were also apprehended. In the meantime, Taluja was also apprehended when he came there to collect the payment for 10 vials of Liposomal Amphotericin-B injections," said the DCP.

"When Shoaib Khan was interrogated, he revealed that Shivam Bhatia, who is the manager of Mediiz Health Care in Saket is the source of these vials of Liposomal Amphotericin-B injections. The accused, Shivam Bhatia who was also apprehended in the case on June 18 revealed that he procured the injections from one Sonu at Nizamuddin and thereafter, supplied these injections to the needy customers at exorbitant price through his sources," said the DCP.

Covid: Delhi likely to get Sputnik V jabs by June 25

15,76,775 fully vaccinated in city so far: Delhi govt

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

Denizens of the national capital will have to wait for some more days as the roll out of Russian Covid-19 vaccine Sputnik V at Indraprastha Apollo and Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital in Delhi has been delayed for some days.

The facility in Delhi will tentatively start administering the two-dose vaccine by June 25, said a spokesperson of Apollo Hospitals. Earlier, the jabs of Sputnik V were slated to start by June 20. According to an official of Madhukar Rainbow Children's Hospital, there is a delay on the part of the suppliers. "We are expecting (roll out) next week," he said.

Fortis Healthcare, which had said it would make Sputnik V available at its Gurgaon and Mohali hospitals from Saturday, also has not started administering the Russian vaccine so far. "The rollout did not happen on

► **FORTIS HEALTHCARE**, which had said it would make Sputnik V available at its Gurgaon and Mohali hospitals from Saturday, has not started administering the Russian vaccine so far. "The rollout did not happen on Saturday. We expect there will be some clarity on Monday," an official said.

Saturday. We expect there will be some clarity on Monday," an official said. The Centre has fixed the price of the vaccine at ₹1,145 per dose. The maximum price of Covishield for private Covid-19 vaccination centres (CVCs) has been fixed at ₹780 per dose, while that of Covaxin is ₹1,410 per dose.

Russia's Gamaleya National Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology has developed Sputnik V and the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF) is marketing it globally. Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories, the marketing partner for the

vaccine in the country, has been importing the shots from Russia. Over a period of time, the vaccine is also going to be manufactured in India. Sputnik V uses two different viruses that cause the common cold (adenovirus) in humans. It employs a different vector for each of the two shots, given 21 days apart.

According to Gamaleya and the RDIF, Sputnik V has demonstrated an efficacy rate of 92 per cent.

A total of 85,907 vaccine doses were administered in the national capital on Saturday of which 52,060 were given to beneficiaries in the 18 to 44 years age group, Delhi MLA Atishi said.

So far, 65,14,825 vaccines have been administered and a total of 15,76,775 people have been fully vaccinated, the AAP leader said in the daily vaccination bulletin. On Saturday, 60,443 people were given their first dose of vaccine while 25,464 received the second and final dose.

Yoga, meditation can help in post-Covid recovery: Kejriwal

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

Practising yoga and meditation can not only improve immunity but also help in post-Covid recovery, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Sunday.

Speaking at the inauguration of the Centre for Meditation and Yoga Sciences here on the eve of International Day of Yoga, Kejriwal said in these difficult times, people are feeling the need for yoga more than ever.

"In these difficult times, people are feeling the need for yoga more than ever. Yoga can not only help improve immunity in the body but it also helps in recovery post-covid.

"Those who have survived a strong case of COVID-19, need to rebuild their physical and mental health. Yoga and meditation can do that," the chief minister said.

The Delhi Pharmaceutical Sciences Research University (DPSRU) will offer a diploma course in Meditation and Yoga Sciences at the centre, he said.

The one year (three trimester) program currently has 450 yoga instructors under training.

"We keep hearing people talking about taking yoga to people, making yoga a 'jan andolan', a people's movement. India has taught yoga to the world, but how many people in India practise yoga," the chief minister said.

Earthquake of low intensity hits Delhi

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

A low intensity earthquake of magnitude 2.1 struck the national capital on Sunday. The quake had its epicentre in Punjabi Bagh area at a depth of 7 km. It struck at 12.02 pm, according to the National Centre for Seismology. No loss of life or damage to property has been reported so far.

The NCS has deployed additional earthquake recording instruments for close monitoring of seismic activity in and around Delhi after the NCR region witnessed a series of tremors from April to August last year.

Based on the analysis of satellite imageries, the signatures of active faults have been observed at various locations like Wazirabad, Timarpur and Kamla Nehru Ridge in Delhi; Jhunjhunu and Alwar district of Rajasthan; Sonapat, Sohna, Gurgaon, Rohtak, Rewari and Nuh districts in Haryana; and Baghpat district in Uttar Pradesh.

The National Capital Region of Delhi and its surroundings had experienced minor and small magnitude earthquakes during April to August 2020. The epicentre of these earthquakes were located in areas of northeast Delhi, Rohtak, Sonapat, Baghpat, Faridabad and Alwar.

Progress of monsoon likely to be slow: IMD

New Delhi, June 20: The progress of the Southwest monsoon over parts of Rajasthan, western Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, and Delhi is likely to be slow as "large-scale features are not favourable" for its advance, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said on Sunday.

Wind pattern by numerical models does not indicate any favourable condition for sustained rainfall over the region during the forecast period, it said. The IMD had, on Thursday, said the impact of the mid-latitude westerly on the monsoon is likely to continue till June 23 and hence its advance into Rajasthan, remaining parts of Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi is not likely during the period.

It had said the monsoon flow pattern is likely to organise and strengthen gradually between June 26 and June 30 and further advance to most parts of Northwest India is likely during the same period. — PTI



Arvind Kejriwal



Government of India

**VACCINE FOR ALL FREE FOR ALL****Thank You PM Modi!****World's Largest Free Vaccination Campaign****Corona Will Lose, India Will Win**

- Free COVID-19 vaccination for everyone above 18 years of age begins in India today
- So far, vaccines were free for people of 45 years of age and above
- Vaccines will be available free of cost in government-run vaccination centres
- Government of India is providing free vaccines to all states
- Central government has provided 30 crore vaccine doses so far
- Three vaccines approved in India so far, several new vaccines in approval process

Get Vaccinated, Stay Safe

- Vaccines are safe, ignore rumours
- Visit www.cowin.gov.in to register and get full details on vaccination centres and vaccines
- Follow COVID-appropriate behaviour even after vaccination



“Central Government is beginning the Free Vaccination For All campaign for every Indian from today. The biggest beneficiary of this phase of India's vaccination drive shall be the poor, the middle class and the youth of the country. All of us should pledge to get ourselves vaccinated. Together we will defeat COVID-19.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi”

TOGETHER LET US DEFEAT COVID-19, GET YOURSELF VACCINATED AS PER YOUR TURN

SHORT TAKES

Chennai: Bus, Metro services to resume

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu government on Sunday announced more relaxations in lockdown norms for 27 districts and bus services are all set to resume in four districts including Chennai from Monday, after a gap of 42 days. Dispensing with the e-registration requirement in Chennai and three other nearby districts, the government said people could travel in autorickshaws and taxis without such prior approval. Metro would resume with 50% occupancy and similarly intra & inter district bus services also shall become operational in 4 districts including Chennai with 50% occupancy, the government said. Categorising 38 districts into 3 separate groups for the purpose of easing curbs, the government allowed more relaxations for 23 districts in the 2nd category and 4 districts in the 3rd slot got the most of relaxations that includes resumption of bus services. — PTI

3 booked for FB post against Champat Rai

Bijnor: Three persons, including a woman, have been booked for creating an objectionable and indecent Facebook post against Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust's general secretary Champat Rai, police said on Sunday. An FIR against the trio has been lodged on the complaint of Bijnor resident Sanjay Bansal, who has claimed himself to Champat Rai's brother, Nagina police station's in-charge Krishna Murari Dohre said. In his complaint, Bansal said that a man named Vineet has made several objectionable and derogatory remarks against the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra trust's general secretary in his Facebook post. Bansal also annexed to his complaint a screenshot of Vineet's Facebook post, the SHO said. — PTI

Chirag announces 'aashirvaad yatra'

New Delhi: LJP leader Chirag Paswan on Sunday announced "aashirvaad yatra" from July 5, the birth anniversary of his father and party founder Ram Vilas Paswan, from Hajipur, as he seeks popular legitimacy in a battle with the rival faction headed by his uncle Pashupati Kumar Paras for the party's ownership. Accusing his family rivals of "stabbing" him in the back, Paswan made the announcement following a meeting of the LJP national executive which endorsed his leadership and hit out at the faction headed by his uncle for working against the party. Paras, in turn, dismissed the meeting as an Assembly of "rented crowd" and claimed that it held no legitimacy. The EC will now decide whether his group is the real LJP or whether the Chirag-led faction is right. — PTI

ODISHA TO START 'ASHIRABAD' PLAN FOR COVID ORPHANS

Bhubaneswar: The Odisha government on Sunday announced a new scheme named 'Ashirbad' for children who lost their parents to Covid. Under the scheme, the orphaned children will be provided monthly financial assistance. According to the scheme, the children who have lost both of their parents or single parents will be provided a monthly assistance of ₹2,500 up to the age of 18. Similarly, the children who have lost either their fathers or mothers due to Covid-19 pandemic will be provided a monthly assistance of ₹1,500. The monthly assistance will be deposited to the bank account of the guardians or relatives by whom the beneficiary children are taken care of. Chief minister Naveen Patnaik has directed the officials to take necessary steps so that all the eligible beneficiaries avail the benefits of the scheme. The CM also asked the district collectors to launch a special drive every year to identify the real beneficiaries. The affected children from April 2020 onwards will be eligible for the scheme. Moreover, the children covered under the scheme will be provided free treatment under Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojna. They will also be included either in the national food security or state food security schemes.



Girls perform yoga ahead of International Yoga Day in Surat on Sunday.

— PTI

PM Modi to address Yoga Day programme today

New Delhi, June 20: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Monday morning address a programme to mark International Yoga Day whose theme this year is 'Yoga For Wellness'.

"Tomorrow, June 21, we will mark the seventh Yoga Day. The theme this year is 'Yoga For Wellness', which focuses on practising Yoga for physical and mental wellbeing," PM Modi tweeted.

"Around 6:30 am tomorrow, will be addressing the Yoga Day programme," he said.

The Ayush ministry, which is the nodal ministry for International Day of Yoga (IDY), in a statement has said that in view of the Covid pandemic and the consequent restrictions on congregational activities, the lead event of the day will be a televised programme with Prime Minister Modi's address being the highlight.

Scheduled to start at 6.30



Narendra Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote to Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last month and thanked them for their cooperation in celebrating the International Day of Yoga

am on all Doordarshan channels on Monday, the event will also include an address by minister of state for Ayush Kiren Rijiju and a live yoga demonstration by the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, the ministry said in a statement.

Meanehile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wrote to Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and Sri Lankan President Gotabaya Rajapaksa last month and thanked them for their cooperation in celebrating the International Day of Yoga.

In his letter to President Rajapaksa, Modi expressed his gratitude for making

Yoga Day celebrations in Sri Lanka a resounding success every year.

The PM, in the letter dated May 25, noted that the 'Yoga For Wellness' theme this year reflected the concern for the good health and wellbeing of people across the globe, according to a tweet by the Indian mission in Lanka.

In his letter to Brazilian President Bolsonaro dated May 14, Modi said in 2014, the overwhelming response of the United Nations General Assembly to recognise June 21 as International Day of Yoga underlined the universal appeal of Yoga that transcends all barriers. — PTI

Iran's President targeted in a misinformation drive: Embassy

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

Stung by adverse portrayals in the international media of new Iranian President Ayatollah Seyed Ebrahim Raeisi as a hardliner, the Iranian Embassy in Delhi said he was being targeted in a misinformation campaign by the country's enemies and described the new president as honest, committed to improving the economy and strengthening ties with immediate and extended neighbours. It said Mr Raeisi had greatly strengthened country's judicial system.

