

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | SUNDAY 20 | JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 33°C
Min: 21°C
Rainfall: 1%

ASTROGUIDE

Pilava: Aani 6
Tithi: Dhasami
Star: Chithirai
Rahukalam: 4.30 am to 6 am
Yamagandam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.23 am
Luhar: 12.14 pm
Asar: 3.35 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.55 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.47 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.01 AM
MOONRISE TODAY 2.23 PM
MOONSET TOMORROW 3.22 AM

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+45,984)	(+1,456)
2,98,68,774	3,86,623

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+8,183)	(180)
TN: 24,14,680	31,015

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

17,87,65,626

DEATHS

38,69,994

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES

219

worldometers.info

Kerala Cong. chief denies CM's charge of child kidnap plot

Kochi: Kerala PCC chief K. Sudhakaran on Saturday denied Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's allegation of having plotted to kidnap his two children decades ago and asked why a police complaint had not been registered then.

Hitting out at Vijayan a day after he levelled the allegation during his press meet to give details of Covid-19, Sudhakaran wanted to know why no complaint had been filed.

■ P4

Will fight for Lakshadweep:

Ayesha Sulthana

Thiruvananthapuram: Filmmaker Ayesha Sulthana, who was booked for sedition in Lakshadweep, on Saturday said she has not done anything against the country so far and would continue her fight till the islanders get justice. She was talking to the media at the airport in Kochi before leaving to the archipelago to appear before the Kavaratti police for questioning on Sunday in connection with the case.

COUNTER

POINT



Wow! Now will they deposit more than ₹15 lakh in our bank accounts?



STATE | 3

This Thandhiram fizzles out



WORLD | 5

Raisi declared new Iran Prez

SPORT | 6

Verstappen takes pole for French GP



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Curbs set to stay in 11 dists

■ **Bus services, eateries may be allowed to run in districts with lesser spread**

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR, D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

The persistent high number of Covid-19 cases in some districts has become a matter of concern for the government even as discussions were on through Saturday to work out more relaxations to the lockdown that is in force since May 24.

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin held meetings with officials, health experts and health department officials and was advised not to relax the lockdown in at least eight districts in the western region, where the numbers are refusing to come down.

It is likely that the present lockdown norms would continue to be in force in the districts that include Coimbatore, Salem, Tirupur and Erode at least till June 28 as the officials wanted to wait and watch.

In the rest of the districts where the numbers have come down, bus services could be resumed on Monday with permission to take onboard only 50 per cent of the passenger capacity.

There was also a demand from some quarters for allowing the opening of small eateries and allowing dining for 50 per cent customers at a time. Similarly a recommendation for opening small temples was also made.

Many felt that the e-registration facility was serving no purpose and could be scrapped. But what the government has decided on will be known only



Transport workers clean the buses at Koyambedu mofussil bus terminal as services likely commence next week. — DC

Unlock carefully, stick to Covid protocol: Centre

New Delhi, June 19: The easing of Covid-related lockdown norms has led to crowding in some markets and other places, the Union government said on Saturday, as it urged states to ensure the “extremely important” five-fold strategy of Covid-appropriate behaviour, test-track-treat and vaccination to prevent the spread of the disease.

In a communication to all states and Union terri-

when the official announcement is made, probably by Sunday.

Meanwhile, health secretary J. Radhakrishnan has

tories (UTs), Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla said vaccination against Covid-19, in the present scenario, is critical to break the chain of transmission.

Therefore, all state and UT governments should step up the pace of vaccination, to cover maximum number of people in an expeditious manner, he said. The home secretary said that during the second Covid wave, a significant surge in cases was

witnessed in several states and UTs, and many of them imposed restrictions in order to contain the spread of the infection.

“With a decline in the number of active cases, many states and UTs have started relaxing restrictions. I would like to highlight that the decision to impose or ease restrictions has to be taken, based on the assessment of the situation at the ground level,” he said.

concern was over the popular practice of using saliva in the fingers to split open the covers or the habit of blow into them. ■ P3

THIRD WAVE IN 6-8 WEEKS, SAYS AIIMS DIRECTOR

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 19

A third Covid wave in India is “inevitable” and it could hit the country in the next six to eight weeks, director of All-India Institute of Medical Sciences’ director Dr Randeep Guleria said on Saturday amid unlocking in many parts of the country after weeks of strict restrictions. The country’s main challenge is vaccinating a huge population, he said.

“As we have started unlocking, there is again a lack of Covid-appropriate behaviour. We don’t seem to have learnt from what happened between the first and the second wave. Again crowds are building up... people are gathering. It will take some time for the number of cases to start rising at the national level. Third wave is inevitable and it could hit the country within the next six to eight weeks... maybe a little longer. It all depends on how we go ahead in terms of Covid-appropriate behaviour and preventing crowds,” Dr Guleria told a news channel.

India reported 60,753 new cases of Covid-19 and 1,647 deaths in the last 24 hours. The active caseload has declined to 7.60 lakh.



Chief Minister M.K. Stalin inaugurates the distribution of Corona Cash Relief to the families of Sri Lankan Tamils living outside the refugee camps in Chennai at a function at the secretariat on Saturday.

Covid-hit Lankan Tamils to get aid

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

Chief Minister M.K. Stalin launched a scheme to pay a relief of ₹4,000 each to the 13,553 families of Sri Lankan Tamils who are living outside the refugee camps in the State.

Five families of Sri Lankan Tamils were handed over the relief at the Secretariat on Saturday to mark the start of the distribution of the money, an official release said.

While the Sri Lankan Tamil families living in the refugee camps have already been paid ₹4000 along with the family card holders, the sufferings of those outside the camps, who normally run small businesses or work as daily wage earners and were also hit by the lockdown, were brought to the Chief Minister’s notice.

The Chief Minister announced the scheme to mitigate their loss of livelihood, which will cost ₹5,42,12,000 to the exchequer.

Doctor assault to invite tougher law

New Delhi, June 19: The Union government on Saturday asked state governments to register cases and invoke the stringent Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Act, 2020 against those who indulge in assault on doctors and healthcare professionals.

Union home secretary Ajay Bhalla’s letter to states and Union territories came following several incidents of attack on doctors and healthcare professionals in different parts of the country amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

“You will agree that any incident of threat or assault on doctors or healthcare professionals may dampen their morale and create a sense of insecurity amongst them. This may adversely affect the healthcare response system,” Mr Bhalla wrote.

The home secretary said in the present circumstances, it has become imperative that strict action be taken against those who assault healthcare professionals.

“Institutional FIRs should be registered against assaulters and such cases should be fast-tracked. You may also like to invoke provisions of the Epidemic Diseases (Amendment) Act, 2020, where applicable,” he said.

According to this law, anyone involved in the assault on doctors and healthcare professionals are liable to be punished with imprisonment up to five years, and a fine up to ₹2 lakh.

● **The law provides for imprisonment up to five years, and a fine up to ₹2 lakh for assault on doctors and healthcare professionals.**

● **If the assault causes grievous harm, the person committing the offence will be punishable with imprisonment up to seven years and a fine up to ₹5 lakh.**

This offence may be compounded by the victim with the permission of the court.

Further, if an act of violence against a healthcare service personnel causes grievous harm, the person committing the offence will be punishable with imprisonment up to seven years and a fine up to Rs 5 lakh. These offences will be cognisable and non-bailable.

“I would also like to reiterate that a close watch be kept on any objectionable content in social media which may exacerbate such situations. Concerted efforts should be made through posters in hospitals, social media, etc. to emphasise the valuable contribution being made by doctors and other healthcare personnel in the fight against Covid-19,” Mr Bhalla said. ■ P4

19 districts in K’taka to relax restrictions

Bengaluru, June 19: The Karnataka government on Saturday announced further easing of lockdown restrictions in 19 of the 31 districts from June 21 in view of the positivity rate falling below five per cent and a decline in others. “For the past one week, the Covid-19 positivity rate is less than five per cent in 16 districts, between five per cent and 10 per cent in 13 districts and above 10 per cent in Mysuru district. We have taken certain decisions on easing restrictions, based on the advice of the Technical Advisory Committee,” Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa said.

— PTI

Telangana to lift all curbs, reopen schools

Hyderabad, June 19: After over a month of imposing lockdown curbs to check the Covid-19 surge, the Telangana government on Saturday decided to lift the shutdown in the state from Sunday in view of a decline in coronavirus cases and also reopen educational institutions from July 1.

The state cabinet, which met on Saturday, took decisions to this effect and directed officials of all departments to remove all restrictions imposed during the lockdown.

Telangana on Friday reported 1,417 new Covid-19 cases.

— PTI

Covid worker dies after tree falls on her

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

A 27-year-old contract worker of Greater Chennai Corporation succumbed to the injuries she suffered when a tree fell on her while on a door-to-door checking of the temperatures of the residents in Padmini Gardens on June 5. Dharani, the victim, is survived by her husband Mohan, and two children, Rahul (9) and Kavitha (8), police said.



PM to chair J&K talks on June 24

New Delhi, June 18: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to chair a meeting with all political parties from Jammu and Kashmir on June 24 as part of the Centre’s initiatives to bolster political processes, including holding assembly elections, in the Union territory, officials said here on Friday.

The meeting – the first such exercise since the Centre announced the abrogation of Jammu and Kashmir’s special status and its bifurcation into union territories in August 2019 – is likely to

be attended by Union home minister Amit Shah and other central leaders.

The central leadership has begun the process of inviting National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah, PDP chairperson Mehbooba Mufti, Altaf Bukhari of the Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP), and People’s Conference head Sajjad Lone for the discussion, the officials said. Ms Mufti said she had received a call from the Centre for a meeting on June 24. “I am yet to take a decision,” she said.

— PTI

‘Flying Sikh’ Milkha cremated with state honours

Chandigarh, June 19: Iconic sprinter Milkha Singh was on Saturday cremated with full state honours here, marking the end of an era in which his pioneering accomplishments on the track galvanised a newly-independent India.

Milkha, who was 91, was bid a tearful adieu in the presence of his family members and several dignitaries, including sports minister Kiren Rijiju. “The

Flying Sikh’, as he was fondly called, died on Friday night due to Covid-19 related complications.

His son and ace golfer Jeev Milkha Singh lit the funeral pyre.

Milkha Singh, who missed an Olympic medal by a whisker at the 400-m final in the 1960 Rome Olympics, came fourth in one of the most relived races in Indian athletic history.

Punjab Governor and



Chandigarh Administrator V.P. Singh Badnore, Punjab finance minister Manpreet Singh Badal, Haryana sports minister Sandeep Singh were among the other

dignitaries who attended the last rites.

A police contingent reversed arms and sounded the last post in the sprinter’s honour. Milkha was also given a gun salute.

The Punjab government had declared a one-day state mourning and a holiday as a mark of respect to the legend.

Earlier, a wreath was also laid on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Wreaths were also laid on

behalf of the Army.

Chief Minister Amarinder Singh had earlier in the day said the Punjab government will accord state funeral to Milkha Singh.

Earlier, the funeral procession started from Milkha’s Sector 8 residence. His body was carried in a bedecked vehicle, with common people turning up along the short route to the Sector 25 cremation ground to pay their last respects to the legend.

— PTI

Modi’s trusted former aide made BJP vice-prez in UP

Lucknow, June 19: The Uttar Pradesh unit of Bhartiya Janata Party on Saturday appointed member of the legislative council A.K. Sharma, a former IAS officer, as its state vice-president.

The party’s state unit president Swatantra Dev Singh who made the announcement, also said Archana Mishra from

Lucknow and Amit Valmiki from Bulandshahr were appointed secretaries of the state unit.

