

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
VISAKHAPATNAM | SUNDAY | 20 JUNE 2021

WEATHER



Max: 32.6°C
Min: 28.2°C
RH: 74%
Rainfall: Trace

Forecast: Drizzle.
Max/Min temp.
32/28 °C

ASTROGUIDE

Plava: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Shuddha Dasami
till 4.17 pm
Star: Chitta till 6.45 pm
Variyam: 11.52 pm to 1.20 am
(Monday)
Durmuhurtam: 5.05 pm to
5.57 pm
Rahukalam: 4.30 pm to 6 pm
HIJRI CALENDAR
Zeeqad 8,1442 AH
PRAYERS (ROYAL MOSQUE)
Fajar: 5.05 am
Zohar: 1.30 pm
Asar: 5.00 pm
Maghrib: 6.19 pm
Isha: 8.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.34 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.23 AM
MOONSET TODAY 2.01 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 01.19 AM

COUNTER POINT



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

SHORT TAKES

Book FIR for doc assaults: MHA

New Delhi: The Centre 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.

Ganga, Bhagirathi cross danger level

Dehradun: Ganga and Bhagirathi rivers in Uttarakhand crossed the danger mark on Saturday following three days of incessant rains in the hills prompting authorities to sound an alert and evacuate villages along their banks. The Ganga exceeded danger level in Haridwar and Rishikesh while Bhagirathi crossed it at Devprayag in Tehri district.

Tech to translate in real time

New Delhi: The government is working on a technology that can translate in real time various vernacular Indian languages to enable exchange of communications between two persons not speaking the same language, a top official in the Ministry of Electronics and IT said on Saturday. This ambitious language translation project, with a timeline of 5-7 years, is being developed using artificial intelligence and modern technologies to end the language barrier in the country.

3rd wave in 6-8 weeks: AIIMS

New Delhi: If Covid-appropriate behaviour is not followed and crowding not prevented, the next wave of the viral infection can strike the country in the next six to eight weeks, AIIMS director Randeep Guleria warned on Saturday. Until a sizeable number of the population are vaccinated, Covid-appropriate behaviour needs to be followed aggressively, he said and stressed on the need for stricter surveillance and area-specific lockdowns in case of a significant surge.



WORLD | 5

Raisi wins Iran presidential vote

deccanchronicle.com, facebook.com/deccannews, twitter.com/deccanchronicle

2 YSRC leaders hacked to death in faction fight

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, JUNE 19

Faction feud broke out in the district at Aravedu village in Yellanur mandal as two persons were brutally killed by rivals in connection with land dispute in the village. Both groups belong to YSRC and are close aides of Tadipatri MLA K. Pedda Reddy. Yellanur police said Jitta Narayanappa and Jitta Rajagopal of Aravedu village in Yellanur mandal had agricultural land in their possession for the past few decades.

Nagesh of Aravedu village encroached the land and dug a borewell in the disputed land four months ago. Angered by this Narayanappa and his

brother filled up the borewell with stones and made it defunct. It led to a dispute between the two groups who approached Yellanur police. Police hammered a compromise on Saturday morning after issuing a warning to both groups.

While Narayanappa, 34, and his brother Rajagopal, 50, were on the way to village from Yellanur on a motorcycle, rivals U. Nagesh along with close aides Mahadev and Nagaraju waylaid them near a hillock between Achyutapuram and Vasapuram villages. They rammed their vehicle into the motorcycle attacked them with hard stones. Both brothers died on the spot.

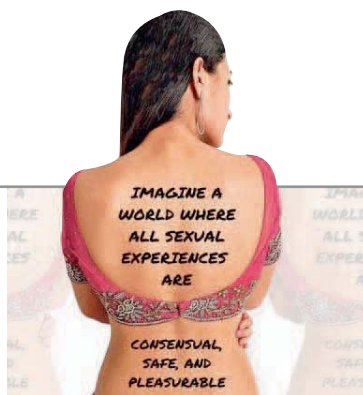


SPORTS | 8

Griezmann rescues France against Hungary

TABLOID

Influencers the next educators



Vol. 37 No. 26 Established 1938 | 16 PAGES | ₹6.00

State's mega vax drive to cover 8 lakh today

Health department issues orders to all district collectors

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 19

The AP government will conduct a mega Covid-19 vaccination programme on Sunday to administer 8 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses in a single day. Earlier, the state had created a new record by administering 6 lakh Covid-19 vaccine doses in one day for two times, and now it is aiming at 8 lakh doses in a day to create another record.