"Indeed Mr Raeisi's records & history, his competence and expertise, & inclusive approach would no doubt ... bring a bright chapter ... by developing the economy, boosting livelihood, safeguarding the country's independence, rights & interests of the nation, ... and expanding a comprehensive relation with immediate and extended neighbours," Embassy said. "After the landslide and historical victory of Ayatollah Raeisi, the enemies of the nation ... spare no effort ... to spread misinformation on a personality who has been democratically and freely elected by the Iranian nation ...," the Iranian Embassy added.

Hailing Ayatollah Raeisi as one of the most successful judicial heads in Iranian contemporary history, the Embassy further said, "His clean-handedness and zero tolerance for administrative and financial corruption has made him a loved icon and a trustworthy figure ...".

India records lower than 60,000 cases in 81 days

Country sees 1,576 deaths & 87,619 recoveries in 24 hours

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

With 58,419 new Covid-19 cases in the last 24 hours, India recorded less than 60,000 fresh infections after 81 days, according to the Union health ministry's data on Sunday. The country witnessed as many as 1,576 deaths and 87,619 recoveries in the last 24 hours.

With the new cases, the cumulative caseload has climbed to 2,98,81,965 including 7,29,243 active cases. The daily positivity rate in the country stands at 3.22 per cent while the weekly positivity rate is currently at 3.43 per cent. The daily positivity rate has remained below 5 per cent for 13 consecutive days.

As many as 3,86,713 people have succumbed to the Covid-19 infection so far while the recoveries reached 2,87,66,009. As daily recoveries continue to outnumber the daily new cases for the 38th consecutive day, the recovery rate is currently at 96.27 per cent.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a total of 39,10,19,083 samples were tested for Covid-19 up to June 19. Out of these, 18,11,446 samples were tested on Saturday. The Union health ministry informed that 27,66,93,572 vaccine doses have been administered so far under the vaccination drive in the country.

While many states eased Covid-19 relaxations, the Haryana government, on Sunday, extended the Covid-19 guidelines in the state for another week till June 28. Uttarakhand

India begins free Covid-19 jabs for all above 18 today

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

Narrowing the gap between jabs and arms, India will begin its free Covid vaccination drive for population above the age of 18 from Monday, June 21. The move came in force after Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 7, announced that the central government will provide free coronavirus vaccine to states for inoculation of all adults and had also asserted that vaccine supply would be increased significantly in the country in coming days.

All citizens above the age of 18 can get free vaccination at government facilities from June 21. Several states had already declared free vaccines for all. All vaccination centres, government and private, would provide onsite registration facilities for both

individuals and groups. Citizens need not pre-register themselves on CoWin or Aarogya Setu app.

As per centre, states may avail the facilities of Common Service Centres and Call Centres to help citizens book slots for vaccination. The Centre will buy 75 per cent of the total vaccine production from vaccine manufacturers and give it free to the state governments. The central government also bears the responsibility of 25 per cent of the work related to vaccination with the states, an arrangement that was implemented in the weeks following the announcement.

However, private sector hospitals can continue to procure 25 percent of vaccines, but their service charge would be capped at ₹150 per dose over fixed price of the vaccine. State governments may monitor the price being so charged.

chief minister Subodh Uniyal has announced that a Covid-19 curfew will be imposed in the state from June 22 to June 29 with certain relaxations. Kerala reported 11,647 fresh Covid cases and 112 deaths while Andhra Pradesh reported 5,646 new cases of Covid-19 on Sunday, taking the active caseload in the state to 63,068. Karnataka reported 4,517 new Covid cases and 120 deaths in 24 hours. Delhi reported 124 fresh cases of coronavirus

on Sunday, taking the active case tally in the city to 2,091. The city also registered 7 deaths in the past 24 hours.

The ministry stressed that more than 70 per cent of the deaths happened due to comorbidities.

"Our figures are being reconciled with the Indian Council of Medical Research," the ministry said on its website, adding that state-wise distribution of figures is subject to further verification and reconciliation.

Reform not achieved by questioning: Khurshid slams G-23

New Delhi, June 20: Taking a dig at some of the G-23 leaders who have renewed their call for reforms in the Congress, senior leader Salman Khurshid on Sunday asked whether those calling for organisational polls have got to where they are in the party in the same manner, and asserted that reform is achieved by sacrificing, not by suddenly questioning something that one has "taken advantage of" over the years.

Days after G-23 leader M. Veerappa Moily stressed the need for a "major surgery" on the party to make it electorally more competitive, Mr Khurshid said these "wonderful phrases" are not the answer as party leaders need to sit down and come up with solutions to the challenges that have arisen in the last 10 years.

In an interview with PTI,



Salman Khurshid

SENIOR LEADER Salman Khurshid also said that it was for Rahul Gandhi to decide whether he wants to contest the party's presidential polls or not, but asserted that with or without being party president he remains 'our leader'

Mr Khurshid also said that it was for Rahul Gandhi to decide whether he wants to contest the party's presidential polls or not, but asserted that with or without being party president he remains "our leader".

Asked about Kapil Sibal's call for widespread reforms across all levels of the organisation and Moily calling for a "major surgery" on the party, the former Union minister took a dig saying, "I am quite happy for the major surgery but what do you want to remove — my liver, kidney, just somebody tell me

what surgery you want to do."

Mr Khurshid, who is among the leaders considered close to the Gandhi family, said the "surgery" should be done on the party but it must be made clear what one will lose and what one will achieve by it.

"These wonderful phrases are not the answer, we need to get to the bottom (of the problem), we need to get to the inside, before surgery, we need to do X-rays, ultrasounds," the 68-year-old said using medical analogies. The senior Congress

leader said he doesn't understand when people say "let us do surgery, reform, bring about a fundamental change" and wishes that they would clearly explain what they mean by it.

"If they mean that there should be a reshuffle and they should be given the top positions, then that is not reform or surgery. That is just saying 'I want the job'. So, I think there should be a conversation," he said.

Mr Khurshid asserted that the leaders calling for reform should have had a discussion with other leaders as well.

"Why hasn't somebody talked to me and said let us do this for the party?... (it is as) if only they exist and want reform," he said referring to the 'Group of 23' leaders who had written to party chief Sonia

Gandhi and sought extensive organisational revamp last year.

But since then, out of that group, Jitin Prasada has switched over to the BJP while many have apparently distanced themselves from the group.

Pointing out that the 'Group of 23' leaders, which included the likes of Ghulam Nabi Azad, Anand Sharma, Moily and Sibal, had sought major organisational revamp, he said they only said there should be elections in the party.

"Nobody is against the election, there should be an election. It would have been very nice if they had reminded us of which election they won to get where they are. If they reminded us of that it would be easy for us to understand," he said, taking a swipe at the G-23 leaders.

— PTI

Muslims targeted when polls are around: Madani

New Delhi, June 20: People of a certain ideology spread hate and target minorities whenever elections approach, Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind (Arshad Madani faction) chief Maulana Arshad Madani alleged on Sunday.

In a statement, Madani stressed on the need to promote unity, mutual harmony and Hindu-Muslim brotherhood, saying religious hatred is taking the country on the path of destruction, not development.

Elections are to be held in some states including Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, and Goa next year.

— PTI

Govt. of Haryana

Yoga For Wellness

International Yoga Day

State-Level Programme in Haryana

Date - 21st June, 2021 Time - 6:30 am Onwards

Following the Corona safety guidelines, under the joint aegis of AYUSH Department and Haryana Yoga Commission

- Programmes will be organized at 1100 places in all the districts of Haryana.
- 50 programmes will be organized in each district and maximum 50 yoga sadhak will be able to attend each programme.

**Practice yoga everyday
Live your life in healthy way
Yoga is the best key
To make the State disease free**

**- Manohar Lal
Chief Minister, Haryana**

All the people of the State, join the mentioned link to watch the live broadcast of this programme

You Tube <https://youtu.be/AjvpVt3movU>

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana | www.prharyana.gov.in | @Cmohry | @DiprHaryana

SHORT TAKES

3 HELD FOR BLACK MARKETING OF BLACK FUNGUS INJECTIONS

SHAHAB ANSARI
MUMBAI, JUNE 20

Acting on a tip-off, the Thane police have arrested three persons and busted an alleged racket of black marketing of a drug used for the treatment of mucormycosis also known as "black fungus" infection.

According to Pankaj Shirsat, Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), after receiving reliable information that a person was black mar the medicine, the police laid a trap in Kapurbawdi Naka in district Thane in neighbouring Mumbai on Saturday and initially arrested two persons from the spot.

The police recovered 14 injections of Liposomal Amphotericin-B worth Rs 1,09,424 from the duo.

The two arrested persons reside in Pannel in neighbouring Navi Mumbai and Vasai in Palghar district.

According to the police, during questioning, the two accused persons told the police that they had procured the vials from a man from Boisar in Palghar. The police later also arrested the third accused, the official said.

The accused were produced before a local court which remanded them to police custody till June 23. The police are now probing if there were more people involved in the case and how the medicines were procured by them. Mucormycosis is a fungal infection leading to prolonged morbidity and even mortality among Covid patients.

Earlier this month the Pimpri-Chinchwad police in Pune had also busted a black-marketing operation of antifungal drugs used for treatment of Mucormycosis and arrested six persons including nursing staff and medical representatives of a pharmaceutical company. The police had also recovered medicines worth ₹23,442, from the five people arrested on June 7, and later during the probe more medicines were seized from them.

SENA MLA FACING ED TROUBLE ASKS UDDHAV TO TIE UP WITH MODI, BJP

■ Continued from Page 1

he added. The Enforcement Directorate had, last year, raided several properties belonging to Mr Sarnaik in connection with a money-laundering case. His son, Vihang Sarnaik, too, was questioned by the ED.

Reacting to Mr Sarnaik's letter, BJP leader Kirit Somaiya said the Sena MLAs' suggestion stems from his fear of being jailed. "All corrupt leaders of the Shiv Sena - Prapat Sarnaik, Anil Parab, Ravindra Waikar - will have to be in jail," he said.

However, senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut said: "The important thing is that he is complaining of harassment in his letter. So, the question is, who is harassing him?"

The Shiv Sena had snapped ties with its long-time ally BJP over the dispute on the chief minister's post after the Maharashtra Assembly elections in October 2019 and it formed Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government with the NCP and the Congress. The leaders of the Sena and the NCP have also hinted about striking an alliance for the forthcoming elections in Maharashtra.

BJP to contest its narrow poll defeats in Calcutta HC

BJP will file petition for 11 seats where its candidates lost by less than 1K-5K votes

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
AND PRANMOY
BRAHMACHARI
KOLKATA/BERHAMPORE,
JUNE 20

To tackle West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and her party in their own strategy, the BJP has also decided to legally challenge it's defeat in those Assembly seats where the ruling Trinamul Congress won by a narrow margin.

It is planning to move a writ petition at the Calcutta High Court soon seeking the recounting of the votes in those seats.

At Berhampore in Murshidabad state BJP president Dilip Ghosh said, "We will file a writ petition at the HC for recounting in a few assembly seats where we lost in narrow margins. The BJP legal cell is now preparing papers. It will file a case very soon and demand for the recounting

of votes." Many leaders of his party had raised the demand after May 2 when the TMC supremo threatened to contest his defeat legally. They however fell silent later.

This time, the BJP's plan comes close on the heels of Ms Banerjee's election petition at the HC last week, challenging her defeat to Suwendu Adhikari, now the leader of the Opposition, of the BJP at Nandigram by over 1,900 votes and her party's contest to its defeat at the HC in four more seats

BJP PRESIDENT Dilip Ghosh said, "We will file a writ petition at the high court for recounting in a few assembly seats where we lost in narrow margins. The BJP legal cell is now preparing papers. It will file a case very soon and demand for the recounting of votes"

Though Mr Ghosh did not reveal the name and number of the seats BJP is going to contest legally, party insiders hinted at three and 11 seats, where their candidates lost to

TMC, in less than 1,000 votes and 5,000 votes respectively. These seats are under consideration for the legal contest, according to sources.