Mr Sharma is considered close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Known for delivering time-bound results, Mr Sharma earned Mr Modi’s confidence as his secretary during his tenure as the

Gujarat chief minister by successfully handling the Vibrant Gujarat campaign to get investments to the state. He also handled the MSME (micro, small and medium enterprises) ministry’s affairs, a crucial department under the Prime Minister’s plan for the revival of the economy following the coronavirus-triggered lockdown.—PTI

OTHER STORIES

740 companies roll out 9,381 job offers to VIT students

Chennai: With a record 9,381 placement offers rolled out by 740 companies for the 2021 graduating batch, Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), emerges yet again as the top institution in India for campus recruitment. For the third successive year, more than 700 companies have visited Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT) for campus placement and the number of offers provided this year is the highest for VIT since its inception.

This number is nothing short of a milestone considering the severe impact of the prevailing Covid-19 pandemic.

As many as 1,132 students have received Super Dream offers – more than Rs. 10 lakh per year compensation – from over 100 companies and they include Microsoft, Amazon, Paypal, D.E.Shaw India Pvt. Ltd., Morgan Stanley, AppDynamics, Udaan, WorkIndia, Cisco, Bajaj Auto, Shell, Societe Generale, Optum, Walmart Labs, Cloudera, Amadeus labs and AppleWellsfargo among others. Seven students received the highest annual compensation of ₹44 lakh per annum from Microsoft. Yet again VIT emerged as the top institution to offer the most number of students through campus recruitment to IT majors like Cognizant (1,418), TCS (1,321) and Infosys (778). Wipro created a National Record by giving 418 dream offers to VIT students, 224 students were hired by TCS for their digital practice, again, highest in India.

Good placement opportunities have also been offered to management students of VIT Business School. Over 100 companies have offered jobs to MBA students of VIT Vellore and Chennai with the highest offer being ₹14 lakh per year.

Well-known companies that recruited these students include Deloitte, PWC, Renault Nissan, Mondle, TATA AIG, Godrej & Boyce, ESAF Bank and IV Mobility, according to a press release from VIT.

In yet another first in VIT, a BCA student was hired by Razor Pay with an annual salary package of ₹15 lakh per year.

High court enhances compensation to ₹60.54 lakh for youth in vegetative state

J. STALIN | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

A wheel-chair bound 25-year-old youth, who is in a vegetative condition, after sustaining multiple injuries in a road accident in the year 2012, got reprieve with the Madras high court enhancing the compensation of ₹48.39 lakh awarded by a tribunal to ₹60.54 lakh.

A division bench comprising Justices R.Subbiah and S.Kannammal enhanced the compensation while partly allowing an appeal filed by the victim Leela Prasad, against an order of the Motor Accident Claims Tribunal, Chennai, dated June 7, 2019.

The bench said this is a pathetic case where the claimant, who was aged 25 years at the time of accident, had sustained grievous injuries and is in a vegetative condition. His movements are restricted entirely and he requires an assistant for discharging each and every domestic chores. He cannot independently do any work and is totally dependent on others.

The marital prospects of the victim have been lost and his future is bleak. The tribunal observed that the claimant is in paraplegic state and he does not have any sensation as to what is happening below the chest level. He does not have the urination sensation or he could not know when he has to attend to his nature call. The evidence on record suggests that a separate urine bag is tagged to him and this has to be emptied frequently. The claimant is also wearing a diaper which also requires frequent change. Thus, this is a clear case that the claimant is completely bed-ridden and is in a veg-

etative condition, the bench added.

The bench said the tribunal, in utter disregard to the aforesaid evidence made available, in our opinion, awarded the compensation towards loss of income by taking only 90 percent disability. This approach of the tribunal was erroneous and it was liable to be interfered in this appeal. The claimant was suffering functional disability which has completely eroded his natural life. Therefore, the disability of the claimant has to be treated as 100 percent for the purpose of awarding compensation as against 90 percent taken by the Tribunal, the bench added.

The bench said on perusal of records there was no doubt that the claimant suffered a lot due to injuries sustained by him by accident. Still he was suffering since he had no sense below the chest. The claimant at the age of 25 years lost his life totally and any amount of money would not compensate the same, the bench added and by applying the multiplier method, it has enhanced the compensation amount under various heads and finally arrived at a sum of ₹60.54 lakh.

Arrangements made for adequate supply of drinking water in Salem district: TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

The Tamil Nadu government has informed the Madras high court that arrangements have been made for adequate supply of drinking water by the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board. Photographs have also been filed indicating the work undertaken and the officials at site. Sakthivel, author of the letter, which resulted in the suo motu proceeding being instituted, was represented.

Sakthivel airs certain grievances, particularly that there were no facilities for storing the drinking water in the village or in the locality, the bench added.

The bench said Sakthivel will be entitled to obtain a copy of the status report filed by the District Collector. Sakthivel should indicate his e-mail ID for the status report to be forwarded by

District Collector filed the present status report.

After perusing the report, the bench said according to the report, arrangements have been made for adequate supply of drinking water by the Tamil Nadu Water Supply and Drainage Board. Photographs have also been filed indicating the work undertaken and the officials at site. Sakthivel, author of the letter, which resulted in the suo motu proceeding being instituted, was represented.

Sakthivel airs certain grievances, particularly that there were no facilities for storing the drinking water in the village or in the locality, the bench added.

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Suo motu petition to monitor progress of cases pending in spl courts against MPs and MLAs closed

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

The Madras high court has closed a suo motu writ petition, instituted in the year 2020, which sought a direction to monitor the progress of the cases pending in Special Courts for trial of criminal cases against Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assembly in the State of Tamil Nadu to ensure compliance of directions of the Supreme Court of India.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar

Ramamoorthy closed the suo motu writ petition on June 17, 2021, after recording the submission of the High Court Administration that the Benches have been set up and infrastructure and other aspects are in place.

In its order, the bench said it was submitted on behalf of the High Court administration that now that all vacancies have been filled up, the infrastructure put in place and territorial jurisdictions demarcated, the matter may have served its purpose. The suo motu proceedings were initiated pursuant to the orders

passed by the Supreme Court requiring the High Court to monitor criminal cases against Members of Parliament and Members of Legislative Assembly. "Since the Benches have been set up and infrastructure and other aspects are in place, the suo motu proceedings need not be continued any further, with an observation that all Courts hearing the criminal cases should deal with them as expeditiously as the business of that Court would permit and ensure that the matters are brought to a logical conclusion without undue delay", the bench added.

P.Muthukumar, counsel appearing on behalf of the authorities. Sakthivel's grievances, or the lack of

further facilities in the locality, should be indicated by way of an affidavit before any action can be

taken in such regard, the bench added and posted to July 9, 2021, further hearing of the case.

Consider plea to remove encroachment made in odai poromboke: HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

The Madras high court has directed the tahsildar, Madathukulam, Tiruppur district, to consider and dispose of a representation, which sought a direction to the authorities to remove the encroachment allegedly made by GPR Sand and Blue Metals (p) Ltd and Sakunthala in the odai poromboke in

S.F.No.495, Maivady Village, Madathukulam taluk, Tiruppur district and restore the same.

The first bench comprising Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee and Justice Senthil Kumar Ramamoorthy gave the directive while disposing of a petition filed by M.Yoganandham.

The bench said the petitioner complains of the alleged encroachment of the pdai poromboke in

S.F.No.495, Maivady Village, Madathukulam taluk, Tiruppur district by GPR Sand and Blue Metals (p) Ltd and Sakunthala. The petitioner asserts that the odai runs adjacent to the GPR Sand and Blue Metals (p) Ltd's land in the aforesaid survey number and that the company has encroached upon the odai by filling up the odai with debris from their crushing unit. It was alleged that

the company has also put up a fence and thereby completely blocked the waterway and impeded both ingress and egress to the adjoining land.

The petitioner stated that a representation was submitted to the Tiruppur district collector on February 13, 2021, but no action has been taken for the removal of the said encroachment, the bench added.

The bench said government advocate P.Muthukumar, who accepted the notice, submitted that the tahsildar, Madathukulam taluk, was the appropriate authority to consider and dispose of the petitioner's representation. Accordingly, without examining the merits of the matter, the petitioner was granted leave to submit a fresh representation to the tahsildar with-

in two weeks. Upon receipt of the same, the Tahsildar was directed to consider such representation of the petitioner and dispose of the same by a reasoned order, after providing a reasonable opportunity of hearing to the petitioner, GPR Sand and Blue Metals (p) Ltd and Sakunthala within eight weeks from the date of receipt of the representation, the bench added.

Getting ready



Metropolitan transport corporation workers doing repair and cleaning work on buses at Mandaveli bus depot on Saturday, as bus services could be resumed from Monday with permission to take onboard 50 per cent of the passenger capacity.

—DC

IBPS plays key role in expansion of BPO/ITes

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, JUNE 19

The India BPO Promotion Scheme (IBPS) by the Government of India has played a pivotal role in facilitating the expansion of BPO/ITes companies in several tier 2 and 3 towns across the country.

Under the aegis of IBPS, DSM Soft Pvt Ltd has set up operations in Tiruchirappalli creating employment opportunities for local youth. The unit has a total headcount of 305 employees, with women accounting for about 53 percent of the workforce.

DSM Soft Pvt Ltd. had been allocated 300 seats under IBPS to set up a BPO/ITES unit at Tiruchirappalli, which commenced operations in September 2019. The IBPS scheme was notified by the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) under the Digital India Programme. Software Technology Parks of India (STPI) is the executing agency of the IBPS scheme.

Four held for murder, ATM heist attempt

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUVARUR, JUNE 19

Police arrested four persons for murdering a commercial complex owner when he tried to prevent robbery at an ATM functioning in his complex at Koodur near Tiruvavur on Friday late night.

Police said the deceased

Unpleasant green



Greater Chennai Corporation removing water hyacinth in Cooum river near Pudupet.

— DC

Tamilarasan (60), hearing an unusual noise from the ATM annexure, went there to find four persons trying to break open the ATM and tried to prevent them. But the robbers attacked him fatally with sharp weapons and fled.

Meanwhile, neighbours, hearing the noise, rushed to the spot and nabbed one

of the robbers, Madhan (22) of Latchumangudi, and alerted the police.

The night patrol police team chased and caught the fleeing robbers along with their motorcycle. The three were identified as Akash (22) of Pullamangalam, Pratab (24) of Ilamangalam and Vijay (20) of Ootiyani village.

The trio were admitted to the government medical college hospital for treatment of their injuries caused when they fell down from their two-wheeler while attempting to flee, police added.

Tiruvavur taluk police arrested all four and remanded them to judicial custody.

Why a sense of déjà vu over Stalin's Delhi visit



G. Babu Jayakumar

Just spamming

The maiden visit of M. K. Stalin to New Delhi as Chief Minister generated substantial chatter in the media and social networking sites with a lot of significance attached to the event, particularly the meeting with the Prime Minister. In the process, there was also a bid to draw parallels with the first official sojourn of the late M. Karunanidhi to the national capital. One of the reasons behind such an exercise was the legacy of Karunanidhi, which is so enduring that there is a

temptation to compare the illustrious father with the son who has inherited his mantle.

But then, how many people can recall Karunanidhi's first meeting with the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, and compare it with Stalin presenting a 25-point charter of demands to Modi to pinpoint the differences and similarities between the two events, 52 years apart. Well, without going into the archives of newspapers or poring over old records, one

can access what happened in 1969 by just flipping through the pages of the autobiography of Karunanidhi, titled *Nenjuku Neethi* (Justice for the Heart).