The state medical and health department issued orders to the Collectors of all districts, who made all arrangements accordingly.

According to reports, as many as 1,22,83,479 Corona vaccine doses have been administered to people in 13 districts of the state till date, under which the vaccine was administered to 5,29,000 women bearing children below five years of age. Further, as many as



Preparations are in full swing for the mega vaccination drive at a hospital in Vijayawada on Saturday. — DC

26,41,739 people got two doses in the state. First and second dose vaccines would be administered to people above 45 years of age and further to women

having children of below five years on Sunday.

In Krishna district, the mega Covid-19 vaccination programme will be carried out at 260 centres on

Sunday. Krishna District Collector J. Nivas said that the officials made arrangements for the administration of one lakh vaccine doses to people from 7 am to 6 pm in all the health centres besides 260 special vaccination centres at various places in the district. He said people above 45 years of age and women with children below five years of age can get vaccine shot at the vaccination centres in the district.

He directed medical officers, municipal commissioners, MPDOs and Tahsildars to effectively coordinate and conduct the drive and make it a success.

He said that village and ward volunteers, ASHA workers, Anganwadi workers, VROs should inform people above 45 years of age and mothers with children below 5 years of age in advance to get them vaccinated.

Eamcet becomes Eapcet, to be held from Aug. 19

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 19

The Eamcet is becoming history in Andhra Pradesh as the name of the popular common entrance test for engineering, agriculture and medicine is changing to the Engineering, Agriculture and Pharmacy Common Entrance Test (Eapcet).

The AP government decided to conduct Eapcet from August 19 to 25. Minister for education Adimulapu Suresh said the notification would be released on June 24.

Submission of online applications without a late fee is from June 26 to July 25. Online applications can be submitted with a late fee of ₹500 from July 26 to August 5. Thereafter, applications can be submitted till August 10, with a fee of ₹1,000. A late fee of ₹5,000 will be charged for applications filed between August 11 and August 15. Applications would be accepted with Rs 10,000 fee up to August 18.

All other common entrance tests like ECET (Engineering Common Entrance Test, lateral

entry for diploma holders), ICET (Integrated Common Entrance Test for MBA/MCA), PGECET (Post Graduate Engineering Common Entrance Test for M Tech / M Pharma), Lawcet (Law Common Entrance Test for three- and five-year law courses and for PG Law), EdCET (Education Common Entrance Test for Bed) and PECET (Physical Education Common Entrance Test for BPED/UG DPED) are proposed to be conducted in the first half of September.

EX-BUREAUCRAT CLOSE TO PM IS BJP VICE-PREZ IN U.P.

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 19

Former bureaucrat A.K. Sharma, considered close to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was appointed as the vice-president of BJP's Uttar Pradesh's unit after speculations of him being inducted in the state Cabinet have been doing the round in the party's state unit for the past couple of weeks.

The former IAS officer, who joined the BJP in January and is an MLC, is known for delivering time-bound results.

TS to build new Krishna projects to counter AP

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, JUNE 19

The Telangana state Cabinet approved the construction of new irrigation projects over the Krishna river to lift water to safeguard the interests of Telangana and to counter the 'illegal projects' undertaken by the Andhra Pradesh government.

The Cabinet expressed severe anger over the AP government going ahead with the construction of Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme (RLIS) to divert Srisailem water

over the Krishna and the right canal of Rajolibanda Diversion Scheme (RDS) over the Tungabhadra

termining both as 'illegal projects' being undertaken without any approvals of regulatory bodies concerned. It also objected to the Centre's inaction in ensuring a justifiable share of Krishna water to Telangana even after the formation of state seven years ago. It said though the Telangana government had withdrawn case from the Supreme Court on Krishna water sharing complying with the

Centre's assurance that it would reallocate Krishna water to AP and TS, nothing happened so far.

Against this backdrop, the Cabinet has decided to take up a few projects to lift Krishna water to ensure justifiable share to TS. It was decided to construct a project at Alam-pur to divert 60 to 70 tmc through pipelines and fulfil needs of Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation project ayacut needs.