Teasing the BJP for its plans, TMC state general secretary Kunal Ghosh on Sunday said, "BJP has become a laughing stock. Nishiith Pramanik, who is their Lok Sabha MP, contested the Assembly polls but won by a very narrow margin. He later preferred to continue as the MP by vacating his assembly seat that he won. It means they have no problem accepting where they won and lost. When they are accepting the results on one hand but they are vacating their seats to retain their MP seats on the other, they could have fought the polls altogether. What is the point in shying away from the Assembly?"



Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar participate in adventure sport para sailing at Tikkar Taal lake in Panchkula on Sunday. — PTI



Ayesha Sulthana

Lakshadweep: Filmmaker quizzed by cops in sedition case

Kochi, June 20: Filmmaker Ayesha Sulthana, booked for sedition in Lakshadweep, on Sunday appeared before the Kavaratti police in connection with the case.

She reached the Kavaratti police headquarters at 4 PM and was allowed to leave at 7.15 PM after questioning.

In a video message to reporters, Sulthana said the police were cooperative and she had been directed to stay on the islands for 3-4 days.

The allegation is that the filmmaker, while participating in a debate telecast by a Malayalam news channel on June 7, had said the Centre used biological weapon against the people of Lakshadweep.

The complaint was filed by a BJP leader on the islands. In a relief to Ms Sulthana, the Kerala high court had on Thursday granted her interim anticipatory bail for a week, while reserving orders on her advance bail plea.

It had directed her to comply with the notice issued by the Kavaratti police to appear before them for interrogation on June 20 in connection with the sedition case. — PTI



SP party's patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav and his son Akhilesh Yadav with RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav during the former's granddaughter Deepali's wedding. — PTI

Wife accuses TMC MLA of heckling her in public

RAJIB CHOWDHURI
KOLKATA, JUNE 20

Tollywood actor and newly-elected Trinamul Congress MLA Kanchan Mullick's wife Pinki Banerjee Mullick lodged a complaint with the New Alipore police station in Kolkata against him and his close friend and young actor Shreemoyee Chattaraj for allegedly heckling and threatening her on the road with dire consequences in the city. Popular for his comedian role in Bengali films, Kanchan, in his early fifties, is a first-time MLA of Uttarpara in Hooghly. On Saturday night he visited a flat in New Alipore where Pinki, also an actor and grand-daughter of famous Bengali actress Sabitri Chatterjee, has been staying with their eight-year-old son separately due to a marital discord over the buzz about his closeness to Shreemoyee.

However Pinki, along with her son, was at a relative's



Kanchan Mullick and wife Pinki Banerjee Mullick with their son

house, also in South Kolkata, then. While returning with Shreemoyee in a car, Kanchan however came across Pinki and their son in another car on the way and stopped them at Chetla. Pinki claimed, "Kanchan shouted at me and also heckled me by trying to open the locked door of my car. He wanted to talk to me desperately since morning over the phone."

She added, "When I did not listen to him and refused to get down, Shreemoyee came forward and threatened me with dire

consequences. She warned me not to create trouble in their life. Panicked, my son started crying. Kanchan and Shreemoyee were angry with me because I recently opened my mouth against their closeness. I later lodged a complaint with the New Alipore police station against them and sought protection as I had no other option."

The cops said they are looking into the complaint. But no case has been initiated into the incident. On Sunday evening Kanchan also lodged a complaint of harassment against Pinki at the Chetla police station. Kanchan and Shreemoyee were not available for comments. TMC however landed in a spot over the complaint against its first-time MLA. It's state general secretary Kunal Ghosh tried to downplay the incident saying, "It is a family issue which has no connection with the party. I am also not aware of what exactly happened."

Alliance with Sena only for 5 yrs: Nana

SONU SHRIVASTAVA
MUMBAI, JUNE 20

A day after the Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray slammed the Congress for wanting to go solo in the future elections, Maharashtra Congress president Nana Patole on Sunday said that the three-party Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition, comprising the Shiv Sena, NCP and Congress, was formed in Maharashtra for five years and is not a permanent fixture. Mr Patole reiterated that the party would contest all the local body elections alone.

On the occasion of the 55th foundation day of Shiv Sena on Saturday, in a veiled attack on the Congress, Mr Thackeray said that the people would "beat with footwear" those who only talk about contesting polls alone without offering solutions to people's problems. The remark was in response to Mr Patole's claim that his party with go it alone in future elec-



Nana Patole

tions in Maharashtra. Speaking with reporters on Sunday, Mr Patole said there was no clarity in Mr Thackeray's speech about who he was referring to. Even the Shiv Sena, the BJP and the Congress have spoken of contesting elections independently.

He also reminded that when there was a BJP-Shiv Sena government in Maharashtra in the last five years, all the local bodies elections were fought by them independently. "All parties have the right to expand their base. The Congress party is doing the same," he said.

PDP LEADER NAEEM FREED FROM HOUSE DETENTION

Srinagar, Jun 20: PDP leader Naeem Akhtar was Sunday released from house detention after over a month, officials said here.

This comes amid hectic political consultations in Jammu and Kashmir within mainstream regional parties, including the PDP and National Conference (NC), over an all-party meeting to be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 24.

"Akhtar has been released from house detention," an official said.

The PDP leader was put under house arrest on May 10 after his release from a five-month preventive detention during which he was lodged at the MLA Hostel here.

Several leaders of the PDP, including Akhtar and Sartaj Madni, and those of NC were taken into preventive custody on December 21 last year -- a day ahead of the counting of votes for the District Development Council elections.

Mr Akhtar was first detained in August 2019 and later booked under the Public Safety Act (PSA). He was released in June 2020 after 10 months of detention, but was again taken into custody in December last year.

Mr Madni, who is also the uncle of PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, was released from the preventive detention on Saturday.

The PDP on Sunday authorised Mehbooba to take a decision on the invitation for the June 24 talks.

The issue will also be discussed in the meeting of the PAGD -- of which the NC as well as the PDP are a part of -- on Tuesday here. — PTI

Delhi eases curbs: Bars and parks can open from today

■ Continued from Page 1

am on June 28 or further orders, whichever is earlier.

The concerned district magistrates, DCPs, deputy commissioners of municipal corporations and other officials as well as market and resident welfare associations will be responsible for ensuring Covid-appropriate behaviour and other guidelines at the markets, malls, restaurants, bars, public parks and gardens, the order said.

"All district magistrates, district DCPs and other authorities concerned will take strict action against defaulting persons, as per the applicable laws and rules, including closure of such establishments, business premises, weekly markets, public parks and gardens," it said.

The owners of the restaurants and bars will be responsible for strict adherence to the prescribed SOPs, all instructions as well as guide-

lines of the Central government and the Delhi government, it said. "In case any violation is found, strict penal/criminal action will be taken against the owner of the restaurant or bar," the DDMA warned.

Agencies like the MCD, DDA, NDMC that own parks and gardens as well as RWAs, owners or directors of golf clubs and yoga instructors will be responsible for ensuring strict compliance of Covid-appropriate behaviour, the DDMA order said. It cautioned that very close watch and supervision will be maintained on the overall functioning of markets, market complexes, malls, restaurants and bars by district magistrates, DCPs and other authorities.

"In case it is found Covid-appropriate behaviour is not being followed or the positivity rate or the number of Covid-19 positive persons start rising in Delhi, then markets, market complexes,

malls, restaurants and bars will be closed forthwith without any loss of time," it warned.

The other permitted activities like marriages at court or at home with a maximum attendance of 20 persons, funerals with gatherings of upto 20 persons, functioning of government and private offices with 50 per cent staff, operation of Delhi Metro trains and public transport buses with 50 percent capacity for seating, will continue, the DDMA order added.

The fresh phase of relaxation comes amid warnings by doctors and other public health experts about the risks of a rapid unlocking. Dr Randeep Guleria, the director of New Delhi's All-India Institute of Medical Sciences and a member of the Centre's Covid Task Force, has earlier said that a third wave of Covid-19 in India was "inevitable", and it may hit the country sooner rather than later -- within six to eight weeks.

Gupkar leaders will strategise Tuesday for June 24 meeting

■ Continued from Page 1 (Farooq Abdullah) to develop a joint strategy."

The sources said the PAGD leadership is trying to make the Congress a part of the same strategy for "a better manoeuvring" of the PM's move. The sources said contact was already established with senior Congress leader Ghulam Nabi Azad, who is among the invitees. JKPC president Ghulam Ahmed Mir and another senior party leader and former deputy CM Tara Singh too were invited by Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla to the all-party meet. Congress sources said the trio was waiting for the green signal from the party high command in New Delhi. The Congress, meanwhile, has raised the pitch for the restoration of full statehood.

The PDP's political

affairs committee, which held a virtual meeting on Sunday, authorised its president Mehbooba Mufti to take a final call on participation in the all-party meeting at the 7, Lok Kalyan Marg. Party sources said Ms Mufti said at the PAC meet that though the host had not spelt out the agenda for the June 24 all-party meeting, it seems it would be about the delimitation process and elections to the J&K Assembly.

She said her view was that before a meaningful dialogue was initiated to end the stalemate in J&K, the Centre should take some confidence-building measures to break the ice. Most participants were of the view that the PDP shouldn't deviate from its stand on abrogation of Article 370, bifurcation of the state and introduction of new laws or modifica-

tion in the existing ones after August 2019, it may convey that it is "open to talks with all". The sources said Ms Mufti sought the opinion of other PAC members on her suggestion that PAGD chief Farooq Abdullah may be asked to represent all the constituents at the PM's meeting, but the majority of members did not agree to it.

While Sajad Lone's People's Conference core group is meeting here on Monday to discuss the PM's invite, the J&K Apni Party headed by former minister Syed Altaf Bukhari has decided to "avail the opportunity to put forth its viewpoints on the issues concerning J&K at the PM's meet". Prof. Bhim Singh, leader of National Panthers' Party, is also reported to be in the wings. The other

invitees are CPI(M) leader Mohammed Yousuf Tarigami, who is a part of the PAGD and will go by its decision, and the BJP's Nirmal Singh, Kavinder Gupta and Ravinder Raina.

In New Delhi, defence minister Rajnath Singh held separate meetings with J&K lieutenant-governor Manoj Sinha and Ladakh's L-G R.K. Mathur. Official sources said Mr Sinha and Mr Mathur called on the defence minister to apprise him on the security situation and all other defence-related issues in the two UTs. A government spokesman in Leh said Mr Mathur expressed gratitude to the defence minister for approval of the construction of Shinku La tunnel, a 4.5 km stretch, that will enable all-weather connectivity between Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh.

THE ASIAN AGE

21 JUNE 2021

Setting the road ahead for Kashmir's political future

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government took away Jammu and Kashmir's constitutional autonomy, broke up the state, and attached its political and administrative management to New Delhi totally, without consulting the people of the erstwhile state. Since August 5, 2019, more specifically, when autonomy and statehood were ended, but in reality since June 2018, when governor's rule was introduced by torpedoing a popular government, political rights and civil liberties have practically ceased to matter. But now New Delhi has sent out invitations to leaders of J&K's political parties for a conversation on June 24 on the "political scenario in Jammu and Kashmir".

This is an indication that it is impossible to carry on in J&K without even the outward show of political participation. The world is watching. Earlier this month, the US assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asia told a congressional hearing that the Biden administration had urged India to normalise politics in Kashmir early. This amounts to a sharp criticism and the offering of guidance. Also, with China sitting on our frontier in Ladakh and far-reaching political changes in the pipeline in Afghanistan, the people remaining wholly marginalised in Kashmir was becoming manifestly untenable.

Whatever the national parties may do, it would be wise for the National Conference and People's Democratic Party, the key regional parties of J&K, to participate in the June 24 discussion

Whatever the national parties — Congress and BJP — may do, it would be wise for the National Conference and People's Democratic Party, the key regional parties of J&K, to participate in the June 24 discussion. They carry the burden of people's expectations in the former state. If they hesitate, they will be wasting the opportunity of being at an important national forum to put forward their ideas. It cannot be emphasised enough that the ordinary people of J&K don't wish to carry on in their present state in which they have no access to the participatory process, which is the bedrock of democracy.