In fact, in Karunanidhi's political career, too, the first visit as Chief Minister to Delhi had been a watershed event. Not only has he devoted a chapter for the Delhi trip (in volume II of the autobiography), the newspapers then had evinced keen interest in the event as evidenced by the elaborate press conference that Karunanidhi had given at Tamil Nadu House. Going by the details in the book, the idea behind the present Tamil Nadu House building, where Stalin was put up, was born during the 1969 visit of Karunanidhi.

Based on the feedback of the staff at the Tamil Nadu

House that the then newly elected Chief Minister came up with the broad design for the building with more facilities and two statues – one of Tiruvalluvar and the other of C. N. Annadurai. When he had driven to Tamil Nadu House from the airport, the Chief Minister's vehicle was escorted by motorcycle riders belonging to the party. Even at the airport he was given a rousing welcome by the party MPs and other functionaries. Karunanidhi recounts that he had taken his ministerial colleague S. Madhavan along with him.

The meeting with the Prime Minister has been recorded as a cordial one that lasted for 40 minutes. The Prime Minister had assured support to Tamil Nadu that was then reeling under a drought. His meetings with other Union

Ministers were also on a friendly note and arrangements were made for supply of 10,000 tonnes of rice to the State and informal permission was obtained for setting up sugar factories. The only hitch, as mentioned in the book, was the attitude of the Deputy Prime Minister Moraji Desai, who was also holding the finance portfolio.

Karunanidhi describes the hostility he faced from Desai right from the moment they stepped into his house for the meeting. The Chief Minister and the accompanying delegates were late by about five minutes in view of an unexpected traffic snarl, enraging Desai. The Deputy Prime Minister's treatment of the Chief Minister was more like a school teacher reprimanding a truant student who had been late to class.

When the Chief Minister put forth his demand for release of Rs 5 crore as the first instalment of drought relief, Desai turned angry and shot back that there was no tree in his garden that produced money. Karunanidhi had retorted that when there is no such tree in the world how would he have expected him to have one in his garden. The Chief Minister had been advised to ask for the Rs 5 crore advance by Communist leader Kalyanasundaram, who met him at the airport before he boarded the flight to Delhi.

Recalling the meeting with Desai, Karunanidhi had written that it was an instance that taught how the rulers treated the ruled and how it reminded him that it was the same power structure that the DMK wanted to demolish. But it

was the press conference at Tamil Nadu House that followed the meeting with Desai that was more illuminative of the political trends of the time. Questions were asked mostly on state autonomy, Centre-State relations, evolution of powers to the states and providing enhanced powers to the states.

It was the Chief Minister's reply to a question that formed the forerunner for the setting up of the Rajamannar Committee on Centre-State relationship.

It was during that trip Karunanidhi felt the rumblings of a split in the Congress. He narrates how many leaders in the Congress like Chandra Sekhar were then slowly raising their banner of revolt. Well, in the later years Karunanidhi saw

both Moraji Desai and Chandra Sekhar becoming Prime Ministers with the Congress splintering into many groups. But it was that visit that gave him the first inkling of the revolt brewing in the party.

Stalin's visit to Delhi on June 17 and 18, too came under similar circumstances with the State requiring funds for overcoming the raging pandemic.

Also, like in 1969, the DMK had defeated the ruling party at the Centre in the state elections and was also asserting the rights of the state.

Though there was no one like Desai to talk roughly to the Chief Minister, there was no indication of any bonhomie between the DMK and BJP, pointing to the political climate remaining the same.

OTHER STORIES



Milkha Singh

Gov, CM condole Milkha's demise

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

Governor Banwarilal Purohit and Chief Minister M K Stalin were among those who condoled the death of legendary athlete, 'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh at the age of 90.

Captain Milkha Singh, four times Asian games gold medalist, was one of India's greatest track and field sprinter who was introduced to the sport while serving in the Indian Army, the Governor said in his message.

'I am deeply saddened to hear about the demise of one of India's most stellar athletes,' Stalin tweeted, adding 'May his life and achievement defying all odds inspire scores of young Indians.'

Purohit said the story of his struggles and strength of character would continue to inspire generations of Indians.

Woman dies after tree falls on her

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

A 27-year-old contract worker of Greater Chennai Corporation died on Saturday morning after a tree fell on her earlier this month in Nandambakkam.

The deceased, Dharani, succumbed to injuries she sustained due to the impact of the fall.

According to police, Dharani, a resident of Ramar Kovil street in Nandambakkam, worked with the Chennai Corporation on a contract basis. On June 5, when she went door-to-door checking the temperatures of the residents in Padmini Gardens, a tree fell on her due to a windstorm and heavy rains. She was admitted to the Rajiv Gandhi Government hospital in the city, where she passed away in the early hours of Saturday. Police said Dharani is survived by her husband Mohan, and two children, Rahul (9) and Kavitha (8).

3.10 lakh Covishield doses arrive in TN

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

The state on Saturday received 3,10,150 doses of Covishield and they will be dispatched to all districts, the officials said.

On Saturday evening, 3,10,150 doses of Covishield in 26 parcels from Pune, Serum Institute, arrived here at Chennai airport on an Indigo airlines flight. The doses were sent to the Directorate Of Medical and Rural Health Services in Teynampet in Chennai. The processing of the shipment at the Chennai airport was completed quickly and it was handed over to department officials, airport sources said.

The state in the last three days alone had received 12.26 lakh doses of coronavirus vaccine from the centre. The doses are expected to revive the vaccine drive-in Tamil Nadu as the daily vaccination numbers recently had fallen sharply due to a shortage.

TMC alumni donate medical aid worth ₹6 lakh

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, JUNE 19

As a means of help to fight the Covid-19 second wave, the alumni of the 1988 batch of Thanjavur medical college (RIPPLES 88) here have donated ₹6 lakh worth of medical aids like 6,000 N95 masks, 500 PPE kits, 10,000 3ply surgical masks, 10,000 surgical gloves, life-saving BiPAP ventilation assist device, and a cardio-respiratory monitor.

The materials were handed over recently to Dr Ravikumar, Dean of TMC by a team of doctors Muthuvinayagam, Amutha, Loganathan, Malarvizhi, and Bhuvaneshwari on behalf of the TMC 1988 batch. The dean thanked them for the humanitarian gesture.

Rising cement prices causes concern now

G. BABU JAYAKUMAR & D. SEKAR | DC
CHENNAI, JUNE 19

The unprecedented rise in the prices of cement is turning out to be a major embarrassment for the state government with the construction industry going up in arms at one side and cement manufacturers unrelenting at the other end amidst politicians pointing fingers at the new regime.

The cement cartel in the state had increased the price with a view to earning a bad name to the government, which is otherwise doing a remarkable job on other fronts, Construction and Real Estate Industry Coalition (CRIC) secretary S Yuvaraj alleged.

Pointing out that a bag of cement cost ₹520 in the State while it was sold for ₹370 in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and for ₹350 in Delhi, Yuvaraj said

Justifying the price hike, South India Cement Manufacturers Association said that companies had been heavily hit by the lockdown as they were operating with only 30 to 50 per cent of capacity utilisation

the price hike has paralysed the construction industry on the whole.

However, justifying the price hike, South India Cement Manufacturers Association said that companies had been heavily hit by the lockdown as they were operating with only 30 to 50 per cent of capacity utilisation.

The association claimed that there was an increase in the all-round costs that made the increase in prices inevitable but assured that they would work with the State gov-

ernment to provide cement at concessional rates for weaker sections of the society.

Cement industry would remain supportive of every single development initiative of the Tamil Nadu government, the association assured and pointed out that they had protected the interest of their employees during the lockdown period.

With the cement price hike also lending an opportunity to political party leaders to attack the new government, most opposition leaders have started accusing the government of a nexus with the cement cartel.

On Saturday, PMK leader Anbumani Ramadoss alleged that the price of a bag of cement had gone up by 41 per cent after the total lockdown was imposed. He said the price was ₹370 earlier and it was now ₹520.

He said that he had

drawn the government's attention to the prices shooting through the roof but no action was taken to curb it.

Government contractors, too, raised the bogey of the cement price hike, among other things at a meeting called by PWD Minister E. V. Velu on Saturday.

More than 100 government contractors attended the meeting, along with top government officials. Though they had a plethora of complaints, cement price was also raised by them. They pointed out that the market rates of cement and other construction materials, including steel, were much higher than the rates quoted by PWD.

Velu told them that he would take up their demands with Chief Minister M. K. Stalin and find solutions to their problems brought about by the price hike.

BJP MLA's supporters stage stir for his inclusion in ministry

Puducherry, June 19: Supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party legislator A John Kumar staged a dharna at the party headquarters here on Saturday urging the high command to induct him into the yet-to-be-formed NDA ministry headed by AINRC.

Kumar and his son Richards, also a BJP legislator, airdashed to Delhi during the day and met the party general secretary Santhosh to urge the high command for the induction, said party sources.

The high command had already presented a list to the AINRC founder and Chief Minister N Rangasamy recommending names of A Namassivayam, former Industries Minister, and John Kumar for induction in the Rangasamy-led

ministry. But the BJP top brass had later reportedly asked Rangasamy not to proceed with the list.

This raised the shackles of Kumar's supporters here and they held the demonstration and raised slogans to have him in the ministry.

Why the high command asked Rangasamy not to go ahead with its list could not be known immediately.

The Puducherry state BJP committee president V. Saminathan was not accessible for his comments on the present development.

The NDA government headed by Rangasamy (AINRC) presently lacks a full-fledged team and he alone is looking after the administration.

There was already a delay in the ministry's

expansion because of the demand by the BJP that its legislator A. Namassivayam be inducted as Deputy Chief Minister.

The AINRC had rejected the demand on the ground that never ever was there a post of Deputy Chief Minister in Puducherry.

On coming to learn about the tension in the Union Territory, Kumar called up from Delhi and asked the partymen here to drop the agitation which they duly did.

In the meanwhile, there was still no clear indication from the AINRC on its legislators who would be accommodated in the Ministry. — PTI



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TN minister for tourism M. Mathiventhan along with Managing Director Sandeep Nanduri inspecting Island Grounds on Saturday. — DC



Covid relief given to priests, HR&CE temple staff

DC CORRESPONDENT
ARIYALUR, JUNE 19

Backward class welfare minister S.S. Sivasankar said the impact of Covid-19 second wave has reduced considerably in the state, due to the preventive measures taken by the state government.

The minister said this after distributing the Covid-19 relief fund of Rs 4,000 each and essential commodities to 123 temple priests and other staff of the HR&CE-administered temples across Ariyalur district, in the presence of Ariyalur MLA K. Chinnappa, Jayankondam MLA K.C. Kannan at Ariyalur on Saturday.

The minister appealed to the public, especially philanthropists, to donate more to the Chief Minister's Corona Relief Fund. In a function at Pudukkottai, law and prisons minister S. Reghupathy along with Pudukkottai

Collector Kavitha Ramu distributed Rs 4,000 each and essential commodities to 331 temple priests and other staff of the HR&CE-administered temples in the district.

Nagapattinam Collector Dr. Arun Thamburaj accompanied by Nagapattinam MLA J. Mohamed Shah and Keel Velur MLA Nagai V.P. Mali distributed similar assistance to 218 temple priests and other staff of the HR&CE-administered temples in the Nagapattinam district, at a function held at Nagapattinam.