■ Page 2: TS to fight AP's projects

MEMORY | TRACKS

'Flying Sikh' trained around EME Centre, running up Ammuguda hill with stone-filled bag

Sprinter Milkha was made in Secunderabad

MOSES KONDETY | DC
HYDERABAD, JUNE 19

Milkha Singh made waves at the 1960 Olympics in Rome, but his baby steps as a sprinter were taken here in Secunderabad, where he was recruited in the Corps of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (EME) of the Army back in 1952. The 'Flying Sikh' died of Covid complications late on Friday night. He was 91. He trained in and around the EME Centre area, building his strength and stamina by taking up many an uphill task — he would

run up the Ammuguda hill carrying a stone-filled bag and also run alongside a train, which ran on the then metre gauge track between Bolaram and Ammuguda.

"The driver of a particular train used to encourage and motivate me on it. It was kind of a gimmick and I could run for a longer distance," Milkha recalled in interviews later. He has always credited the Army, EME and Secunderabad Cantonment for his sporting success. "Had I not joined the Army I would not have worked so hard,"

Milkha said. Fittingly, a colony in the EME Centre is named after him, as also the Stadium inside the EME Centre where he trained. While inaugurating the Milkha Singh Stadium in 2014, the legend had got emotional, kissed the turf and said it was like a gurudwara to him.

Secunderabad, where Milkha lived from 1952 to 1960 and prepared for the 1960 Olympics at which he missed the 400 metres bronze medal by a whisker, was always special to him. "Whenever he came across athletes from Secunde-

rabad/Hyderabad, he would develop an instant affinity. 'Mai Secunderabad ka rice khane ki baad running start kiya' (I have started running after eating rice in Secunderabad) he once told me in jest. He would also talk about his many memories here," Prabhakara Rao Mulagala, veteran long distance runner from the city, told this newspaper.

"We should also remember Milkha used to run on cinder tracks, not on the present synthetic ones that give athletes the advantage of up to a second. He was

the first to run the 400m under 46 seconds, at a meet in Oslo (Norway) a fortnight or so before the Rome Olympics, where he was unfortunate to finish fourth, 0.1 second behind Malcolm Spence of South Africa. Later, South Africa was banned from sport for 36 years because of apartheid... that bronze could've belonged to Milkha, who competed against the world's best," added Prabhakara, who has won 300-plus gold medals at national and international races, and at 69 still competes in races.



The Milkha Singh Colony at EME Centre in Secunderabad. — MOSES KONDETY

SHORT TAKES

CM condoles death of Milkha Singh

Vijayawada: Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy expressed grief over the passing away of Milkha Singh, the Sprint King who cantered like a 'Flying Sikh' to take the Indian glory to Olympic heights. Milkha Singh was an inspiration to many young athletes and would continue to remain so, the Chief Minister said and conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family members.

Advocates panel appointed in AP HC

Vijayawada: The Union Ministry of Law and Justice has issued orders, appointing a five-member advocates panel to hear arguments on behalf of the Central government in the Andhra Pradesh High Court on Saturday. The advocates in the five member panel are Jupudi Venkata Krishna Kumar, Datla Divya, Venna Hemanth Kumar, J.V.M.V Prasad and Kiluru Krishnabhushan Chowdary. The advocates would act on behalf of the Central government in the AP High Court on legal matters of all the departments of the Central government except the Income Tax and Railways. This is the first advocates panel appointed by the Central government after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh.

DIFFERENTLY ABLED TO GET 1,000 JOBS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 19

More than thousand government jobs will be filled with the differently abled candidates in various government departments in the state. Director (welfare of the differently abled) Kritika Shukla said that Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy released the job calendar and according to it the vacancies would be filled in various departments with differently abled candidates.

The director said that 668 backlog posts were identified in medical and health, schools, colleges, backward class welfare departments and steps were on to fill the vacancies as prescribed in the job calendar. She explained that of these vacancies, 62 would be filled through APPSC, 239 by heads of departments, 178 vacancies through DSC and 189 through teachers' DSC notification.

Kritika Shukla appealed to the eligible candidates in the state to make good use of this opportunity to get government jobs.

SP TRANSFERRED TO RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS WING

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 19

Superintendent of Police, Nellore Bhaskar Bhushan was transferred on Friday.

AP government has placed the services of Bhaskar Bhushan, Superintendent of Police, Nellore at the disposal of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, New Delhi.