Bureaucratic rule in the past three years has caused havoc. There has been no development. Since political representatives have been cut out at the level of decision-making at various levels, the people have been robbed of a voice. The officially stated reason for the reading down of Article 370 was to crush terrorism, promote rapid development and end the presumed separatist mindset. None of this has materialised. Children barely out of their teens are still running away from home to become terrorists although the separatist parties have for all practical purposes been snuffed out, the infiltration of Pakistani terrorists is at a low ebb and violations at the Line of Control have ceased since early this year after the signing of a pact between the militaries of India and Pakistan. Encounters with the police, the paramilitary forces and, in some cases, the Army take place on a near-daily basis — now even in northern Kashmir which was relatively quiet earlier. Ordinary people are wholly alienated. Even the largely Hindu population of Jammu has got embittered with the fallout of the end of autonomy. Therefore, by looking to open up the political scenario, the Centre may be making a virtue of necessity.

But this should not mean the people of J&K should look askance. On the undeclared agenda of the proposed June 24 meeting could be subjects like the controversy (as it is premature) delimitation of constituencies ahead of the holding of Assembly elections, besides the restoration of statehood. Even if this is just conjecture, J&K's people must not be left unrepresented.

Farewell, 'Flying Sikh'

Milkha Singh, whose life was bookended by great tragedies, was a satisfied man as he believed life gave him more than he could have wished for. As an iconic athlete who crossed many barriers in sport when the scene was loaded against youngsters from the colonies who could barely afford even a smart pair of shoes to run on tinder tracks that took so much out of an athlete's feet. Early in life Milkha saw his parents and kin butchered in the terrible passions of Partition in undivided India and had to run to save himself and this after having lost half his 14 siblings to sickness. After 91 years of disciplined living he saw the modern scourge of the coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 carry away his wife five days before it consumed him too.

From running for his life to jogging for honour became a lifeline as a career in the Army encouraged the activity that made him famous as a multiple medal winning runner at the Asian level who also won gold in the British Empire and Commonwealth Games at Cardiff in 1958. The whisker by which he lost the bronze at the Rome Olympics was to haunt him for life. He was, however, realistic enough to admit he ran the first 200m too quickly and switched down a gear and lost his rhythm even as three competitors passed him in the final stretch. To this day, Indian athletes are still out of their depths when it comes to track and field medals at the Olympics though they have all come some way since Milkha blazed a trail.

Humility was the hallmark of his life as an icon who was regarded highly and honoured long after he hung up his running shoes. To the end he maintained that fitness was something you worked on regardless of age and that a healthy life was owed as much to activity as moderate eating. It is up to Indian athletes to try and break the hoodoo about an Olympic track and field medal and if they do it would be a tribute to the spirit with which Milkha Singh ran for honour.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary



Question, not cancel, Kipling; murky twist to Diana plot claim

Rudyard Kipling's racism has been the worst kept secret in India — and possibly in the UK too, where, undoubtedly, his poetry and literature continue to be read. Thus the recent decision of English Heritage to at least correct his image on their website reflects this dichotomy we are all facing today. Whilst we read authors such as him (and our children read Enid Blyton), their views and writings may not reflect the world in which we live today — where black lives matter. In 2018, I remember that the Manchester University Student's Union had removed Kipling's *If* from the University walls — as a protest against his racism and colonial values.

Which one of us can forget his infamous poem from which the phrase "white man's burden" was taken? However, these discussions held today will not cancel his Nobel Prize for Literature awarded in 1907 — even if they will make us a little more sensitive to his views. Will the Nobel committee also take the trouble of upgrading its website or speaking about his dubious legacy?

Among of the best known examples of his popular writing are in the film adapted series: *The Jungle Book*, and in the character of Kim. But can we really distinguish between the author who wrote so well that his books have survived more than a century — and his mindset?

Thus English Heritage may have done the wise thing by not removing the blue plaque it had placed for controversial authors like him and Enid Blyton (also accused of racism, sexism, and homophobia) on the streets where they lived in London — and instead updated the websites where the reference appears, giving their work the correct and critical contemporary context.

However, yes, I do believe that many of the references that appear in their stories do have a subliminal effect — and should not be included for popular reading unless published with a note that may even required parental guidance! I still remember that story I read as a child, of the black doll by Enid Blyton, who was disliked till her face was wiped clean. A "fair and lovely" concept, which could leave a negative impact on an impressionable young

reader. At that time I did not realise the reference, but now I do... So perhaps the way forward is to publish these books but with the contextual explanation that is required, stating clearly that these views are retrograde. But is that enough? And is it only a band-aid solution?

It is a complex problem — that requires a more widespread debate even in India — where many English authors continue to be read, quoted and treated as heroes, unquestioningly.

This is going to be a great English summer washout. How do we know it? It has rained frequently. Just as the lockdown was eased enough to have sports with spectators watching, we have had "Rain Stops Play" as our friendly summer headline. The much-awaited Test match between India and New Zealand in Southampton had its first day washed out. Simultaneously, the Indian women's team playing the Test match at Bristol against England had its wet patches. Now the Euro soccer match between England and Scotland has ended in a 0-0 draw. Mind you, given the current

tension between the two not just in soccer matches but in politics as well, it is probably the best outcome.

As Freedom Day recedes from the immediate future — old stories of Princess Diana's death have resurfaced. This is how the lockdown is forcing us to live more in the past than the future, and the Royals and their offspring make it a constant source of entertainment.

Police Inspector Stevens who was a force to reckon with in the years around the turn of the century has just revealed that he had to interview Prince Charles back in 2005 concerning a note Diana had left behind. She thought her former husband was plotting her death by staging a car crash in a public place crowded with traffic, so he could marry his mistress. In the convoluted so-called conspiracies surrounding Diana's death — this is one which will continue to haunt those close to her.

Prince Charles eventually married someone else and not the person Diana had suspected but she died as she had described in her note on August 15,

1997. Apparently Charles denied any such intention. Perhaps Diana had a creative imagination? But whatever the real story, we will continue to speculate! It is like the Bofors case in India — there will always be a new twist to the old tale.

Boris Johnson, on the other hand, remains the Teflon politician we all have come to wonder at. And he is using all the charm offensive he can garner — if last month it was Carrie, his new wife, at centrestage, this fortnight it has been the very winning Wilfred, his tousle-haired son who had everyone smiling at the G 7 summit. How can anything appear dire when you have a wide-eyed toddler in your midst? He has had his first political outing and may there be many more ahead — as he certainly makes a change from our Covid-related headlines.

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author and playwright, whose new book The Longest Kiss: The Life And Times Of Devika Rani has just been published

Subhani



Challenges will rise for India at home, abroad



K.C. Singh

As the Covid-19 pandemic began abating in the United States and Europe as well as India, in-person summits — on hold for over a year — resumed. The G-7 meeting was held at Carbis Bay in Britain's Cornwall, following which the US President flew to Geneva for his first meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, with a halt in Brussels for talks with Nato. In Israel, long-ruling Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was replaced by a coalition led by Naftali Bennett, while a tightly controlled election in Iran put hardliner Ebrahim Raisi into the presidency. India marked the one-year anniversary of the bloody clash with Chinese PLA soldiers in Ladakh's Galwan, as Beijing prepared to celebrate the centenary of the Communist Party of China. Some strands of policy flow through all these events and need examination.

The G-7 summit was trying to deal with a world ravaged by Covid-19, the strategic convergence between China and Russia and concerns about the global economy and climate change. A joint communiqué issued on June 13 outlined in great detail both the challenges and the policy responses. The opening paragraph stresses the determination to beat the pandemic and build a better world. In doing that, the group emphasised the need not to forget their shared values and responsibilities.

So, the G-7 was not just a gaggle of major economic powers but also "free open societies and democracies". Thus, the four non-members invited to the summit — Australia, India, South Korea and South Africa — were seen as espousing those values. Prime Minister Narendra Modi vociferously declared India's commitment to these values, despite mounting concern within

and outside India about the state of India's democracy.

The G-7 communiqué captures the main themes under six headings. First, understandably, relates to the current pandemic and ways to end it and be better prepared for any future outbreak. Global health is seen as inter-connected and a "One Health" approach is recommended, covering pandemic prevention, preparedness and seamless links between human and animal health and of both to the environment. This holistic way is a welcome outcome. They also committed to provide two billion vaccine doses through ACTA and COVAX, the two global vaccine programmes.

The second and third themes address the urgent need to reinvigorate the economies after the damage caused by lockdowns and the disruption of supply chains. With this is an emphasis on free and, new hyphenation, fair trade. The World Trade Organisation is sought to be reformed. Behind this is a new consensus between the US and Europe on treating China as a predatory power, utilising state power to gain unfair trade advantages and to poach technology. Also highlighted is the requirement to ameliorate the inequalities caused by wealth accumulation by the top layer as the middle and working classes face tepid growth in incomes. This is the main cause of the rise of fascist forces in the developed world.

It is also recognised that future growth must factor in an increased role of the digital economy and green transformation. The China factor again colours the debate, besides need to regulate and tax big technology firms with a global footprint.

The commune devotes a lot of space to climate change and new commitments to ensure the world moves towards reducing

greenhouse gases. To achieve that, power production and transport systems must be decarbonised. Renewables are advocated, besides recommending the diminishing use of coal, labelled the "single biggest" culprit in global warming. On agriculture and forestry, sustainable production is seen as dependent on conservation consciousness and regeneration of eco-systems. This holds a lesson for India, with the farmers' agitation still continuing as the government is unable to present a unified model for transitioning to greener and sustainable agriculture.

The G-7 will also seek new partnerships, especially with Africa. The aim is to counter China's monopolising infrastructure development under the Belt and Road umbrella. The G-7 will also seek a standard setting in new technologies like Artificial Intelligence and a negotiated balance in the cyber world between freedom of speech and privacy concerns on one side and its abuse on the other.

The elephant in the room is clearly China, which celebrates a century of its Communist Party's existence on July 1. There is some softening of the tone President Xi Jinping has adopted of late, but this may be a tactical move to ensure that the centenary celebrations go off smoothly. On the other hand, some analysts interpret it as a sign of brewing internal dissonance over China getting progressively more isolated as it displays aggressiveness along its continental and maritime periphery.

As India marked one year since the Galwan horror, China is still refusing to withdraw some intrusions

Looking at the G-7's priorities, India will have to carefully thread its path through them. Foremost is preparing to face climate change evangelism. Next is how to play along with the 'Quad'...

to positions of traditional deployment of its troops. Despite the Indian government's claims to the contrary, the PLA detachments are blocking Indian patrols in Depsang Plains, Gogra and Hot Springs, etc. Recently China sought talks at the local military level. But so far there is no evidence that China will modify its use of the unsettled border to strategically keep India on the tenterhooks. Some analysts feel China wants to keep India tied down in the Himalayas so that it doesn't divert its resources to the maritime domain, where India has an edge.

President Biden's summit with President Putin was to try and loosen the growing convergence between China and Russia. It was a smart move to tackle Mr Putin before sitting down to discuss differences with President Xi Jinping. Russia may not be the global rival it was during the Cold War or have an economy that is in the top 10 but it still has a huge nuclear arsenal and sheer geographical size to intervene in European and Asian affairs. Thus, reducing Russia's handholding with China is necessary for the US to raise the G-7's leverage against China. The first step towards that was to get the European powers on board as nations like Germany are always worried about their exports to the huge Chinese market.

Looking at the G-7's priorities, India will have to carefully thread its path through them. Foremost is preparing to face climate change evangelism. Next is how to play along with the "Quad" or other US initiatives without being locked into an intractable anti-China position. Finally, the salience of India's domestic political discourse may degenerate even more than during the West Bengal election as the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls approach. This may sit poorly with the pious words used by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his G-7 engagement.

The writer is a former secretary in the external affairs ministry. He tweets at @ambkcsingh.

LETTERS

IS BJP ANXIOUS?