Mayiladuthurai Collector R. Lalitha and MLAs Nivedha M. Murugan of Poompuhar, M. Panneerselvam of Sirkazhi, and S. Rajkumar of Mayiladuthurai distributed similar assistance to 170 temple priests and other staff of the HR&CE-administered temples in Mayiladuthurai on Saturday.

Malls likely to be opened without AC in Chennai

FROM P1

Since such habits of employees dealing with the food or other articles to be packed can lead to the spread of coronavirus, Mr Radhakrishnan, through a press release, asked the establishments to ensure that using of saliva to split the covers and blowing into covers should be totally abhorred.

Otherwise, with the numbers declining in Chennai, there is even an expectation that malls might be opened without air conditioners from Monday. The closure of big shops has also led to many workers going without jobs and owners running on losses.

Several lobbies are said to be putting pressure on the government to ease the restrictions and open their businesses. But how much the government would yield is not known. For, experts are also cautioning on the possibility of a third wave of Coronavirus sweeping through the state next.

It is in this background that the government has been promoting vaccination, which alone is the means of preventing the spread of the Coronavirus now.

State reports 8,183 Covid cases, 180 deaths; TPR at 5%

Chennai, June 19: Tamil Nadu recorded 8,183 fresh COVID-19 cases on Saturday, including three returnees from Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, pushing the caseload to 24.14 lakh, while 180 deaths took the toll to 31,015.

Recoveries continued to outnumber new cases with 18,232 people being discharged, taking the tally to 23,04,885, leaving 78,780 active cases, a health department bulletin said.

Tamil Nadu recorded its highest daily cases at 36,184 on May 21 and since then has been reporting a declining trend.

The daily case count dropped below 10,000 on June 17.

The decline in numbers also reflected in the Test Positivity Rate, with Minister for Medical and Family Welfare Ma Subramanian saying that the TPR now stood at five per cent in Tamil Nadu, compared to 8-9 per cent in other states.

Coimbatore was the only district to report over 1,000 cases today, adding 1,014 infections, while the remaining were scattered across other districts.

As many as 26 districts, including the state capital, reported new cases in triple digits and 10 in double figures.

Chennai registered 468 new infections, aggregating 5,28,768 till date.

The number of COVID-19 related fatalities in Chennai as of date stood at 8,032.

A total of 1,71,179 samples were tested in the last 24 hours, pushing the cumulative number of specimens examined so far to 3,09,96,798.

Of the deceased, 45 did not have any co-morbidities.

Earlier in the day, Subramanian said that after a 40 day gap, the TPR in Tamil Nadu stood at five per



cent, compared to between 8-9 per cent in other states. "Tamil Nadu reported the highest number of new infections on May 21 with the daily infection tally reaching 36,184.

After a gap of about 40 days, it dropped to 8,633 yesterday. The government has been taking various measures to bring down the virus spread," he told reporters.

He said more awareness programmes conducted by the government had resulted in a lot more people coming forward to take the shots.

"We received 1.22 crore doses of vaccine and 1.14 crore people have received the shots so far.

We have about 5.56 lakh doses in stock and another three lakh doses are expected to arrive," he said.

To a query on 'Black Fungus' disease, he said till June 18, 2,382 people had been affected, of whom 111 had recovered and been discharged from hospitals.

Asked whether the treatment for it would be covered under the Chief Minister's Health Insurance Scheme, aimed at benefiting a large number of BPL families, he said a decision would soon be taken on that.

On the possibilities of a third wave of COVID-19, he said the government wished that it should not recur; but was adequately prepared to deal with any eventuality.

"Already we have stepped up measures (in case of third wave) by strengthening the medical infrastructure -- adding additional beds and also appointing 2,000 doctors and 6,000 nurses," he said. — PTI

This Thandhiram fizzles out

FILM REVIEW

JAGAME
THANDHIRAMANUPAMA
SUBRAMANIANCAST: Dhanush, James
Cosmo, Joju George,
Aishwarya LekshmiDIRECTION: Karthik
Subbaraj

RATING: 2.25

The buildup and hype around Dhanush-Karthik Subbaraj's

combo gangster film Jagame Thandhiram has been huge, but does it live up to the expectations? Can it deliver something worthwhile to watch over the weekend?

Suruli (Dhanush) is a local thug in Madurai with a devil-may-care attitude. Though he runs Suruli Mess, a Parotta restaurant, he is mainly involved in gangster activities, which includes carrying out murders. On the day of his engagement, he kills the kin of a north

Indian man who had set up business in his town. This lands him in trouble and he is asked to leave the place for a month.

Around the same time, Suruli gets a highly lucrative offer from a NRI to accomplish a murder task for his boss Peter Sprott (James Cosmo) from London, a racist and ruthless gangster with political connections.

Peter wants Suruli to kill his nemesis Sivados (Joju George), a Tamil-speaking gangster who comes in his way in getting the much-debated immigration law BICORE passed. For Suruli, money comes first than anything else and hence agrees for the deal. He cleverly executes his mission of killing Sivados and emerges big in London. However, he realizes that what he did to Sivados was nothing but a betrayal as he comes to know about the latter's real intentions of helping the immigrants in their struggle for identity.

This happens through Attila (Aishwarya Lekshmi), a Sri Lankan

woman who sings at a local pub, to whom Suruli declares his love.

Now it is retribution time for Suruli and how he takes on Peter in his own stride forms the rest, with the film ending in an insipid climax.

Dhanush is in full form and playing a gangster is like a cakewalk for him. His imitable swag, delivering punch lines with perfect comic timing and mannerisms are definitely inspired by his father-in-law Rajinikanth. His stylish moustache also resembles that of Rajini in Petta. And this was a deliberate attempt by Karthik Subbaraj, as the actor in an earlier interview has revealed that there are shades of Rajini in Suruli.

There's even a dialogue when Suruli says 'romba naal kazhichu paakkara Thalaivar padam maadhiri irukku' in a happy moment.

Joju George, the award-winning actor from Malayalam who makes his debut in Tamil, looks impressive although his is a weakly written charac-

ter arc. *Game of Thrones* fame James Cosmo fits the bill of a xenophobic, however he has been made to look like a caricature in the second half and hence becomes irrelevant.

And Cosmo mouthing cuss language in each and every scene is annoying.

Aishwarya Lekshmi in a brief role is adequate, but the romantic portions with Dhanush look flimsy. *Vadivukkaraasi*, Kalaiyaran, Sarath Ravi and Ramachandran are also there.

Though the film starts off in a brisk fashion, it falters big time due to its incoherent storyline and slacky narration. Karthik's writing is so convenient that logic takes a beating throughout the proceedings. Technically, Santhosh Narayanan's background score is the biggest plus with *Rakita Rakita* song already being a huge hit. Shreyas Krishna's visuals are equally impressive.

Choppy editing makes some of the scenes feel very disjointed.

IN BRIEF

AYESHA: WILL CONTINUE FIGHT FOR L'DWEEP

Thiruvananthapuram, Jun 19: Filmmaker Ayesha Sulthana, who was booked for sedition in Lakshadweep, on Saturday said she has not done anything against the country so far and would continue her fight till the islanders get justice.

She was talking to the media at the airport in Kochi before leaving to the archipelago to appear before the Kavaratti police for questioning on Sunday in connection with the case. She said her advocate was also accompanying her and she would cooperate with the police. "I believe that I will get justice as I have not done anything wrong."

My words were wrongly interpreted and I have already mentioned everything in detail in my recent Facebook post," Sulthana said.

On her controversial usage of 'biological weapon' during a television discussion, she said all these controversies had happened based on that particular word. "I have not done anything against the country. All these have happened over a word I uttered. So, it is my responsibility to prove that I have not done anything wrong. I will continue my fight till my land and people get justice," she added.

ODISHA STUDENTS SHINE AT NASA COMPETITION

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO | DC BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 19

Seven students from Odisha have excelled in the National Aeronautical Space Agency (NASA) competition by developing fasteners or nuts and bolts which will be part of NASA's space launch on June 24.

The nuts and bolts have been developed by using four different metals by the seven-member team of Young Tinker Academy from the state.

This experiment of the team has been selected for the next space mission of NASA.

Hundreds of participants from 73 countries had taken part in the 'Cubes in Space' competition.

As per reports, the fasteners developed by the students will be part of NASA's SR-7 rocket mission scheduled for June 24. The nuts and bolts will be sent in the rocket to check whether they could stand out in space.

"It was very difficult to develop the fasteners. We worked for 24 hours- researching and searching for the proper materials. We learned many new things during the entire process and it was a great experience," said Sriya Sahoo, a young scientist who is part of the seven-member team.

NEARLY 2L COVID WARRIORS YET TO TAKE JAB

DC CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, JUNE 19

Nearly two lakh registered health care workers (HCWs) and Frontline Workers (FLWs) in Odisha have not taken vaccine shots against Covid-19.

A letter issued by the state health department to district collectors, commissioners of municipal corporations, chief district medical and public health officers revealed this on Saturday.

As per the document, a total of 1,97,217 registered health care and frontline workers have not taken vaccines so far. It includes 1,36,170 health care workers and 61,047 frontline workers. The HCWs and FLWs who are honoured with the status of Covid warriors for leading the fight against the pandemic were the first priority group in the vaccination drive.

The health department shared a district-wise list of HCWs and FLWs who have registered in the government's CoWIN app but have not taken the jabs yet.

As per the list, the highest numbers of 17,407 health care and frontline workers have not taken the jabs in Bhubaneswar followed by Sundergarh (14856), Ganjam (13,613), Bhadrak (11,892) and Khordha (11,858). Three other districts which have more than 10,000 such unvaccinated health and frontline workers are Mayurbhanj (10,519), Cuttack (10,347) and Balasore (10,316).

The additional chief secretary (health) Pradipta Mohapatra has directed the district administration and municipal authorities to vaccinate all HCWs and FLWs, who were registered but not vaccinated, within June 20.



Crowded Sadar market that reopened after further ease in lockdown restrictions in New Delhi on Saturday.

- PTI

PUNJAB CM DEFENDS GIVING JOBS TO SONS OF CONG. MLAS

Chandigarh, Jun 19:

Under fire from the opposition over giving jobs to sons of two Congress MLAs, Punjab CM Amarinder Singh defended the decision, saying it was a recognition of the sacrifices made by their grandfathers, who laid down their lives for the country. The Punjab cabinet on Friday decided to appoint Arjun Pratap Singh Bajwa as an inspector in the Punjab Police and Bhisham Pandey as a naib tehsildar in the Revenue Department as a special case on compassionate ground.

Arjun Pratap Singh Bajwa is the son of Qadian MLA Fateh Jung Singh Bajwa while Ludhiana MLA Rakesh Pandey is the father of Bhisham Pandey.

Arjun Bajwa is the grandson of former Punjab Minister Satnam Singh Bajwa, who laid his life in 1987 for the sake of peace and harmony in the state while Bhisham Pandey is the grandson of Joginder Pal Pandey who was gunned down by terrorists in 1987, the government had said on Friday. The chief minister on Saturday said those who make a sacrifice for the nation can, and should, never be forgotten.

Their families deserve to be compensated for the loss, he further said while informally interacting with media persons outside the residence of Milkha Singh, where he had gone to pay his last respects to the legendary athlete.

Taking a swipe at the SAD and AAP, which have criticised the government's move, the CM said if these parties provide names of any youth whose father/grandfathers have made similar sacrifices for the nation, they will also be provided jobs in the government.

- PTI

Centre asks states to ease curbs carefully

Covid protocol, testing, tracing treating key, states told

From Page 1

impose or ease restrictions has to be taken, based on the assessment of the situation at the ground level," he said.