He is being appointed to the post of Deputy Secretary in the Class-I Executive Cadre of the Cabinet Secretariat (Research & Analysis Wing) on deputation basis for a period of four years.

A technocrat from prestigious IIT Kharagpur, Bhaskar Bhushan took charge as SP of Nellore in December 2019.

The 2009 batch IPS officer was instrumental in securing ISO (International Organisation for Standardisation) Certification for the District Police Office in Nellore.

MAHATMA VISITED UNDI VILLAGE

From page 1

Central Film Sensor Board Member D.V. Bala Subrahmanyam said the statues are installed by Sri Veda Vignana Parishad and Sri Sena Sakthi Peetham. Raghupathi will address the people after unveiling the statues.

Undi is a historic village as Mahatma Gandhi visited the village in 1929 and addressed the farmers at the present sub-registrar office during the freedom movement.

Bountiful catch



Fishermen retrieve fish from their nets on their arrival at the fishing harbor in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

— K. MURALI KRISHNA

Covid brings realty to a grinding halt

No takers for around 10,000 apartments, 500 complexes

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 19

The lockdown-induced slump has dealt a grievous blow to the realty sector in AP state. As the finances of the people were in a dire state, the long-drawn-out market inactivity has shattered the dreams of real estate businessmen and prevented further development. The real estate which was already facing a slump due to the Three Capitals decision was mired in a neck-deep crisis due to the pandemic crisis.

The real estate business was on the top following the announcement of Amaravati as the capital in 2015. A frenetic pace of activity was witnessed till 2019 when the announcement of Three Capitals was made by Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy. The announcement put paid the ambitious dreams of the sector in the capital region. Later, even the plans of Three Capitals received a rude shock with a stay by the courts.

The Corona crisis

● **THE THREAT** of third wave is dangling like a Damocles' sword on the already hard-hit construction sector and allied fields. The construction field is the only unorganised sector contributing about 12 per cent employment after the agriculture sector in the country.

● **BUILDER P.** Naresh said that construction material costs increased abnormally during the past two years which created hurdles for the businessmen to complete the ongoing works or take up new ventures.

● **REAL ESTATE** agents say, thousands of apartments and commercial complexes are lying vacant in AP.

slashed incomes, closed many businesses and trades and plucked jobs and further caused the unexpected and costly Covid-19 treatment burden on the fragile finances of the people. This forced most of the people to defer land and house purchasing activity, leading to a huge slump in the sector for the past 14 months.

Further, the threat of third wave is dangling like a Damocles' sword on the already hard-hit construction sector and allied fields. The construction field is the only unorganised sector contributing about 12 per cent employment after the agriculture sector in the country. It

further contributes 8 to 10 per cent of the nations' GDP with 25 various fields connected to the construction field directly and 240 industries indirectly.

According to the representatives of real estate companies, thousands of apartments and commercial complexes are lying vacant in AP due to the slump as a result of the Corona crisis. Further, banks and other financial institutions are wary of extending loans to buyers at this stage. The realtors expect revival to happen only the Corona was reined in the country.

CREDAI AP chairman (media affairs) R.V. Swamy said the construc-

tion field had been totally in slump for the last one-and-a-half years. He explained that first it was badly affected due to the Three Capitals announcement and next due to the pandemic Corona crisis. He said nearly 10,000 apartments and 500 commercial structures were ready to occupy, but there were no takers for them. He urged that banks come forward to offer liberal loans to consumers so as to boost the sector. He sought that the government reduce the stamp duty from 7 per cent to 3 per cent. The registration charges are also higher than those in neighbouring states.

Builder P. Naresh said that construction material costs increased abnormally during the past two years which created hurdles for the businessmen to complete the ongoing works or take up new ventures. He stated that first there was sand problem and before it was resolved the Three Capitals issue raged. And then came the Covid brought the realty activity to a grinding halt.

Maritime Board gets land for Ramayapatnam Port

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, JUNE 19

Arrangements are being made to hand over 377.57 acres of land at Chevuru and Ravuru villages in Prakasam district to the AP Maritime Board for speeding up construction of the proposed port at Ramayapatnam. Officials have acquired 113.45 acres of patta land, 43.14 acres of assigned land and 220.98 acres of dotted lands for the port.