The all-party meeting of Jammu & Kashmir leaders called by the PM looks to be a tentative move by the Centre. If it is a straw poll for holding early elections in Jammu and Kashmir, the consolidation in the Opposition camps is forcing the government to reanimate the politics in the state. If left dormant for long the resulting power equations could be unfavourable to the BJP besides the party being branded as one lacking administrative acumen. This would be most unfortunate given the major Assembly elections early next year.

R. Narayanan
Navi Mumbai

FOOT IN THE MOUTH

SEEING HIS POLITICAL career going nowhere with the Congress, Jitin Prasada must have thought it prudent to move to the BJP. However, his comment that the regional parties can't do any good to the nation is bound to ruffle a lot of feathers, especially of the allies of the BJP. Perhaps Mr Prasada has forgotten that the regional parties are in government in many states and to surmise they are not good for the nation is insulting to them. A union of regional parties during the next general elections may very well pose a stiff challenge to the BJP!

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

KUDOS, SHAFALI

HATS OFF to our women's cricket team who ensured an honorable draw against the mighty English team. Due credit should be given to our talented young debutant opener Shafali Verma, who scored 96 in the first innings and 63 in the second innings. Though our team was asked to follow, youngsters like Shafali, Sneha Rana, Deepthi Sharma, Punam Raut and Tania Bhatia fought valiantly. Ironically, our captain and vice-captain failed to do justice during both innings. Have they fallen out? Well done, youngsters!

Janaki Mahadevan
Chennai

₹500 for the best letter of the week goes to Aman Jaiswal (June 19). Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.

SHORT TAKES

2 INDIANS DIE IN NEPAL STEEL FACTORY FIRE

Kathmandu, June 20: Two Indian workers have died in a fire accident at a steel factory in southern Nepal's Bara district, according to a media report on Sunday.

The deceased were identified as Pradeep Godh, 40, and Ramnath Mahato, 45, both natives of Bihar, news portal *Online Khabar* reported. The fire at the factory of Jagadamsa Steels started after a furnace oil tank exploded on Saturday evening. Workers' union secretary Deepak Karki told the news site that workers were cleaning the tank.

PAK SOLDIER, 2 ULTRAS KILLED IN ENCOUNTER

Peshawar, June 20: A soldier and two militants, who were responsible for recent attacks on security personnel, have been killed in an encounter in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, officials said on Sunday.

Based on intelligence input, the security forces launched the operation in Spin Wam subdivision and Bobar areas of North Waziristan tribal district on Saturday night. Soldier Nazakat Khan, 32, died in the encounter, a release from the Inter-Services Public Relations said. The killed militants were reported to be part of the banned Pakistan Taliban.

A huge cache of weapons and ammunition was seized from them. The militants had organised attacks on security personnel in recent months, officials said.

PAK SCHOOL VAN FIRING INJURES FOUR TEACHERS

Karachi, June 20: Unidentified gunmen opened fire on a school van in Pakistan's Balochistan province, injuring four women teachers, according to a media report.

The women were returning home when their vehicle came under attack in Mastung town, the police said. The doctors have said that three teachers are in critical condition, *SAMMA TV* reported.

The police have cordoned off the area and are conducting search operations to arrest the culprits. Two professors of the University of Balochistan were abducted from the same area in November 2020. They were, however, released later.

BELGIUM SCHOOL BUILDING SITE COLLAPSE KILLS 5

Paris, June 20: A school undergoing construction work collapsed in the Belgian city of Antwerp, killing five workers and injuring nine others, according to local authorities. An investigation is underway into the cause of the accident.

Firefighters and rescue dogs laboured through the night after Friday's accident to pull out the victims one by one, while the construction company cleared rubble and worked to secure the site, according to a running account on Twitter by the Antwerp fire service.

As of Saturday, all the construction workers who had been at the site had been accounted for. Of those injured, three were in intensive care, five others were hospitalised and one had been released, according to the fire service.

ROCKET TARGETS IRAQ BASE WITH U.S. TROOPS

Baghdad, June 20: A rocket on Sunday targeted an Iraqi air base hosting American troops, a security source said, the latest in a series of attacks the US blames on Iran-linked militias. The assault on the Ain Al-Assad base came as pro-Tehran groups hailed the election of Iranian ultraconservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi as the new president of the Islamic republic, with some saying it reflected the "failure" of America's "pawns" in the region.

The attack also comes 10 days after the United States offered a reward of up to \$3 million for information on strikes against its citizens in Iraq. US interests in Iraq have come under repeated attack since October 2019, including with rockets, with Washington routinely blaming them on Iran-backed factions.

Since the beginning of the year, a total of 43 attacks have targeted the US embassy in Baghdad. Pro-Iran groups in Iraq are campaigning for the departure of the remaining 2,500 US troops deployed in the country as part of an international coalition to fight the Islamic State.

Taliban roots for Islamic system

Says it's only way to end war, ensure rights

Kabul, June 20: The Taliban said Sunday they remain committed to peace talks but insisted a "genuine Islamic system" in Afghanistan was the only way to end the war and ensure rights — including for women.

Talks between the militants and the Afghan government have been deadlocked for months and violence has surged across the country since May when the US military began its final withdrawal. Fears are also growing that if the Taliban return to power they will reimpose their harsh version of Islamic law, under which girls were banned from school and women accused of crimes such as adultery were stoned to death in stadiums.

Despite the rise in violence, Taliban co-founder and deputy leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar said Sunday that the group was committed to the peace talks.

"Our very participation in the negotiations... indicates openly that we believe in resolving issues through (mutual) understanding," Baradar said

● **TALKS BETWEEN the militants and the Afghan government have been deadlocked for months and violence has surged across the country since May when the United States military began its final withdrawal.**

in a statement.

He said the only way to end the conflict in Afghanistan was to establish an Islamic system after the departure of all foreign forces. "A genuine Islamic system is the best mean for solution of all issues of the Afghans," Baradar said. His statement acknowledged the fears in Afghanistan and abroad about the kind of system that would emerge — and its impact on women — saying that fell "within the ambit of the intra-Afghan negotiations".

Baradar also assured that the rights of all Afghans including women would be accommodated in that system, according to "the glorious religion of Islam" and Afghan traditions. But many fear that the Taliban's interpretation of rights will clash

with the changes that have happened in Afghan society since 2001.

In May, a US intelligence report said the gains made over the past two decades on women's rights would be rolled back if the militants returned to power. As the US military presses ahead to meet the September 11 deadline to complete the troop withdrawal, the Taliban have fought daily battles with government forces and claim to have captured 40 districts. The growing fear and uncertainty about the future have forced many Afghans to try and leave, including thousands of men and women who fear reprisals because they worked with foreign forces.

Baradar called on Afghan youths to not leave the country, and also stressed that the Taliban would ensure that minorities, humanitarian organisations and diplomats had nothing to fear.

The recent losses faced by government troops have forced President Ashraf Ghani to change his defence and interior ministers.

— AFP

PAK TO FINISH FENCING OF AFGHAN BORDER

Islamabad, June 20: In the wake of looming uncertainty in Afghanistan due to the withdrawal of the United States troops, Pakistan has announced that it would complete the fencing of its border with the war-torn country by the end of June.

Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmed stated this on Saturday on the floor of the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament, the *Dawn* newspaper reported. The minister informed the house that 88 per cent work on the fencing of the border with Afghanistan has been completed and the "rest would be completed by June 30", it said.

The fencing of the 2,640 km land border with Afghanistan began in March 2017 after a spate of attacks from across the porous border. Pakistan shares a long and porous border with Afghanistan, which runs through mountainous terrain and is largely unpatrolled.

— PTI

DIPLOMATS TO MEET FOR MORE IRAN N-TALKS

Vienna, June 20: Further talks between Iran and global powers were planned Sunday to try to negotiate and restore a landmark 2015 agreement to contain Iranian nuclear development that was later abandoned by the Trump administration.

Senior diplomats from China, Germany, France, Russia, and Britain were due to meet at a hotel in the Austrian capital.

Top Russian representative Mikhail Ulyanov wrote in a tweet Saturday that the members of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.

— AP

across the world for leading the death committees that executed thousands of innocent Iranian citizens throughout the years."

— AP

Tech giants may fail to run 3rd party platform

Washington, June 20: The antitrust overhaul package unveiled in Congress targeting Big Tech, if enacted, could have far-reaching effects on how people use the internet and on America's biggest and most successful companies.

The five bills, due for a committee vote on Wednesday, could pave the way for a reorganisation or breakup of giants such as Google, Facebook, Apple and Amazon while reshaping the entire internet ecosystem.

The measures would stop tech giants from operating a platform for third parties while offer-

ing competing services on those platforms, dealing a major blow to the likes of Apple and Amazon.

Lawmakers also are seeking to ban tech firms from prioritising their own products or services, with Google clearly in mind. Another measure would require data "portability" and "interoperability," which could make it easier for people to quit Facebook, for example, while keeping their data and contacts.

The largest tech firms additionally would be barred from acquiring competitors under the package, which would also add funds for antitrust enforce-

ment. Fiona Scott Morton, a Yale University professor and former US official who has written extensively on Big Tech, said the legislation stems from the failure of antitrust enforcement in the US and elsewhere to make a dent in the dominance of major technology firms.

"This is regulation, it's not antitrust anymore," Morton said.

If the bills are enacted, she noted, Apple might have to sell or shut down its music service so that it doesn't discriminate against rivals such as Spotify.

"Apple would have to choose," she said. — AFP

Macron losing ground in French polls



French President Emmanuel Macron (2nd R), greets voters at the polling station in Le Touquet on Sunday, during the first round of the French regional elections, with Marine Le Pen's far-right party making gains. — AFP

As Brazil tops 5 lakh deaths, protests against Bolsonaro

Rio De Janeiro, June 20:

Anti-government protesters took to the streets in more than a score of cities across Brazil on Saturday as the nation's confirmed death toll from Covid-19 soared past half a million — a tragedy many critics blame on President Jair Bolsonaro's attempt to minimise the disease.

Thousands gathered in downtown Rio de Janeiro waving flags with slogans such as Get out Bolsonaro. Government of hunger and unemployment.

Brazil is experiencing a great setback. The country was an exemplary country for vaccination in the world. We have widely recognised institutions, but today we are in a sad situation, said Isabela Gouljor, a 20-year-old student who joined the protest in Rio.

Other marchers hoisted posters reading: 500 thousand deaths. It's his fault, alluding to Bolsonaro.

Similar marches took place in at least 22 of Brazil's 26 states, as well as in the Federal District, Brasilia. They were promoted by left-wing opposition parties who have been heartened by Bolsonaro's declining poll ratings with next year's presidential race looming. Get out Bolsonaro, genocidal, yelled Rio demonstrators, some of them wearing T-shirts or masks with the image of former leftist President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva — who leads Bolsonaro in some polls. In Sao Paulo, protesters dropped red balloons as a tribute to the victims of the virus Bolsonaro's supporters have taken more often to the streets over the past month, in large part because many agree with his dismissal of restrictions meant to stifle the Coronavirus and anger that lockdown measures have hurt businesses.

— AP

Taipei, June 20: The US is sending 2.5 million doses of the Moderna Covid-19 vaccine to Taiwan, tripling an earlier pledge in a donation with both public health and geopolitical meaning.

The shipment was due to arrive by plane later Sunday, the de facto US embassy said. "The donation reflects our commitment to Taiwan as a trusted friend, and a member of the international family of democracies," it said in a Facebook post.

Taiwan, a self-governing island of 24 million people, has been scrambling to get vaccines after a recent outbreak. China,

WHETHER IT is for regional peace and stability or the virus that is a common human adversary, we will continue to uphold common ideas and work together

TSAI ING-WEN, Taiwan President

which has been ruled single handedly by the Communist Party since 1949, claims Taiwan as its territory and says it must eventually come under its control. The US promised 750,000 doses for Taiwan on a brief visit to the

island earlier this month by Senator Tammy Duckworth and two of her Senate colleagues.