Mr Bhalla said while the opening up of activities, after decline in cases is essential, states and UTs must ensure that the whole process is "carefully calibrated".

"While opening up, it would be extremely important to follow the five-fold strategy of Covid appropriate behaviour, test-track-treat and vaccination," he said.

The home secretary said regular monitoring of Covid-19 appropriate behaviour is required to prevent relapse.

To reiterate, Covid-appropriate behaviour includes mandatory use of masks, hand hygiene, social distancing and also proper ventilation of closed spaces, he said.

"However, easing of restrictions in some states has led to resumption of crowding of people in markets etc., without adherence to the norms of Covid appropriate behaviour," he said. Bhalla said to contain the spread of the infection on a sustainable basis, it is necessary to continue the strategy of test-track-treat. It may especially be ensured that the testing rate does not come down, he said.

As the situation is dynamic, a close watch needs to be kept on early signs of a surge in active cases or high positivity rates, he said.

A system should be in place at the micro-level to ensure that whenever cases rise in a smaller place, it gets checked there itself, through local containment measures as per the existing guidelines issued by the health ministry, he said. PTI

Pawar says take warning of third wave seriously

SONU SHRIVASTAVA | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 19

Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar on Saturday asked people not to lower their guard against Covid in view of the possible third wave of the pandemic.

He warned people against visiting tourist attractions just because restrictions have been eased.

Mr Pawar said that the warning of a third wave needs to be taken seriously. Mr Pawar held a review meeting with officials over the coronavirus situation in Pune district.

Later speaking with reporters, he said that if

people go out for tourism purposes, the administration would not be left with any option except imposing a 15-day quarantine regime on such people after their return to home.

As per the state's weekly review of the five level unlock categories, Pune city is under level-II, which means most of the establishments can be allowed to open with time restrictions.

Mr Pawar said that the coronavirus numbers are coming down, but as a precautionary measure, it has been decided that all the shops under the non-essential category, malls, hotels, and restaurants in Pune will remain closed on weekends.

PUNJAB CANCELS CLASS 12 EXAMS

Chandigarh, Jun 19: The Punjab government on Saturday cancelled Class 12 exams because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

State Education Minister Vijay Inder Singla said the Punjab School Education Board (PSEB) will declare the results as per the pattern of the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

It was the need of hour to take a decision on examinations as students and parents were worried about admissions to the higher classes, said Singla in a statement here.

Singla said 3,08,000 students enrolled in Class 12 in government, aided and private schools under the Punjab School Education Board in the 2020-21 academic session.

He said it was not possible for the education board to conduct the examinations due to the challenges posed by coronavirus.

The Punjab School Education Board will prepare the result according to a 30:30:40 formula based on the student's performance in Classes 10, 11 and 12, respectively.

- PTI

MP ALL SET TO VACCINATE 10L PEOPLE TODAY

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC BHOPAL, JUNE 19

Madhya Pradesh government is set to launch a 10-day special vaccination drive on Sunday. The government has set a target to vaccinate 10 lakh people on the opening day of the drive.

This was announced by chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan here on Saturday.

Addressing eminent citizens of the state, Mr Chouhan said elected representatives of local civic bodies, social activists and eminent citizens in the localities would be roped in to join the campaign for mass vaccination of the people during the period.

Eminent citizens of the locality along with the health workers would visit people in their houses to extend an invitation to them with 'rice mixed with turmeric' (a traditional way of inviting guests) to get vaccinated, he added.

The slogan of the campaign would be 'get vaccinated, save life', he said.

Mr Chouhan said his government has set a target to vaccinate maximum people in the state by October to stop the third wave. He, however, said the government would not slow down the ongoing 'corona kill' drive focusing on testing and treating of people, despite the dip in new cases in the state.

"We will ensure that testing of 75,000-80,000 people is done every day", he added.

Kerala Cong. chief denies CM's charge of child kidnap plot

Kochi, June 19: Kerala PCC chief K. Sudhakaran on Saturday denied Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's allegation of having plotted to kidnap his two children decades ago and asked why a police complaint had not been registered then.

Hitting out at Vijayan a day after he levelled the allegation during his press meet to give details of Covid-19, Sudhakaran wanted to know why no complaint had been filed.

"Vijayan raised so many allegations. It was the press conference of the Chief Minister. We saw the real Pinarayi Vijayan yesterday (Friday), who came out of the PR agency's cover. His stance was that of a political criminal. I cannot reply like him. My post and stature does not allow me to stoop to his level," Sudhakaran said.

"Vijayan alleged that a late friend of mine had told him that I had planned to kidnap Vijayan's children. Why has he not revealed the details, why has he not complained to the police? He said he had not revealed it to anyone. Not even to his wife. Usually, if there is any threat against kids, one will inform the mother as they are always there to protect the kids. Is that how a father reacts?," Sudhakaran asked.

Vijayan had on Friday, while replying to a query from reporters about certain remarks made against

● Vijayan while replying to a query from reporters about certain remarks made against him by Sudhakaran in an interview, had raised the serious allegation that a person close to the current KPCC president had years ago revealed to him that Sudhakaran had plans to kidnap Vijayan's son and daughter who were school students then.

him by Sudhakaran in an interview, had raised the serious allegation that a person close to the current KPCC president had years ago revealed to him that Sudhakaran had plans to kidnap Vijayan's son and daughter who were school students then.

Sudhakaran, however, refuted the charge and said the Chief Minister had not revealed the details on the matter.

The newly appointed State Congress president, who met reporters here, rejected all the allegations raised by the Chief Minister.

Vijayan had raised allegations against the new KPCC chief after an interview of Sudhakaran was published in a vernacular magazine in which he said he had kicked Vijayan down during an incident that happened around 50 years ago at Brenon College, their alma mater, at Thalassery in Kannur district.

- PTI

J&K parties yet to take call on talks

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC SRINAGAR, JUNE 19

Jammu and Kashmir's mainstream political leaders are being invited for talks by the Centre next week. The move is seen by political watchers here as the first post-August 2019 major attempt by the Narendra Modi government to end the political stalemate in the erstwhile state.

Former chief minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP), Mehbooba Mufti, confirmed that she has received an invitation for the talks slated to be held in New Delhi on June 24. "Yes, I got a phone call from Delhi, and I have been invited for a meeting on June 24. The meeting will be chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," she told a local news agency KNO.

She, however, added, "I haven't decided yet whether

to attend the meet or not."

The PDP's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) headed by Ms. Mufti is meeting here on Sunday to discuss the invitation for the meet which, she said, has no clear-cut agenda but convened to "review the general situation and how to take the political process forward."

PAGD president and former chief minister Farooq Abdullah said that his National Conference party's core group will first sit to discuss how to respond if a formal invitation from the Centre comes and evolve a 'strategy' for such an engagement 'keeping the interests of the J&K people above everything else.'

The PAGD is also likely to hold a meeting soon to work out a joint strategy vis-à-vis the Centre's latest move seeking to break the ground in J&K.

Assam CM asks Cong legislators to join BJP

Guwahati, June 19: A day after four-time Congress MLA Rupiyoti Kurmi announced his plans to join the BJP, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday appealed to all opposition legislators to join the ruling party.

Mr Sarma was replying to a question on Mr Kurmi, the Congress' lone legislator from the tea tribe community, who quit the grand old party and resigned from the Assam Legislative Assembly.

The MLA from upper Assam's Mariani constituency had also announced that he would join the BJP on Monday in the presence of the chief minister.

"What will they do in the opposition benches for five years? I would rather say they should join us. Since we are working for the welfare of people irrespective of caste, creed and religion, I appeal to them (opposition members) to join us and work together for the public," the chief minister said.

While leaving the party on Friday, Kurmi had attacked the Congress leadership, alleging that the organisation has become "very weak" as the leaders "do not listen to the voice of the grassroots workers".

The assembly election results are a testimony of the fact as the party "failed in all the five states" where the polls were held in March and April, said the MLA from the tea tribe communi-

ty which plays a decisive role in polls in Upper Assam.

"It appears that the party leadership is not willing to give an opportunity to people from the tea tribe or other marginalised communities but it is seen that people from a particular religious community are given prominence in the party," he said.

Leader of opposition in the assembly Debabrata Saikia has termed Mr Kurmi's exit as a loss for the party.

Another senior Congress leader Juri Sharma Bordoloi, who was the president of the Guwahati city district Congress and former national office-bearer of Mahila Congress, had also resigned from the party on Friday.

Mr Bordoloi claimed that more than 100 supporters have decided to leave the party with her.

There are speculations that a few more Congress leaders, including an MLA, will quit the party and join the BJP in the next few days.

With Mr Kurmi's resignation, the strength of the Congress in the 126-member Assam assembly has come down to 28. The BJP currently has 60 MLAs, while its allies AGP has nine and UPPL five. The Congress, which was in power in Assam for three successive terms from 2001, has been in opposition since 2016 when the BJP-led coalition formed the government for the first time.

- PTI

FRESH | START

Prominent Vidarbha leader quits BJP to return to Congress

Chavan indicates 'ghar wapsi' of netas

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC MUMBAI, JUNE 19

Maharashtra may witness 'ghar wapsi' scenes like those in West Bengal as senior Congress leader Ashok Chavan has indicated that many people who had switched their loyalties to the BJP are upset and want to return to their parent party. A decision on their home coming should be taken by the Congress at the earliest, he said.

To celebrate the birthday of senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, the

Maharashtra Congress on Saturday had organised an event in Mumbai, where Sunil Deshmukh, a prominent leader from Vidarbha joined the Congress after quitting the BJP.

He was welcomed into the party by former chief ministers Ashok Chavan and Prithviraj Chavan.

Speaking at the event, Ashok Chavan, who is also a state public works department minister, appealed to the state party leadership to expedite efforts to bring back former partymen.

● **ASHOK CHAVAN** appealed to the state party leadership to expedite efforts to bring back former partymen.

"Those who left the Congress and joined the BJP are upset with their decision. The party should immediately take a call on their return. These leaders should be asked to work vigorously for strengthening the Congress in the state," he said.

Later Ashok Chavan tweeted, "I congratulate

Sunil Deshmukh on his home-coming. Several Congress leaders had earlier joined the BJP against their wish. But they have not settled there. Hence, a decision about their ghar wapsi should be taken at the earliest and they should be used for the party's growth."

Prithviraj Chavan also said that many former Congress leaders are regretting their decision to join the BJP. They want to come back to the party, he added.

Mr Deshmukh was

elected from Amravati on a Congress ticket in 2004 elections. However, he was denied a ticket in 2009 elections by the party, which instead fielded Raosaheb Shekhawat, son of the then President Pratibha Patil.

Irked by the decision, Mr Deshmukh rebelled against the party, but lost the keenly contested fight to Mr Shekhawat.

In 2014 polls, he joined the BJP and defeated Mr Shekhawat, but five years later he lost to the Congress' nominee, Sulabha Khodke.

SHORT TAKES

PLANE CRASHES IN SIBERIA, KILLS FOUR

Moscow, June 19: Four people were killed and four others seriously injured on Saturday after a plane carrying parachutists crashed in Siberia, Russian authorities said.

The L-410 plane carrying 19 people crashed around 10:00 am local time (0300 GMT) during a training flight at the Tanya airfield in the Siberian region of Kemerovo — also known as Kuzbass — authorities said. The TASS news agency cited the local prosecutor's office as saying that the failure of one of the plane's engines caused the crash.

GEORGIA TO PURGE 1L VOTERS FROM THE ROLLS

Atlanta, June 19: Georgia's secretary of state is making public a list of nearly 102,000 voters who will be removed from the rolls unless they act to preserve their registration.