In all, 3,700 acres of land is being procured for the Ramayapatnam Port. The 377 acres already acquired are part of 802 acres identified for acquisition in the first phase of the port.

● **OFFICIALS HAVE** acquired 113.45 acres of patta land, 43.14 acres of assigned land and 220.98 acres of dotted lands for the port.

● **IN ALL, 3,700 acres of land is being procured for the Ramayapatnam Port.**

With this, district administration has utilised ₹55.36 crore released by the state government for land acquisition.

District Collector Pravin Kumar said plans are being drafted to construct a colony for rehabilitating 563 families comprising 775 people displaced due to the port project. For the purpose, revenue officials

have been asked to secure permission from Forest Department to acquire 44 acres of its land.

While reviewing progress of various projects, the collector underlined the need to pay special attention for protecting water resources in the district because rivers, such as Gundlakamma, Paleru, Moosi and Manneru, are dependent only on rains.

He pointed out that 1.85 lakh acres in 25 mandals of the district are irrigated using water from Nagarjuna Sagar Right Canal. Similarly, 952 medium and small tanks are utilised to cultivate another 1.35 lakh acres.

MONEY | TROUBLES TTD unable to dispose ₹49.7 crore demonetised notes

TTD stuck with huge invalid money

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 19

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) seems unable to wriggle out of a bizarre situation of being saddled with demonetised currency worth ₹49.7 crore, which has been piled up in its coffers since 2016.

TTD Chairman Y.V. Subba Reddy has met Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman nearly four times till now and sought her help to resolve the issue. Despite repeated requests, the ministry neither resolved the issue nor turned down the request of TTD.

In a representation to Sitharaman in September last year, Subba Reddy underlined that TTD had stopped accepting the demonetised currency of ₹500 and ₹1,000 denomination at its counters, duly following the guidelines of the RBI and the Central government, post demonetisation announcement on November 8, 2016.

Many devotees, however, continued to extend offerings in the hundi in demonetised currency, even after the period for exchanging such currency notes ended. Several banks with which TTD has been maintaining its

accounts and parked thousands of crores of corpus funds also stopped accepting the demonetised currency from the TTD.

As a result, ₹49.7 crore demonetised currency comprising 6.34 lakh ₹500 notes and 1.8 lakh ₹1,000 notes piled up in TTD lockers since 2016. Despite being a semi-government institution, the TTD, which comes under the purview of the state government, has not been given an opportunity to get the demonetised currency stockpile exchanged.

Placing all these facts, the TTD chairman, at that time, appealed to the

YSRC cleared ₹4K crore farm dues left by TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 19

YSR Congress claimed to have ₹4,000 crore debts left behind by Telugu Desam to farmers, and denied allegations of TD that no payments were made to paddy farmers since last Rabi.

Minister for civil supplies Kodali Venkateswara Rao alias Nani that CM had paid ₹4,000 cr towards the dues kept pending by the TD government to farmers within 3 months of coming to power in 2019.

Minister for civil supplies Kodali Venkateswara Rao alias Nani that CM had paid ₹4,000 crore towards the dues kept pending by the TD government to farmers within three months of coming to power in 2019. He mentioned that both the state and the Centre procured 28 lakh metric tonnes of paddy

● **MINISTER FOR** civil supplies Kodali Venkateswara Rao alias Nani that CM had paid ₹4,000 cr towards the dues kept pending by the TD government to farmers within 3 months of coming to power in 2019.

and paid ₹1,637 crore to farmers by the time Naidu wrote a letter to the Chief Minister. He mentioned that following directions from the Chief Minister, the government is paying within 21 days of crop procurement and as on date only ₹1,619 crore needed to be paid.

Minister Nani said that the Centre has to release the pending arrears of about ₹3,229 crore to the state, and although there has been a delay in clearing those dues, the government has been paying the farmers from the state treasury. He said that Naidu did not even know the difference between bran and grain and is afraid of writing a letter to the Centre, fearing about his cases. He slammed Naidu for betraying one crore

farmer community by promising to waive ₹85,000 crore farm loans during 2014 elections and not even clearing 20 per cent of the promised amount in his five-year rule.

Meanwhile, the minister also rebuked Nara Lokesh's allegations against the CM being vindictive towards the opposition and said that he was screaming like a madman confined to his house and Zoom app. He warned Lokesh to keep mouth under control while levelling charges against or addressing the Chief Minister. He stated that many YSRC leaders were assassinated during the TD regime and it was not reasonable to attribute such incidents in the villages to the government.