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen said the US had decided to increase the donation through efforts on both sides over the past two weeks. "On the democratic front, Taiwan and countries with similar ideas have always been able to interact closely," she wrote on her Facebook page in Chinese. "Whether it is for regional peace and stability or the virus that is a common human adversary, we will continue to uphold common ideas and work together." — AP

New Oman curbs over spike in case

Dubai, June 20: The sultanate of Oman has lunched back into a strict nightly lockdown as it struggles to curb a major surge in severe Coronavirus cases that has overwhelmed hospitals.

Mere weeks after lifting most restrictions amid its vaccination campaign, the country on Saturday announced a wide-ranging movement ban and the shutdown of all public places and nonessential businesses from 8 pm to 4 am.

Daily Coronavirus infections have more than tripled in the last month in the Gulf Arab state. Doctors struggling to handle

the influx of new patients have reported bed and staff shortages at major hospitals.

Officials this week detected several cases of what's known as black fungus in Covid-19 patients, a potentially fatal infection that also has spread quickly among virus patients in India.

Oman has recorded more than 242,700 infections and 2,600 deaths.

Its inoculation campaign has lagged compared to Gulf neighbours as the government struggles to overcome vaccine skepticism.

— AP

UK allows outdoor weddings

London, June 20: The British government said Sunday it will permit outdoor non-religious wedding ceremonies in England and Wales for the first time, boosting a sector hard-hit by the pandemic.

Up to now, England and Wales have only allowed Jewish and Quaker weddings outdoors, while others have to marry in a room or a fixed permanent structure. Scotland does allow

outdoor weddings.

Justice Minister Robert Buckland told *Sky News* the reform gave "greater flexibility" for weddings to "have more guests in a safe way".

Under the new rules, from July 1 people in England and Wales will be able to have non-religious weddings and civil partnership ceremonies outside or "under a partially covered structure" at approved venues such as hotels, the Ministry of Justice said. The rules are temporary, running to April next year, though the government said it would consult on whether to make them permanent. It called this a "boost to the wedding sector", allowing all aspects of weddings to take place outdoors for the first time. The rule change provides more flexibility "especially during the pandemic," the government said, although its commitment to change the rules predates the virus.

Wedding organisers and owners of venues have complained that restrictions on celebrations during the pandemic have made their businesses unviable.

The government said it was considering further broadening the rules on weddings. — AFP

ic," the government said, although its commitment to change the rules predates the virus.

Wedding organisers and owners of venues have complained that restrictions on celebrations during the pandemic have made their businesses unviable.

The government said it was considering further broadening the rules on weddings. — AFP

AUSTERE | IMAGE**Crown Prince Salman pursues a liberalisation drive with a vigorous crackdown on dissent**

Saudi mosque loudspeaker volume limit triggers backlash

Riyadh, June 20: Muezzins issuing high-decibel calls to prayer have long been part of Saudi identity, but a crackdown on mosque loudspeakers is among contentious reforms seeking to shake off the Muslim kingdom's austere image.

Saudi Arabia, home to the holiest Muslim sites, has long been associated with a rigid strain of Islam known as Wahh-

abism that inspired generations of global extremists and left the oil-rich kingdom steeped in conservatism.

But the role of religion faces the biggest reset in modern times as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, spurred by the need to diversify the oil-reliant economy, pursues a liberalisation drive in parallel with a vigorous crackdown on dissent.

Chipping away at a key pillar of its Islamic identity, the government last month ordered that mosque loudspeakers limit their volume to one-third of their maximum capacity and not broadcast full sermons, citing concerns over noise pollution.

In a country home to tens of thousands of mosques, the move triggered an online backlash with the hashtag "We demand the

return of mosque speakers" gaining traction.

It also sparked calls to ban loud music in restaurants, once taboo in the kingdom but now common amid liberalisation efforts, and to fill mosques in such large numbers that authorities are forced to permit loudspeakers for those gathering outside.

But authorities are unlikely to budge, as economic reforms for a post-oil era

take precedence over religion, observers say.

"The country is re-establishing its foundations," Aziz Alghashian, a politics lecturer at the University of Essex, said.

"It's becoming an economically driven country that is investing substantial effort in trying to appear more appealing — or less intimidating — to investors and tourists." In the most significant

change that began even before the rise of Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia neutered its once-feared religious police, who once chased people out of malls to go and pray and berated anyone seen mingling with the opposite sex.

In what was once unthinkable, some shops and restaurants now remain open during the five daily Muslim prayers. As clerical power wanes, preachers

are endorsing government decisions they once vehemently opposed — including allowing women to drive, the reopening of cinemas and an outreach to Jews. Saudi Arabia is revising school textbooks to scrub well-known references denigrating non-Muslims as "swines" and "apes". The practice of non-Muslim religions remains banned in the kingdom. — AFP

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	52,344.45	0.04
Nifty 50	15,683.40	-0.05
S&P 500*	4,166.45	-0.28
Dollar (₹)	73.87	0.13
Pound Sterling (₹)	103.18	0.31
Euro (₹)	88.36	0.19
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	46,460.188	0.40
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	73.51	0.59
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.006	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	1.460	-0.051

* As of Friday/Saturday

FPIs invest over ₹15,300 crore in equity in June

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) pumped in a net Rs 13,667 crore so far in June as the market remained attractive to overseas investors. However, market experts noted that FPIs withdrew money from Indian equities last week. Depositories data shows FPIs invested Rs 15,312 crore in equities during June 1-18 while they withdrew Rs 1,645 crore from the debt segment. FPIs had pulled out Rs 2,666 crore in May.

Draft Cabinet note floated for 100% FDI in oil PSUs



The commerce and industry ministry has floated a draft cabinet note seeking inter-ministerial views on a proposal to allow up to 100 per cent foreign investment under automatic route in oil and gas PSUs, which have an 'in-principle' approval for disinvestment, sources said. The move, if approved by the Union Cabinet, would facilitate privatisation of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited.

Liquidity support for NBFCs sought for MSME lending

Industry body Finance Industry Development Council (FIDC) has written to the government requesting setting up of a refinance window for NBFCs, especially smaller players, for on-lending to the MSME sector. In a letter to Union MSME Nitin Gadkari, the council said banks are one of the major sources of funding for NBFCs, with the small and medium sized non-bank players being totally dependent on banks.

Vedanta top bidder for coal block in Odisha

Vedanta has emerged as successful bidder for a coal block in Odisha, which was put for re-bid in the second attempt of auction of blocks for commercial mining. With the successful auction of Kuraloi (A) north coal mine in Odisha, the total number of mines successfully auctioned in the first tranche of auction for commercial mining is 20 out of total 38 coal mines offered, the coal ministry said in a statement.

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Sebi tells firm to do fresh valuation PNB Housing asked to halt fundraising

FC BUREAU
with agency inputs
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

Capital market regulator Sebi restrained PNB Housing Finance from proceeding with a shareholders' voting on the proposed Rs 4,000-crore deal with Carlyle group and directed the company to move ahead only after valuation of the shares is done from an independent registered valuer.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India said the resolution regarding the private placement deal, which was to be put for shareholders' vote on June 22, was "ultra-vires" of the company's Articles of Association (AoA).

PNB Housing Finance said it has acted in compliance with all relevant applicable laws and is evaluating further steps.

The proposed transaction, which has come under the radar of Sebi and Reserve Bank of India following concerns raised by proxy advisory firm SES and others, would eventually see private equity major Carlyle Group taking control of PNB Housing Finance.

"The current resolution bearing item no. 1 (issue of securities of the company and matters related therewith) of EGM notice dated May 31, 2021 is ultra-vires of AoA and shall not be acted upon until the company undertakes the valuation of shares as prescribed under 19(2) of AoA, for purpose of prefer-



ential allotment, from an independent registered valuer as per the provisions of applicable laws," PNB Housing Finance said in a late night filing on Saturday referring to Sebi's instruction.

The company said it had received the letter from the Sebi on June 18, calling upon the company to comply with the legal provisions in the matter.

Proxy advisory firm Stakeholders Empowerment Services (SES), in its report, has raised questions on the proposed deal, wondering if parent Punjab National Bank has willingly surrendered control without extracting a fair compensation.

The deal is "ultra vires" of the AoA, it added.

Under the proposed deal, Rs 3,200 crore is to be raised through equity shares and Rs 800 crore by issuance of warrants.

PNB Housing Finance has not raised any equity capital in the past three years, except for issuing shares under an employee stock option plan.

Earlier in February, the Reserve Bank had rejected

Punjab National Bank's proposal for a capital infusion into PNB Housing.

The company had wanted to raise tier I capital up to Rs 1,800 crore through various modes.

Under the proposed deal, a total of 8.21 lakh shares and 2.05 lakh warrants are to be issued at a price of Rs 390 per share/warrant to Carlyle Group; Salisbury Investments (person acting in concert with Carlyle); General Atlantic Singapore Fund FII Pte Ltd and Alpha Investments V Pte Ltd.

Salisbury Investments is the family investment vehicle of former HDFC Bank CEO Aditya Puri, who is also a senior advisor for Carlyle in Asia.

As per the proposal, the deal will change the control of PNB Housing Finance, from PNB being the sole promoter of the company to a joint control holder with Carlyle Group.

With this, PNB's stake in the company will fall to 20.28 per cent from 32.64 per cent and Carlyle's will rise to 50.16 per cent from 32.21 per cent.

MANY TEETHING TROUBLES IN NEW I-T PORTAL, SAY PROFESSIONALS

Kolkata June 20: The Direct Taxes Professionals Associations (DTPA) claimed that tax professionals are facing numerous problems or teething issues in the revamped income-tax portal launched recently.

The DTPA in a letter to finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman claimed about 40 problems in the new portal for filing returns.

The association has also urged the finance minister to extend by two months the date for payment of tax under Vivad Se Vishwas (VSV) Scheme as also the date for furnishing TDS/ TCS statements and for other compliances which are due by June 30, as offices are closed in most states due to the pandemic.

DTPA representation committee chairman Narayan Jain said, "No option for VSV altogether despite the scheme is still on for payments, unable to file TDS/ TCS statements, form 10A for making application for fresh registration of societies and trusts etc, under Sec 12AB and 80G not also available in this portal."

He told PTI that "I-T acknowledgements and Intimation under Sec 143(1) cannot be downloaded, DIN is not getting auto-populated, IT payment challan numbers not getting validated, digital signature certificate not getting registered or updated and new incorporated firms are not able to get registered."

—PTI

Swinging fortunes: Anil Ambani up, Adani down

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 20

Are stock market traders' interest shifting away from Adani Group to Anil Ambani Group companies? The week ahead may see more trading in shares of companies of the two groups.

On Friday, while Reliance Power hit the upper circuit, Adani Power hit the lower circuit for the fifth consecutive session, showing how fast two power producing companies' fortunes could change. Other Anil Ambani Group companies Reliance Infrastructure, Reliance Capital, Reliance Home Finance, Reliance Communications, Reliance Naval & Engineering all made gains, often hitting the upper 5 per cent upper circuit.

Adani Power, Adani Transmission, Adani Green Energy and Adani Total Gas, on the other



hand, hit lower circuits on all five days last week. The group's flagship Adani Enterprises recovered most of the losses after falling 25 per cent on Monday but continues to be highly volatile. The same goes for Adani Ports & Special Economic Zones as these two still are finding favour with momentum traders given their valuations still look attractive.

New business initiatives and debt reduction drive by the Anil Ambani Group companies are attracting traders and investors towards the listed companies of the

group. In contrast, four of the six Adani Group companies hit lower circuits throughout the week on reports that the NSDL froze accounts of three foreign investors in Adani Group companies.

Reliance Communications last week asked the telecom department to renew its telecom licence for another 20 years. Authum Investment and Infrastructure, a registered NBFC's Rs 2,887 crore bid for Reliance Home Finance, was reported as a part of company's debt resolution plan boosted share prices of group companies.

Adani Group companies on Sunday informed stock exchanges of annual general meetings. AGMs Adani Enterprises, Adani Ports & Logistics, Adani Power, Adani Transmission, Adani Green Energy, Adani Total Gas are scheduled on July 12 and July 13.