Republican Brad Raffensperger announced the list, part of an every-other-year bid to remove voters who may have died or moved away. The state has about 7.8 million voters and his office said the removals include 67,000 voters who submitted a change of address form to the US Postal Service, and 34,000 voters who had election mail returned. Voter purges in Georgia became a hot-button issue during the 2018 governor's race between Democrat Stacey Abrams and Republican Brian Kemp. Secretary of state before being elected governor, Kemp oversaw aggressive voter purges during his tenure.

ONTARIO CABINET GETS TWO MORE INDO-CANADIANS

Toronto, June 19: Two more Indo-Canadian politicians have been appointed as ministers in a Cabinet reshuffle in Canada's Ontario province, taking the representation of the community members in the Executive Council to three.

Ontario Premier Doug Ford on Friday reshuffled his Cabinet, with former finance minister Rod Phillips — who resigned from his post following a Caribbean vacation during the Covid-19 pandemic — returning as the new minister of long-term care.

Indo-Canadian Prabhmeet Sarkaria, 30, has now been promoted to take over as president of the Treasury Board.

Parm Gill, 47, took on the new portfolio of citizenship and multiculturalism.

Nina Tangri was appointed associate minister of small business and red tape.

POLARISED BY WAR, ARMENIA VOTES TODAY

Yerevan, June 19: Armenia's leader is facing a tough challenge at the polls after a humiliating defeat for Armenian forces in last year's fighting with Azerbaijan over the separatist region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan called the early election for Sunday, seeking to assuage public anger over the peace deal he signed in November that triggered months of protests demanding his resignation.

The Moscow-brokered agreement ended six weeks of fighting between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces, but saw Azerbaijan reclaim control over large parts of Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding areas that had been held by Armenian forces for more than a quarter-century.

The deal was celebrated as a major triumph in the Azerbaijani capital of Baku.

STORM BRINGS RAIN, FLOODS TO GULF COAST

New Orleans, June 19: Tropical Storm Claudette formed Saturday morning along the US Gulf Coast, bringing heavy rains and flooding to coastal states including Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

The National Hurricane Center in Miami said in a 4 am CDT advisory that the storm was located 45 miles (75 kilometres) southwest of New Orleans with maximum sustained winds of 45 mph (75 kph).

Flooding had already begun overnight Friday into Saturday, with local reports of high water over roads and stranded vehicles. Flash flood warnings dotted the coast while flood watches were in effect. With virus restrictions loosened, business owners had been anticipating an influx of tourist cash after a year of lost revenue. But those hopes have been dimmed by the storm.

No bail for Apple Daily editor, CEO

Hong Kong, June 19: A Hong Kong court ordered the top editor of pro-democracy newspaper *Apple Daily* and the head of its parent company held without bail Saturday in the first hearing since their arrest two days ago under the city's national security law.

Ryan Law, the chief editor, and Cheung Kim-hung, the CEO of Next Digital, have been charged with collusion with a foreign country to endanger national security in a case widely seen as an attack on press freedom in the semi-autonomous Chinese territory.

Chief Magistrate Victor

So said there was not sufficient grounds to believe they would not violate the security law again, and ordered them held at the Lai Chi Kok detention center. He set the next hearing for August 13.

Law and Cheung arrived at the court in an unmarked white van with covered windows. A handful of activists held up a banner and copies of the *Apple Daily* outside before the hearing began.

Three others also arrested Thursday two *Apple Daily* senior editors and another executive have not been charged yet and were released on bail late Friday. — AP

Raisi declared new Iran Prez

Ultraconservative's win expected as many heavyweights barred from running

Tehran, June 19: Ultraconservative cleric Ebrahim Raisi was declared the winner Saturday of Iran's presidential election, a widely anticipated result after many political heavyweights were barred from running.

Raisi won 62 percent of the vote with about 90 percent of ballots counted from Friday's election, poll officials said, without releasing turnout figures, after the three other candidates had conceded defeat.

"I congratulate the people on their choice," said outgoing moderate President Hassan Rouhani, who has served the maximum



Ebrahim Raisi

of two consecutive four-year terms and leaves office in August.

Raisi, 60, is set to take over at a critical time, as Iran seeks to salvage its tattered nuclear deal with

major powers and free itself from punishing US sanctions that have driven a sharp economic downturn. The head of the Iranian judiciary, whose black turban signifies direct descent from Islam's Prophet Mohammed, Raisi is seen as close to the 81-year-old supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has ultimate political power in Iran.

Friday's voting was extended by two hours past the original midnight deadline amid fears of a low turnout of 50 percent or less. Many voters chose to stay away after the field of some 600 hopefuls, includ-

ing 40 women had been winnowed down to seven candidates, all men, excluding an ex-president and a former parliament speaker. Three of the vetted candidates dropped out of the race two days before Friday's election.

Populist former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, one of those barred from running by the Guardian Council of clerics and jurists, said he would not vote, declaring in a video message that "I do not want to have a part in this sin". Raisi's victory was confirmed Saturday when he received the congratulations of the incumbent

and the three other candidates — ultraconservatives Mohsen Rezaei and Amirhossein Qazizadeh Hashemi and reformist Abdolnasser Hemmati.

On election day, pictures of often flag-waving voters dominated state TV coverage, but away from the polling stations some voiced anger at what they saw as a stage-managed election aiming to cement ultraconservative control.

"Whether I vote or not, someone has already been elected," scoffed Tehran shopkeeper Saeed Zareie. "They organise the elections for the media."

— AFP



Participants take part in an illegal rave party in a field in Redon, north-western France, on Saturday.

— AFP

Partygoers, police injured at curfew-busting French rave

Paris, June 19: A 22-year-old man lost his hand and several others were also injured amid clashes as police tried to break up an unauthorised rave party in western France, authorities said Saturday.

The tensions erupted in a field near the Brittany town of Redon on Friday night, just two days before France lifts an overnight virus curfew that's been in place for more than eight months — and has prompted growing frustration among young people. Police repeatedly fired tear gas and charged clusters of violent partygoers who hurled metal balls, gasoline bombs and other projectiles at security forces, according to images of the clashes shared online and the top government

22-year-old lost his hand, according to police who said they believed he had picked up an object that exploded without elaborating.

08 months of overnight virus curfew that has prompted growing frustration among young people, is to be lifted in France but two days prior to that, the unauthorised rave party was held in Redon.

07 hours taken by the police to disperse the crowd. Authorities were still evacuating people from the field even on Saturday morning.

official in the region, prefect Emmanuel Berthier.

Local authorities estimated about 1,500 people took part. Berthier accused the attendees of "extreme"

and "inexcusable" violence. It took police more than seven hours to disperse the crowd, and authorities were still evacuating people from the

field Saturday morning.

Berthier told reporters. He said an investigation is under way into the overnight events, including how the 22-year-old lost his hand.

Regional gendarme chief Pierre Sauvegrain told France-Info radio that the man was believed to have picked up an object that exploded, without elaborating. An underground New Year's Eve rave party in the same area drew at least 2,500 people and led to multiple arrests.

France has been gradually lifting restrictions in recent weeks as infections wane and vaccinations rise. France's curfew, among the strictest and longest in Europe, is set to expire Sunday.

— AP

UN condemns Myanmar coup, calls for arms ban

United Nations, June 19: In a rare move, the UN General Assembly condemned Myanmar's military coup and called for an arms embargo against the country in a resolution demonstrating widespread global opposition to the junta and demanding the restoration of the country's democratic transition.

Supporters had hoped the 193-member world body would approve the resolution unanimously by consensus, but in the vote its members were divided with some, includ-

ing 119 countries voting "yes," Belarus voting "no," and 36 countries abstaining.

The resolution was the result of lengthy negotiations by a so-called Core Group, including the European Union and many Western nations and the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations known as Asean, which includes Myanmar. A UN diplomat said there was an agreement with Asean to seek consensus, but in the vote its members were divided with some, includ-

ing Indonesia and Vietnam, voting yes and others, including Thailand and Laos, abstaining.

The resolution didn't get the overwhelming support its backers wanted. But the action by the General Assembly, while not legally binding, reflects international condemnation of the February 1 coup that ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's party from power and put her under arrest along with many government leaders and politicians.

— AP

Biden for milestone of 300mn shots in 150 days

Washington, June 19: President Joe Biden took a cautious victory lap in his quest to bring the Covid-19 pandemic under control, announcing that 300 million vaccine shots have been administered in the 150 days since he took office.

Biden credited scientists, companies, the American people and his whole-of-government effort on the milestone. The president noted that 65 per cent of adults have received at least one shot, setting the stage for most Americans to have a relatively normal summer as businesses reopen and employers hire.

We're heading into a very different summer compared to last year, the president said. A bright summer. Prayerfully, a summer of joy.

But as Biden marks one milestone, he is in danger of failing to meet another: his target to have 70 per cent of Americans at least partially vaccinated by July Fourth, in a little over two weeks.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 305 million vaccine doses had been administered as of June 10. About 141.6 million people, or 42.6% of the U.S. population, have been fully vaccinated.

The pace of new vaccinations in the US has dropped significantly from a high of nearly 2 million per day about two months ago, jeopardising Biden's ability to hit the 70 per cent mark.

The White House said its whole-of-government approach to the vaccination effort has put the virus in retreat, which in turn has brought Covid-19 cases, hospitalisations and deaths to their lowest levels in more than a year. But Biden noted in his remarks that some communities in states with lower vaccination rates are seeing cases and hospitalisations increase.

The administration is in the middle of a monthlong blitz to combat vaccine hesitancy and the lack of urgency some people feel to get the shots, particularly in the South and Midwest. CDC Director Rochelle Walensky said Friday that she expects the Delta variant of the Coronavirus will become the dominant strain in the US. That strain has become dominant in Britain after it was first detected in India.

During an appearance on *ABC's Good Morning America*, she told Americans who get their shots that you'll be protected against this Delta variant.

As part of the administration's vaccination push, Vice President Kamala Harris travelled to

Moscow, June 19: Russia's capital Moscow on Saturday reported a pandemic high for new Coronavirus cases for the second consecutive day, as the city's hospitals are flooded with new patients due to the Delta variant.

The city registered 9,120 new Coronavirus infections in 24 hours, according to government figures, a second consecutive high topping the previous day's total of 9,056 cases.

Those figures have ballooned from just 3,000 daily just two weeks ago, with Moscow Mayor Sergei

Sobyanin saying Friday that the highly infectious Delta variant first identified in India represents nearly 90 percent of new cases. Having claimed the worst of the pandemic had passed over winter, officials are now scurrying to reintroduce pandemic restrictions and roll out new beds dedicated to Coronavirus patients after months of near-normal life. On Monday, Saint Petersburg announced a tightening of restrictions including no food sales in its Euro 2020 fan zones.

— AFP

S. China airport cancels flights

Beijing, June 19: The airport in China's southern city of Shenzhen cancelled hundreds of flights and tightened entry controls Saturday after a restaurant employee tested positive for the Delta Coronavirus variant.

Anyone entering the facility must show a negative virus test from the last 48 hours, Shenzhen Airport Group said in a statement on its official WeChat social media account. City health officials said a 21-year-old

waitress at Shenzhen Baoan International Airport had been infected with the Delta variant of the virus.

The woman tested positive during a routine test for airport staff conducted Thursday, they said.

Shenzhen, a mainland Chinese city neighbouring Hong Kong, is home to some of Asia's biggest tech companies, including telecoms equipment maker Huawei and gaming giant Tencent.

— AFP

UK HOLDS FIRST FESTIVAL SINCE PANDEMIC START

London, June 19: Thousands of heavy metal fans are camping, singing — and even moshing — in the rain at Britain's first full music festival since the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

The three-day Download Festival, taking place at Donington Park in central England, is one of a series of test events to see whether mass gatherings can resume without triggering outbreaks of Covid-19. About 10,000 fans, a tenth of the festival's pre-pandemic attendance, have tickets to watch more than 40 bands including Frank Carter & The Rattlesnakes and Bullet for My Valentine. Attendees all took Covid-19 tests before the event, and don't have to wear masks.

— AP

RAPE | ALLEGATION

NYT article in 2020 accused adult giant of posting illegal content online

Pressure on Pornhub grows after 34 women sue

Montreal, June 19: Pornhub has been increasingly under the gun as the adult video site was sued this week by 34 women who say they appeared without consent in footage showing rape, sexual abuse, revenge porn or images of them when they were minors.

"This is a case about rape, not pornography," the plaintiffs said in the statement of claim, descri-

bing the website as "likely the largest non-regulatory repository of child pornography in North America and well beyond." Their lawyers accuse MindGeek, the controversial adult entertainment empire that runs Pornhub, of being a "classic criminal enterprise" with a business model based on exploiting non-consensual sexual content.

According to the suit,

which was filed in California, MindGeek owns more than 100 pornographic sites, including Pornhub, ReelTube, Tube8 and YouPorn, and sees some 3.5 billion visits each month.

"I'm hoping (the lawsuit) will motivate Pornhub, and then also the other companies in this industry, to put in safety measures so that this doesn't happen to anybody else," one of the plaintiffs, who

identified herself as Rachel, said on Friday.

The 38-year-old Canadian, who spoke on condition that her real name not be used, recently recounted her years-long struggle to have removed from the internet a video of her being sexually assaulted by her own husband as she lay unconscious, and later posted to Pornhub without her consent.

Although Pornhub took

the video down, it had already spread to countless other sites.

"Today is a monumental day," commented Laila Mickelwait of the Traffickinghub campaign to shut down Pornhub and hold its executive accountable, backed by 2.2 million people who signed an online petition. "This lawsuit makes it clear that Pornhub and its parent company Mindgeek are not just a

tech company that makes a (content) moderation mistakes," the sex trafficking expert said in a video message on Twitter.

The porn giant has faced a growing backlash since the *New York Times* published an article in December 2020 in which Pornhub was accused of posting illegal content online, including child pornography and rape videos — which it has denied.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

A varsity chair in Milkha's memory

Chandigarh: A chair will be established after Milkha Singh's name at the Sports University, Patiala, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh announced here on Saturday. The legendary track and field athlete Milkha Singh died of Covid-19 related complications on Friday night. "We are going to have a Milkha Singh Chair in Sports University, Patiala," the Chief Minister told reporters outside Milkha's Sector 8 residence. Singh, accompanied by state Sports Minister Rana Gurmit Singh Sodhi, had gone to meet Milkha's son Jeev and other family members to offer his condolences. Milkha became the first Indian athlete to win an individual gold in a Commonwealth Games, which led to then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru declaring a national holiday on his request. During his visit to the Milkha residence here, Singh was carrying a picture of the sprinter with Nehru. — *PTI*

Record-breaker's tribute to pioneer

New Delhi: Inspired by Milkha Singh, he broke the very record that the iconic sprinter had against his name for 38 years and as Paramjit Singh mourned his idol's demise, he said he would forever cherish the time spent in awe of and with the "pioneering legend". Singh broke Milkha's 400m national record in 1998, 38 years after the Milkha set it in the Rome Olympics for a fourth place finish. "Milkha Ji was so kind and generous that I was invited for a dinner at his place in Chandigarh after I broke his national record. He told me I should work harder to achieve success at the global level. He himself was a man of self discipline and hard work," Paramjit said on Saturday. — *PTI*

Verstappen pips Hamilton for pole

Le Castellet: Max Verstappen claimed pole on Saturday for the French Grand Prix with Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes alongside the Red Bull driver on the front row to lay the foundations for another gripping instalment in this season's delicately-poised title battle. Valtteri Bottas in the other Mercedes starts on the second row with Verstappen's teammate Sergio Perez. Verstappen leads Hamilton by just four points in the Formula One world championship ahead of the seventh race of the season at the Circuit Paul Ricard on Sunday. Hamilton won from pole the last two races staged at Le Castellet in 2018 and 2019, but Verstappen had approached qualifying as the man to beat after dominating the final two practice sessions. — *AFP*

Stricter regulations for Indian athletes

New Delhi: The Indian athletes and officials travelling for the Tokyo Olympics have been asked by the Japanese government to undergo daily Covid-19 tests for a week prior to their departure and not interact with anyone from another country for three days on arrival, strictures that have left the IOA fuming. Stricter regulations have been put in place for all travellers — including athletes, coaches and support staff — who have resided in 11 countries, including India, where different variants of COVID-19 have been identified, within 14 days of their arrival in Tokyo. "The unfair and discriminatory" rules have drawn sharp criticism from the Indian Olympic Association, which has written to the games organising committee. — *PTI*

Live on TV

CRICKET

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

EURO

Group Stage: Italy vs Wales from 9.30 pm on Sony Ten 2; Switzerland vs Turkey from 9.30 pm on Sony Ten 1

COPA AMERICA

Group Stage: Venezuela vs Ecuador from 2.30 am (Monday); Colombia vs Peru from 5.30 am (Monday) on Sony Ten 2, HD

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MILKHA FLIES AWAY

New Delhi, June 19: The track, to him, was like an open book in which Milkha Singh found the "meaning and purpose of life". And what a life he made for himself. Before his 91-year-old body lost to Covid-19 on Friday after fighting it for a month, Milkha won the kind of battles that not many would have survived, forget about living long enough to tell the world about them.

"Don't worry. I am in good spirits...I am surprised. How could I get this infection?...I hope to get over it soon," Milkha had said before being hospitalised, sounding his usual jovial self, supremely confident of his legendary fitness.

One of independent India's biggest sporting icons was a tormented man but refused to let that come in the way of accomplishments which were unheard of in his era.

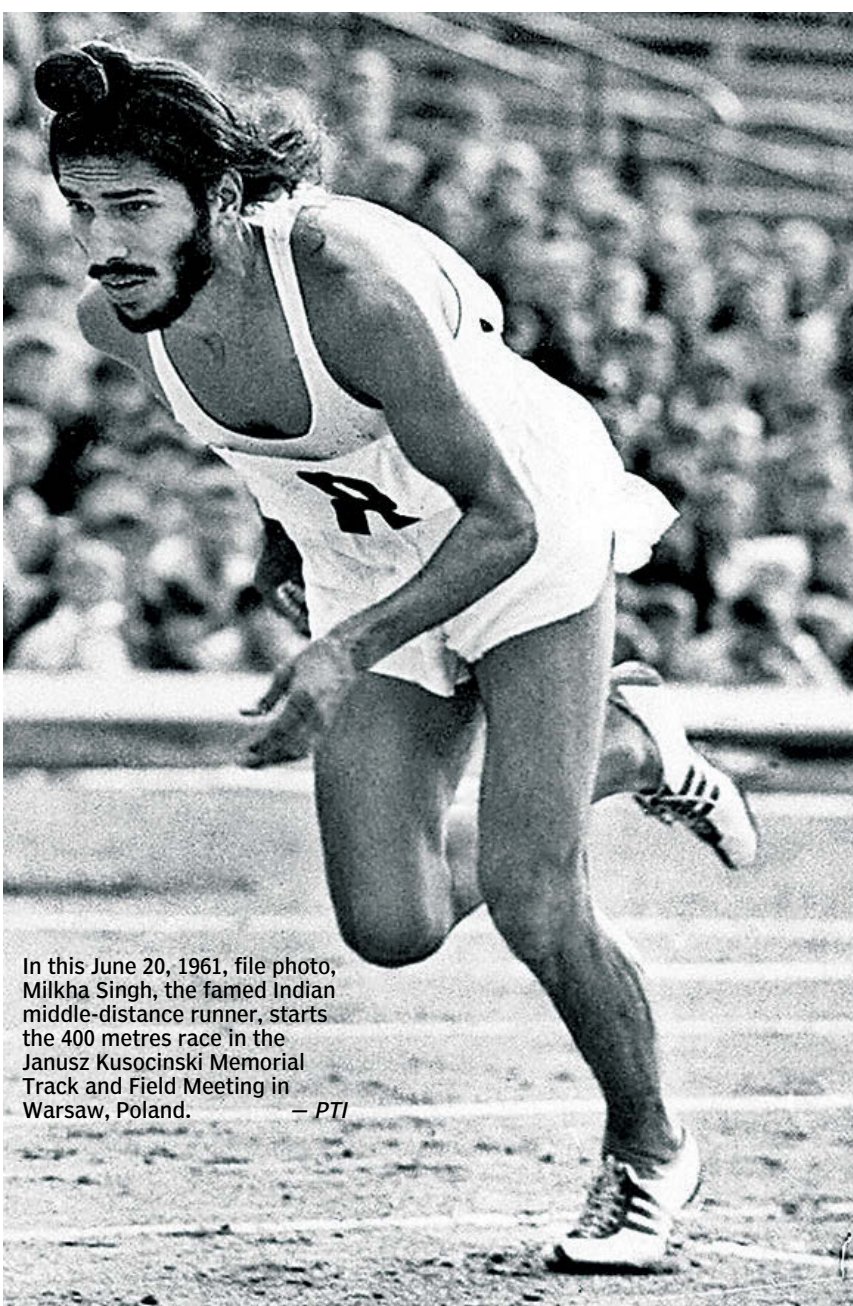
He saw his parents being butchered during partition, indulged in petty crimes to survive in refugee camps of Delhi, went to jail for those and failed three attempts at joining the Army.

Who could have thought a man like that would get the sobriquet of 'The Flying Sikh'? But Milkha earned it and earned it with a master-class on how to be bigger and better than one's circumstances.

He "revered" the track like "the sanctum sanctorum in a temple where the deity resided."

To him running was both his God and beloved as he created his own little fairytale out of what what could have easily been a tale of horrors. To talk of medals, the legendary athlete was a four-time Asian Games gold-medallist and the 1958 Commonwealth Games champion but his greatest performance was a near miss, the fourth place finish in the 400m final of the 1960 Rome Olympics.

His timing at the Italian capital remained the national record for 38 years and he was bestowed the Padma Shri



In this June 20, 1961, file photo, Milkha Singh, the famed Indian middle-distance runner, starts the 400 metres race in the Janusz Kusocinski Memorial Track and Field Meeting in Warsaw, Poland. — *PTI*

in 1959. But more than anything else, Milkha was the one who put Indian athletics on the world map by winning the gold in the then 440 yards race of the 1958 British and Commonwealth Games.

He became the first Indian athlete to win an individual gold in a Commonwealth Games, which led to then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru declaring a national holiday on his request. Milkha put his career record at 77 wins out of 80

races. He also claimed to have bettered the 'Olympics record' of that time in a race in France, but with sketchy records available, it is difficult to confirm just like his actual date of birth which is officially November 20, 1929.

He lost the race of his life in the Rome Olympics, finishing the 400m final in 45.6 seconds, 0.1 second short of the bronze medal mark.

Hard to believe but he had slowed down in a colossal error of judge-

ment as he wanted to preserve himself for the final 150m. He remained tormented by that miss, one of the only two incidents in his life, which he described as unforgettable — the other being the killing of his parents in Pakistan.