General insurers get 16 new GMs

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

A total of 16 deputy general managers (DGMs) have been elevated to general managers (GMs) in the four state-owned general insurance companies and one reinsurer - New India Assurance (NIA), National Insurance Company (NIC), Oriental Insurance Company (OIC) and United India Insurance (UII) and national reinsurer GIC Re. According to a finance

ministry source, the promotional exercise to elevate senior officials of the public sector general insurers was held through a virtual interaction on June 18. "The DGMs are those who are of pay Scale-VI grade and GMs Scale-VII grade. The interview was conducted by a panel comprising the heads of the five state-run companies. They include Atul Sahai of NIA, Tajinder Mukherjee of NIC, Anjan Dey of OIC and Devesh

Srivastava of GIC Re. The panel was headed by the outgoing United India CMD Girish Radhakrishnan," the source added.

There were 32 candidates in the fray against the openings for 16 positions for Scale-VII. It is also expected that the promotional exercise of AGMs of Scale-V to DGMs of Scale-VI will be followed soon. In those exercises, over 192 candidates will be throwing their hats in the ring against 48 vacancies.

CEA unsure of fresh stimulus

KUMAR DIPANKAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

The government is open to coming out with more measures to boost the economy hit by the second wave of the pandemic, says chief economic advisor (CEA) K. V. Subramanian. He, however, added that the demand for a fresh stimulus package has to be considered against the backdrop of a host of initiatives taken by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her budget for 2021-22.

The CEA was responding to a suggestion made by an industry body that the government needed to come out with a Rs 3 lakh crore stimulus package to boost the economy.

According to an assessment by the Reserve Bank of India, the second wave has cost the nation about Rs 2 lakh crore in terms of output loss.

"Like last year, we do remain very open to coming up with more measures as well...but I think it is really important to take into account the big differences between last year and this year when we talk about stimulus," he told PTI in an interview.



K. V. Subramanian

Elaborating, the CEA said that unlike the previous budget, which was framed before the pandemic, the 2021 budget was presented amidst the pandemic and had already incorporated significant fiscal expansion.

The focus is particularly on infrastructure spending, which leads to construction activity and subsequently creation of jobs in the informal sector and demand generation, he said. The effect of this was witnessed during the January-March quarter, he added.

The significant capital spending by the government led to a 15 per cent rise in the construction sector in the fourth quarter and the gross fixed capital formation to GDP surged to 34 per cent, the

highest in six years.

Emphasising that the final objective is to ensure that the economic recovery gathers pace, he said, the government will do whatever is necessary to ensure that.

With regard to food security for the poor, he said, the government has already extended the free food programme for 80 crore population till November.

The extension of PM Garib Kalyan Yojana would cost about Rs 70,000 crore, he said, adding free vaccination for all is another important economic measure.

On the effect of the second wave on growth, Subramanian said, there will be some impact but it is not likely to be very large.

The Economic Survey 2020-21 released in January this year had projected GDP growth of 11 per cent during the current financial year ending March 2022.

India's economy contracted by less-than-expected 7.3 per cent in the fiscal year ended in March 2021 after growth rate picked up in the fourth quarter. —PTI

GDP data yet to capture informal economy well

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 20

The GDP updates are yet to capture the full impact of the pandemic on the unorganised sector. Use of technology to capture more updated data of the informal economy will enable the government to come out with policies and targeted initiatives to mitigate the losses in the sector, say experts.

"With the methods currently deployed, there is a bit of challenge in understanding the real impact on the informal sector not just during the pandemic but also during demonetisation and implementation of GST. During extraordinary times like these, it will not be right to extrapolate data based on past surveys," says Rahul Bajoria, chief India economist, Barclays.

The gross value added (GVA) estimates of the unorganised sector are compiled indirectly through the Labour Input Method using the benchmark-indicator procedure. In this procedure, the benchmark GVA estimates of a base year are prepared using the value added per

worker from the National Sample Surveys on enterprises. The weights were compiled using the data on establishments covered in the NSS 67th round Survey on Unincorporated Enterprises, 2010-11 and extrapolated for the subsequent years.

This extrapolation based on the labour inputs in an enterprise works in ordinary years but not during extraordinary times. Last time the government conducted an NSSO survey was in 2017-18.

Understanding the changes in the informal sector is important for the economy. As per a report from the International Monetary Fund, 52 per cent of India's GVA at basic prices comes from the unorganised sector.

Agriculture, forestry and fishing have 97 per cent of their economic activity in the unorganised sector followed by accommodation, food services and trade at 86 per cent. Construction sector's 74.5 per cent activity happens in the unorganised sector. There are also a few sectors with a lower share of the unorganised enterprises. Public admin-

istration and defence are the only sectors fully under the organised segment while electricity, gas and water utility has 94.7 per cent organised activity and financial services 88 per cent.

Experts find that surveys cannot be fully relied on to understand the informal economy. "The data on the unorganised sector, which is based on surveys that are obsolete, do not provide a true representation," said Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services.

"The data based on surveys do not reflect the ground reality. What happens in Arunachal Pradesh cannot be compared to that in Kerala," said Bajoria.

The government should use technology to gather more updated or real time data about the jobs and the enterprises in the informal economy. "Policy-making will be at its best when the data is real time. Self-identifying schemes are a means to gather such data. While providing incentives or cash, the government can gather data from the beneficiaries," said Bajoria.

SAIL'S HH RAIL PRODUCTION PLAN HIT AS FOREIGN EXPERTS GO AWAY



ABHISHEK SONKAR
NEW DELHI, JUNE 20

State-owned Steel Authority of India Ltd (Sail) has postponed its plans to begin commercial production of head hardened (HH) rails at its Bhilai Steel Plant in Chhattisgarh, as the foreign experts involved in the trials left India in the wake of the second Covid wave.

In April when cases of coronavirus infections were on the surge in several parts of the country, the experts from Europe left for their respective countries.

Replying to a query on its production plans for HH rails, Sail said that cold commissioning of HH rails has been done and hot trials were taken in March this year.

"The entire process was going on with the help and support of foreign experts...but it had to be postponed mid-way due to the second wave of pandemic. The work will resume as soon as the situation is conducive for experts to return," the steel maker said.

The development will affect the company's plans to begin the commercial HH rail production. Earlier, Sail was looking to start commercial production of main HH tracks in the last fiscal.

HH tracks are special tracks used in high-speed cargo lanes and subway tracks. Such rails are manufactured using the head hardening technology to carry about 50 per cent higher pressure compared to normal rails.

Sail has set up facilities for the production of HH tracks at the new Universal Rail Mill at its Bhilai Steel Plant in Chhattisgarh. —PTI

BREAD BASKET A new law will allow the buying and selling of farmland Fertile Ukraine wants to feed the world

VOLODYMYR VERBYANY & AGNIESZKA DE SOUSA
JUNE 20

It was nicknamed the bread basket of the Soviet Union, and now Ukraine might finally be able to start living up to its agricultural potential in an era when the world appears to need it most.

On July 1, a new law will allow the buying and selling of farmland for the first time in two decades. The government says the advent of a functioning market means one of the most fertile places on the planet is the first step toward bigger, more efficient farming by fostering investment.

It's a long-awaited reform in a nation perennially dogged by corruption and political vested interests. But it has implications beyond Ukraine after global food supply was exacerbated by the



coronavirus pandemic.

The country of 40 million people is punching well below its weight on the global stage. It's the biggest exporter of sunflower oil, the fourth-largest shipper of corn and delivers grain to nations from Morocco to Bangladesh and Indonesia. But corn yields are a third lower than in the US and wheat about a quarter below the European

Union.

That's in part down to the legacy of the communist era. Buying and selling of land was prohibited in Soviet times and then banned again in 2001, a decade after Ukraine got independence, because of fears that much of it would be acquired by the super-rich and foreigners. That hampered development because farmers could only lease plots, meaning they couldn't use them as collateral to access money for development.

"This reform is an event of a global scale, as it is important not just for Ukraine, but for the whole world," said Oleg Nivievskiy, an assistant professor at the Kyiv School of Economics. "While for Ukrainians, it's additional export revenue, for the rest of the world it's additional food."

Starting next month, all indi-

viduals will be allowed to buy plots spanning up to 100 hectares, part of efforts by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to revive the battered economy. The move could boost gross domestic product by as much as 1.5 percentage points annually in the coming years, the Kyiv School of Economics estimated.

That's as farming gets more efficient and the market gets more transparent, according to Nivievskiy. Land owners will benefit from a market price, while farmers will get an opportunity to diversify into higher-margin crops and get better access to finance, he said.

The country has a potential arable land market of more than 40 million hectares, an area almost the size of California, with exports meeting increasing demand from places such as the Gulf.

—Bloomberg

SHORT TAKES

Sajan, Srihari win gold in Belgrade

Belgrade: Olympic hopefuls Sajan Prakash and Srihari Nataraj won a gold each in their respective events at the Belgrade Trophy swimming competition but missed the elusive 'A' qualification mark for the Tokyo Games here. Prakash clocked 1:56.96s to win the gold in the men's 200m butterfly at the FINA-accredited Olympic qualifier on Saturday, rewriting his own national record of 1:57.73s that he had set in 2018. However, the 27-year-old swimmer from Kerala fell short of the Olympic 'A' cut by 0.48 seconds. Nataraj, on the hand, clocked 54.45s in the 100m backstroke event to bag the top honours. But the 20-year-old too missed the 'A' mark for the Tokyo Olympics. — PTI

India archers miss out on Games spot

Paris: World Cup champion Indian women's recurve team — Deepika, Ankita Bhakat and Komalika Bari — failed to qualify for the Tokyo Olympics after a tame loss to lower-ranked Colombia in the Final Qualifier here on Sunday. It was the last opportunity for the Indians to upgrade their single women's quota place to team invitation in Tokyo but they failed to make it. She will be in her third successive Olympics. — PTI

Marquez wins German MotoGP

Sachsenring (Germany): Marc Marquez banished 18 months of struggles on Sunday as he dominated in the rain at the Sachsenring to win the German MotoGP. The six-time world champion, who returned this season after crashing in the opening race last year, escaped early and stayed clear of in-form Portuguese Miguel Oliveira and championship leader Fabio Quartararo. Marquez started on the second row of the grid but burst through at the start and was battling for the lead with fellow Spaniard Aleix Espargaro of Aprilia when rain started to fall. While other riders grew more cautious, Marquez reacted by attacking harder. — AFP

BCCI to bid for '25 Champions Trophy

New Delhi: Confident that it can easily host big-ticket tournaments every two years, the BCCI on Sunday decided to bid for three global events — including two World Cups in shorter formats — during the next eight-year tournament cycle that starts from 2024. It has been learnt that BCCI will bid for one Champions Trophy, a T20 World Cup and a 50-over World Cup in the cycle of ICC events. The Champions Trophy hasn't been held since 2017 edition in England. — PTI

Bucks oust Nets to reach East finals

Los Angeles: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 40 points and 13 rebounds as the Milwaukee Bucks defeated the Brooklyn Nets 115-111 in a thrilling game-seven overtime on Saturday to advance to the Eastern Conference finals. Two-time league MVP Antetokounmpo shot 15-of-24 and had five assists in 50 minutes of playing time in the head-to-head match-up with Durant. — AFP

Live on TV

CRICKET

World Test Championship final, Day 4: India vs New Zealand from 3pm on Star Sports 1, HD1

EURO

Group Stage: Ukraine vs Austria, North Macedonia vs Netherlands from 9.30 pm; Finland vs Belgium, Russia vs Denmark from 12.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, 2

COPA AMERICA

Group Stage: Uruguay vs Chile from 2.30 am (Tuesday); Argentina vs Paraguay from 5.30 am (Tuesday) on Sony Ten 1, 2

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JAM SESSION

India dance to Jamieson's tune, bowled out for 217

Southampton, June 20: Kyle Jamieson continued his love affair with the Indian team, tormenting the star-studded line-up with a disconcerting bounce and swing as New Zealand bowled out the opposition for 217 on day three of the World Test Championship final here. Jamieson decimated India with marvellous figures of 22-12-31-5 as New Zealand took control of the Test match by reaching 101 for two at stumps. Openers Devon Conway (30) and Tom Latham (54) negotiated the Indian pace attack pretty well with a 70-run stand before R. Ashwin removed the former. Conway was dismissed by Ishant Sharma. It was 6 feet 8 inch tall Jamieson, who after last year's series in New Zealand, has once again turned into a nightmare for the Indian batsmen.