"The one medal I had yearned for throughout my career had just slipped through my fingers because of one small error of judgement," Milkha wrote in his autobiography.

— *PTI*

Griezmann rescues draw for France

Budapest, June 19: Antoine Griezmann salvaged a 1-1 draw for France against Hungary in Budapest as the world champions missed the chance to clinch a place in the Euro 2020 last 16 on Saturday.

Hungary threatened to blow Group F wide open when Attila Fiola gave the hosts a shock lead in first-half stoppage time after catching out the France defence.

But Griezmann, the Golden Boot winner at Euro 2016, equalised on 66 minutes as an unconvincing France avoided a first competitive defeat since June 2019.

"It's a point, it's not what we were hoping for, but given the context we'll take it all the same," France coach Didier Deschamps told *TF1*.

"After a first half in

which we should have led, we found ourselves trailing after their only chance.

"Obviously playing in front of their fans and that support, it gave them strength."

Deschamps' side top the section with four points, one above reigning champions Portugal who play Germany in Munich later. Hungary earned their first point and the Germans are bottom after losing to France in their opener.

"This is one of the best days of my life, even the best," said Fiola.

"We got a great result, I am proud of the team, and the fans who created an amazing atmosphere today, we showed that we could play braver, more attacking football than versus Portugal, it's been an incredible day."

EURO RESULTS

Hungary (Attila Fiola 47)	1
France (Antoine Griezmann 66)	1
Croatia (Ivan Perisic 47)	1
Czech Republic (Patrik Schick 37)	1
England	0
Scotland	0

France stay in Budapest for their final game against Portugal, while Hungary travel to Munich to take on Germany, still hoping to qualify for the knockout phase for a second straight tournament.

Contending with stifling temperatures in excess of 30 degrees Celsius (86 degrees Fahrenheit) and a

crowd approaching 60,000 at the Puskas Arena, the only Euro 2020 venue without capacity restrictions due to Covid-19, France controlled much of the first half.

Having lived up to their billing as tournament favourites in a 1-0 win over Germany, France dominated Hungary early on, creating numerous chances against a side that held out for 84 minutes before losing 3-0 to Portugal.

Peter Gulacsi clawed away Karim Benzema's low drive, reacting sharply to keep out Griezmann's follow-up, despite the Barcelona star being flagged for offside.

ENGLAND, SCOTLAND IN GOALLESS DRAW

England missed a chance to book their place in the Last 16 at Euro 2020 as

Scotland kept their own hopes alive with a well deserved 0-0 draw on Friday.

Gareth Southgate's side would have been guaranteed to advance from Group 'D' with a win over their old rivals at Wembley.

But lethargic England managed just one shot on target and Scotland's combative display could easily have earned all three points. Despite a flop that saw them booted off at full-time, England have four points and will be certain of qualifying if they avoid defeat by the Czech Republic in their last group game on Tuesday.

Scotland, in their first major tournament since the 1998 World Cup, looked far more composed than in their opening 2-0 loss to the Czech Republic.

— *AFP*

SNEH'S VALIANT FIFTY EARNS INDIA WOMEN FIGHTING DRAW

Bristol, June 19: The one-off women's Test between India and England ended in a draw on the final day here on Saturday, with the visitors defying the home side attack to score 344 for 8 in their second innings after following-on.

India were forced to follow-on on Friday after conceding a 165-run first innings lead to England. But the visitors recovered from a middle-order batting collapse in their second innings to defy the home side bowlers on a sluggish pitch on the fourth and final day.

No. 8 batter Sneha Rana top-scored in the second innings with 80 not out off 154 balls. Rana and number 10 Taniya Bhatia (44 not out) shared 144 runs for the unbroken ninth

Usha remembers defining moment

Chennai, June 19: "You must compete in international meets abroad to improve," was the piece of advice PT Usha received from Milkha Singh when she met him way back in 1982 as she remembers the iconic athlete, who died on Friday.

Herself a track and field legend, Usha said she met Milkha Singh during an international competition in Korea.

"I met Milkha ji for the first time in 1982 and it was a memorable one. He advised me to focus on participating in international meets to improve my level," Usha said.

"Go and run outside the country, only then you can improve and compete with the foreigners, he would insist," she added.

The 'Payyoli Express' said it was her coach O M Nambiar, who introduced her to Milkha and she never missed an opportunity to learn the tricks of the trade from him.

"Ever since I got introduced to Milkha ji through my coach, I always used to ask him a lot of questions. And, he was always ready to answer them. He offered suggestions and spoke in an inspiring manner," she said.

Usha said Milkha Singh, who died of Covid-19 complications after battling hard for a month, would remain in the hearts of millions of Indians.

"I was shocked after hearing the news of Milkha Singh's death. He was a great athlete...An inspiring personality. He will continue to inspire many and will remain in the hearts of millions of Indian people," the 56-year said.

"He used to call me PT. He was a very nice person and whenever I met him he used to enquire about my son, husband. He used to ask about my academy and the trainees," she added.

"I was travelling from Calicut to Patiala and was tired. I got several calls and

I met Milkha ji for the first time in 1982 and it was a memorable one. He advised me to focus on participating in international meets to improve my level. Go and run outside the country, only then you can improve and compete with the foreigners, he would insist

— **P.T. USHA**



A file photo of P.T. Usha and Milkha Singh.

then came to know that Milkha Singh had passed away. I felt very bad because we have lost Milkha ji."

Speaking about his performance in the 1960 Rome Olympics, where the Flying Sikh missed out on a bronze, Usha said it showed that an athlete could shine despite not having the best of facilities.

"What a performance it was in the Rome Olympics. He showed what could be achieved with sheer willpower and dedication. He was a trailblazer."

Usha herself missed out on a medal by a whisker in the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984 in the 400 metres hurdles event. She too became the toast of the nation by winning several medals at the Asian Games and Asian championships.

Usha said Milkha always told the aspiring athletes that there was no substitute for hard work. — *PTI*

ARGENTINA BOSS OVER URUGUAY IN COPA AMERICA

Brasilia, June 19: Guido Rodriguez scored the only goal of the game as Argentina edged past fierce local rivals Uruguay in a disappointing Copa America clash on Friday.

The victory sent Argentina joint top of Group 'A' with Chile on four points while Uruguay remain without a point. These two sides have played each other more times than any other local rivals and played the first ever international match to be held outside the United Kingdom. They have won the Copa 29 times between them.

— *AFP*

Results: Argentina 1 (Guido Rodriguez 13) bt Uruguay 0; Chile 1 (Ben Brereton 10) bt Bolivia 0.

WHAT THEY SAID



In the passing away of Shri Milkha Singh Ji, we have lost a colossal sportsperson, who captured the nation's imagination and had a special place in the hearts of countless Indians.

— **NARENDRA MODI**
Prime Minister

India has lost its star. Milkha Singh Ji has left us but he will continue to inspire every Indian to shine for India. My deepest condolences to the family.

— **KIREN RIJJU**
sports minister

Rest in Peace our very own 'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh ji. Your demise has left a deep void in every Indian's heart today, but you shall keep inspiring several generations to come.

— **SACHIN TENDULKAR**
cricket legend

A huge loss for the sport of athletics today. Rest well #MilkhaSingh ji.

— **ANJU BOBBY GEORGE**
Indian athlete

Saddened to hear about the passing away of the great Milkha Singh ji. May god give strength to his family to overcome this irreparable loss.

— **ABHINAV BINDRA**
ace shooter

We lost a Gem. He will always remain as an inspiration for every Indian. May his soul Rest in peace.

— **NEERAJ CHOPRA**
star javelin throwers

After winning World Championship U20 title and medal in Asian Games, I still remember a call from #MilkhaSingh sir that "Hima just keep on working hard, you have ample time and you can win a Gold medal for our country at a global level. I will try to fulfill your dream sir."

— **HIMA DAS**
Indian sprinter

A legacy that inspired a whole nation to aim for excellence. To never give up and chase your dreams. Rest in Peace Milkha Singh ji. You will never be forgotten.

— **VIRAT KOHLI**
India cricket captain

Had the honour of meeting you and you blessed me so many times. The kindest and warmest Palms up together RIP Milkha Singh sir. The world will miss a legend like you

— **SANIA MIRZA**
tennis star

Really sad about the demise of our national hero and a legend Shri Milkha Singh ji. My heart-felt condolences to the bereaved family. RIP #MilkhaSingh

— **M. C. MARY KOM**
boxing great

Extremely saddened by this news...RIP, India's one of the greatest sportsmen. You have made young Indians dream of becoming an athlete...Had the privilege of knowing you so closely.

— **SOURAV GANGULY**
BCCI chief

We may not have seen you compete, but every time we ran fast as kids, we ran 'like Milkha Singh'. And for me, that will always be the legend you leave behind. You didn't just run, you inspired. Rest in peace, sir. #MilkhaSingh

— **SUNIL CHHETRI**
India football captain

Dearest Milkha ji, A part of me is still refusing to accept that you are no more. Maybe it's the stubborn side I inherited from you... the side that when it sets its mind on something, just never gives up.

— **FARHAN AKHTAR**
Indian actor who essayed Milkha Singh in *Bhaag Milkha Bhaag*

In grief... Milkha Singh passes away...The pride of India... A great athlete... A greater human.

— **AMITABH BACCHAN**
Bollywood superstar

Warm and welcoming, you made our first meeting so special. I have been inspired by your excellence, touched by your humility, influenced by your contribution to our country Sending love and prayers to the family. #MilkhaSingh

— **PRIYANKA CHOPRA**
Indian actor

Kohli keeps Kiwis at bay

Southampton, June 19: Virat Kohli led India's resolute batting effort against a high quality New Zealand attack in testing conditions before bad light brought an anticlimatic end to day two of the World Test Championship final here on Saturday.

Rohit Sharma (34 off 68) and Shubman Gill (28 off 64), opening for the first time in England, showed remarkable application against the moving ball to share a 62-run stand before Kohli (44 not out off 124) came into his own with a steely knock to take India to 146 for three at stumps on a start-stop second day.

The skipper got good support from Ajinkya Rahane (29 not out off 79) in the final session where bad light stopped play



Virat Kohli

twice before umpires called it a day. A total of 64.4 overs could be bowled on Saturday including only 9.1 in the final session. The opening day

was washed out.

As expected, Kohli was ready for the challenge posed by an all seam attack on an overcast day. He played late and close to his body, was happy to leave balls outside the off stump and cashed in on the slightest of scoring opportunities.

His only boundary, a sublime cover drive off Neil Wagner, came before lunch but kept the scoreboard ticking with twos and threes.

Kohli's deputy Rahane did not start convincingly but his feet movement

and shot selection got better as his innings progressed. Three of his four boundaries came post tea.

India, who had reached 69 for two at lunch, was only able to add 51 runs in the afternoon with the loss of Cheteshwar

Pujara (8 off 54).

Compared to the morning session, New Zealand's all pace attack showed much more discipline.

With the Dukes ball moving around, Kohli paid due respect to the bowlers including Colin de Grandhomme, who bowled three successive maidens to the India skipper. With all the fast bowlers making the ball talk, Kohli was patience personified but was quick to pick up runs when bowled into the pads.

— *PTI*

Brief scores: India 146 for 3 in 64.4 overs (Virat Kohli 44 (batting), Ajinkya Rahane 29 (batting), Rohit Sharma 34, Trent Boult 1/32, Kyle Jamieson 1/14, Neil Wagner 1/28) vs New Zealand.