Having removed Rohit Sharma on Saturday morning, Jamieson was relentless with his length and the bounce did the rest with clever traps laid for skipper Virat Kohli and the dangerous Rishabh Pant.

Kohli and his deputy Ajinkya Rahane walked into a nicely laid traps as India failed to reach 250.

The overcast conditions made batting difficult and the likes of Jamieson, Trent Boult (21.1-4-47-2) and Neil Wagner (15-5-40-2) indulged in a 'who blinks first' game with the Indian batters and came out trumps with some incisive seam, swing and short pitched bowling.

Kohli (44, 132 balls) couldn't add a single run to his overnight score as his RCB teammate Jamieson made life difficult for him. Rishabh Pant (4) didn't score a run for 19 balls and then got a boundary with a flick through mid-wicket. Two balls later, he took the bait when he went for an expansive drive only to be snapped in the third slip by Tom Latham.

— PTI



New Zealand's Kyle Jamieson appeals for the wicket of India skipper Virat Kohli during Day 3 of the World Test Championship final in Southampton Sunday. — AP

IF I LOSE URGE TO LEARN, I'LL QUIT: ASHWIN

Southampton, June 20: Star India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin says competition always brings out the best in him and the day he feels he has lost that urge to improve his craft, he will quit the sport.

Ashwin is regarded as a thinking cricketer who always strives to explore something new, something extra in his game and that attitude has paid rich dividends for him throughout his career.

"The beauty about Test cricket is you are always aspiring to be perfect but you can settle for excellence, so that's pretty much I think I do," Ashwin was quoted as saying by the ICC.

"I think whatever I have achieved so far in my career is because of that attitude, did not settle for anything, constantly looking to improve.

"I maintained that if I don't like doing different things and if I lose the patience to do something new or get satisfied then I might not play the sport anymore," he said.

The 34-year-old said that he doesn't enjoy controversy but if poked he doesn't hesitate to give it back on the field with his performance.

— PTI

SCORECARD (DAY 3)

India (1st innings): Rohit Sharma c Southee b Jamieson 34, Shubman Gill c Watling b Wagner 28, Cheteshwar Pujara lbw b Boult 8, Virat Kohli lbw b Jamieson 44, Ajinkya Rahane c Latham b Wagner 49, Rishabh Pant c Latham b Jamieson 4, Ravindra Jadeja c Watling b Boult 15, Ravichandran Ashwin c Latham b Southee 22, Ishant Sharma c Taylor b Jamieson 4, Jasprit Bumrah lbw b Jamieson 0, Mohammed Shami (not out) 4. **Extras (lb 3, nb 2) 5. Total (in 92.1 overs) 217.** **Fow:** 1-6, 2-63, 3-88, 4-149, 5-156, 6-182, 7-205, 8-213, 9-213.

Bowling: Tim Southee 22-6-64-1, Trent Boult 21.1-4-7-2, Kyle Jamieson 22-12-31-5, Colin de Grandhomme 12-6-32-0, Neil Wagner 15-5-40-2.

New Zealand: Tom Latham c Kohli b Ashwin 30, Devon Conway c Mohammed Shami b I Sharma 54, Kane Williamson (batting) 12, Ross Taylor (batting) 2. **Extras (lb 3, nb 2) 5. Total (for two wickets in 49 overs) 101.** **FoW:** 1-70, 2-101.

Bowling: Ishant Sharma 12-4-19-1, Jasprit Bumrah 11-3-34-0, Mohammed Shami 11-4-19-0, Ravichandran Ashwin 12-5-20-1, Ravindra Jadeja 3-1-6-0.

‘Special’ plans for Indians in Tokyo

New Delhi, June 20: The Tokyo Olympic organisers are working on how to ensure safe stay and seamless training of the Indian athletes inside the Games Village, according to a letter they have sent to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

The Indian athletes and officials travelling for the Olympics have been asked by the Japanese government to undergo daily Covid-19 tests for a week prior to their departure and not to interact with anyone from another country for three days upon arrival, strictures that have left the IOA fuming.

Terming the rules as "unfair and discriminatory," the IOA had written to the Tokyo Organising Committee (TOCOG).

In reply to the IOA letter, TOCOG said: "Tokyo 2020 is working to define how

athletes of your NOC as well from other 10 countries and all other 195 NOCs can stay safe in the Villages and have training.

"We hope to provide you with those information and discuss together as soon as possible we develop it," the Games organisers said in a letter to the IOA.

The IOA said that its officials were in discussion with TOCOG.

BCCI TO DONATE ₹10CR FOR INDIAN ATHLETES

The BCCI on Sunday pledged a donation of ₹10 crore for the training and preparations of country's Olympic-bound athletes. A decision in this regard was taken at the BCCI's emergent Apex Council meeting.

"The modalities of the payment will be finalised after talking to Sports ministry and IOA," a BCCI official said.

— PTI



MAX REIGNS IN FRENCH THRILLER

Le Castellet, June 20: Max Verstappen won the French Grand Prix on Sunday to extend his lead over Lewis Hamilton in the drivers' title race and leave the world champion's Mercedes team "with a big fight" to retain control of their Formula One fiefdom.

The Red Bull driver hunted down and over-

took the world champion with over a lap to go at a gusty Le Castellet to claim his third win out of seven races this season.

"Towards the end I enjoyed it! At the beginning it was super difficult out there with the wind," said Verstappen.

This was a massive statement by the Dutch driver and his resurgent Red Bull team who won

their third successive race after Monaco and Baku.

It pushed Verstappen 12 points clear of Hamilton ahead of back-to-back races on Red Bull turf in Austria.

Sergio Perez in the other Red Bull came in third with Valtteri Bottas in the second Mercedes finishing fourth.

— AFP

EURO | 2020



Poland's Robert Lewandowski celebrates after scoring his side's opening goal against Spain on Saturday. — AP

Misfiring Spain held by Poland

Seville (Spain), June 20: While Spain kept misfiring, Robert Lewandowski came through for Poland.

The Fifa player of the year gave his team hope for advancement at the European Championship on Saturday by scoring a second-half equalizer in a 1-1 draw with a Spanish team that continued to miss chance after chance and is now in danger of early elimination.

A loss would have ended Poland's chances of reaching the round of 16 at Euro 2020.

"We knew, against Spain, that we would be more focused on defense, and we did it quite well," Lewandowski said. "It simply worked out."

Among the wasted opportunities for "La Roja" was a missed penalty kick by Gerard Moreno shortly after Lewandowski's goal. Alvaro Morata collected the rebound off the post but failed to put the ball into the open net.

Morata ended his scoring drought by putting Spain ahead in the 25th minute, but Lewandowski evened things in the 54th with a header for only his third goal in 13 appearances with the national team at a major tournament.

"It's another win that we let slip away from us," Morata said. "Now we have a final to play."

EURO RESULTS

Spain (Alvaro Morata 25)	1
Poland (Robert Lewandowski 54)	1
Portugal (Cristiano Ronaldo 15, Diogo Jota 67)	2
Germany (Rüben Dias 35-og, Raphael Guerreiro 39-og, Kai Havertz 51, Robin Gosens 60)	4

GERMANY THRASH PORTUGAL 4-2

Germany got their Euro 2020 campaign back on track — and blew Group F wide open — with a 4-2 romp against Portugal in Munich on Saturday.

France's 1-1 draw with Hungary earlier in Budapest and Germany's win mean there is all to play for in Wednesday's final group games when the Germans host Hungary and the French meet holders Portugal.

"Overall, it was a great performance: great attitude and great morale," said Germany coach Joachim Loew. "We rightly won by that amount and created many chances."

German pressure forced own goals by Ruben Dias and Raphael Guerreiro to put the hosts 2-1 up at half-time.

— Agencies

UKRAINE FACE AUSTRIA WITH AN EYE ON LAST 16

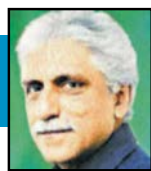
Bucharest (Romania), June 20: A draw might be enough for both, while a win would be a guarantee for either. Ukraine and Austria each have one victory and one loss so far at the European Championship, and they will face each other on Monday both looking to advance from the group stage at the tournament for the first time.

While Belgium have already qualified for the knockout stage of the Euro, they will be taking on Finland in their final group match. And, a draw will be enough for the Finns to advance.

After all that's gone wrong for Denmark at the Euro, a win over Russia on Monday could still set a long of things right. The Danes need Belgium to beat Finland in a game played at the same time. In that case, Denmark, Russia and the Finns would all finish on three points and second place would be decided by head-to-head goal difference between the three.

— Agencies

Heroes come & go but legends remain forever



Ayaz Memon
Over The Top

It was thoughtful of the Indian cricket team's management to wear black arm bands condoling the passing away of Milkha Singh, when they took the field in the WTC final against New Zealand.

Too often, the Indian cricket establishment — administrators and players — is guilty of being narrow-minded in such matters, not looking beyond its own.

Crickets is no doubt India's abiding passion, holding the entire country in thrall.

But there are a few sportspersons from other disciplines whose influence and impact on their own sport as well as the national psyche has been no less than that of iconic cricketers: to name a few, Major Dhyan Chand, Milkha Singh and PT Usha. Hockey wizard Dhyan, set a benchmark for skills in the game that dazzled the world, and perhaps has never been exceeded.

Usha, in individual sprints and hurdling events, and as part of the

4x400m relay squad in the early 1980s, not only won medals aplenty, but also broke the glass ceiling for Indian women where sport is concerned.

Milkha was arguably the most inspirational. His exploits on the track were the stuff of folklore, which has not just survived, but acquired extra dimensions and nuances with the passage of time. I recall an occasion approaching our annual school sports day in the late 1960s.

Heats for the 200m and 400m to determine the finalists were being held. A Sikh boy from my class, in a misplaced show of disdain, ambled his way to the finish in last place, not realising that the race was being watched by the principal, a sports loving Anglo-Indian.



Milkha Singh

"Would Milkha have ever done something like this?" he admonished the boy.

Over the decades, Milkha acquired a larger than life persona and became an example and allegory for diligent effort, toil, courage and character in the pursuit of success. The sobriquet of 'Flying Sikh' bestowed on him by Pakistan President Ayub

Khan enhanced his status as a superhero in the country.

The massive success of the biopic made on him by Rakesh Omprakash Mehra (*Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*) — despite liberties with some facts, and several situations highly exaggerated — highlighted the venerable position Milkha enjoyed in India more than half a century after he had retired.

It is debatable whether Milkha is the greatest Indian athlete ever. With fairly similar accomplishments, albeit a couple of decades later, Usha would be a strong rival. So too 1962 Commonwealth gold medal winning decathlete GS Randhawa. Closer to these times, there's long jumper Anju Bobby George, India's only world

champion in the IAAF World Athletics Final. But as Adile Sumariwalla, former national 100m champion and currently president of the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) says, "What he achieved has to be put into context of the times he lived in."

"In 1958, it was unthinkable that an Indian athlete could win a track and field gold medal at the Commonwealth Games. Or break the Olympics record in 1962, though he failed to win a medal by a heart-breaking nano-second. He opened up the path for all future track and field champions from the country," says Sumariwalla.

I met Milkha on a number of occasions in the past four decades. He was always approachable, spoke his mind and never

got fazed from taking a controversial position. His rustic charm never faded and he could be the most entertaining company in an after-event party.

He was a great storyteller (sometimes mixing fact and fiction!), lacing these with choice Punjabi phrases that might not be considered polite in conservative circles. But he had the aura and chutzpah to carry off these indulgences.

"He was not just a hero, but a legend," says Sumariwalla. He's right. There's a difference. Heroes come and go. Someone will come along, break records and become the new hero. But legends remains forever, though their time on earth may have finished. Milkha Singh, RIP.