Minister Nani said that it was Naidu who backstabbed his father-in-law N. T. Rama Rao to gain power and the same person brought the law to prevent the CBI from entering the state just to safeguard himself. He questioned Naidu whether any CBI inquiry was ordered during the 14 years of his ruling.

TD PADAYATRA FOR RABI DUES TO FARMERS

DC CORRESPONDENT
KAKINADA, JUNE 19

Telugu Desam party took out a padayatra here on Sunday, from the TD district office to the collectorate, demanding that the government clear the paddy arrears to farmers immediately.

The TD activists led by former Deputy Chief Minister Nimmakayala Chenna Rajappa, the Peddapuram MLA, took out the agitation on Sunday.

Rajappa said the state government owed nearly ₹4,000 crore to the farmers in the state including ₹1,000 crore in East Godavari district. He said the government announced that 48 lakh tonnes of paddy would be procured, but it could procure only 27.87 lakh tonnes and the farmers sold their crop at ₹1,100 to ₹1,100 per bag to mediators due to the negligence of the government.

He said the government should take criminal action against the mediators and the rice millers who cheated the farmers by not paying minimum support price to them properly. Due to the floods and rains, each farmer in the state incurred a loss of ₹20,000 to ₹25,000 per acre and in the absence of MSP, each farmer incurred a loss of ₹12,000. Anaparti former MLA Nallamilli Ramakrishna Reddy, Kakinada Mayor Sunkara Pavani and others were present.

● **RAJAPPA SAID** the AP govt owed nearly ₹4,000 cr to the farmers in the state including ₹1,000 cr in East Godavari.

GOPINATH DID HIS SCHOOLING IN ARILOVA

From page 1

Gopinath did his schooling in Arilova and passed his intermediate from a private junior college in the same area and later joined an academy to qualify for the defence services. When nothing clicked, he went for higher studies and did his post graduation in mathematics and MBA.

"I failed the Service Selection Board test nine times during the last four years. Finally, I succeeded last year and passed out today. It was my father who inspired me to do something meaningful in life," Gopinath told this correspondent soon after the parade on Saturday.

He said his father, unlike others in his profession, maintained calm and always thought about him and his little sister.

Land worth ₹50k cr in Vizag gobbled up, alleges CPM

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 19

The district unit of CPM came down heavily on the government for giving political colour to all the land grabbings in the district.

Addressing a press conference in Visakhapatnam, senior leader of CPM and State president of CITU Ch. Narsinga Rao said around ₹50,000 crore worth government land was grabbed by influential persons having political connections and the government was dragging its feet to free from their clutches, but it is politicising the issue. He

demanding that the land be seized and distributed to the poor. He said lands were grabbed in 11 mandals in Visakhapatnam district where the prices have been increasing every day. They include Visakhapatnam rural and urban, Bheemli, Padmanabham, Sabbaram, Pendurthi, Anakapalle, Paravada, and Gajuwaka.

The SIT investigation found that 43 NoCs were given for 250 acres of land and yet the government made no effort to cancel the NoC and take back the land, he said.

Blaming the ruling government, he said it was the responsibility of the present government to make public the two reports of the SIT and initiate action accordingly.

The veteran Left leader suspected that since leaders of both the ruling and opposition parties were involved in the land grabbing, the reports of two SITs were not seeing the light of the day.

He suggested that instead of selling or mortgaging the present property, the government should seize the grabbed land and utilise them for development.

2-yr-old murder case solved

Visakhapatnam: The Vizianagaram police on Saturday solved the mystery behind the murder of a 70-year-old woman nearly after two years after the incident. The police arrested a 26-year-old Sheik Imam, a native of Salur and said it was a case of murder for gain.

Fleet awards function at ENC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 19

Fleet Awards Function 2021 was held to celebrate the operational achievements of the Eastern Fleet during the last year, on Saturday.

The gathering observed with Covid-19 protocol and marked the culmination of the Operational Cycle of the Eastern Fleet and recognises accomplishments of the 'Sword Arm' of the Eastern Naval Command. Vice

Admiral Ajendra Bahadur Singh, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief ENC was the chief guest at the event hosted by Rear Admiral Tarun Sobti, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet.

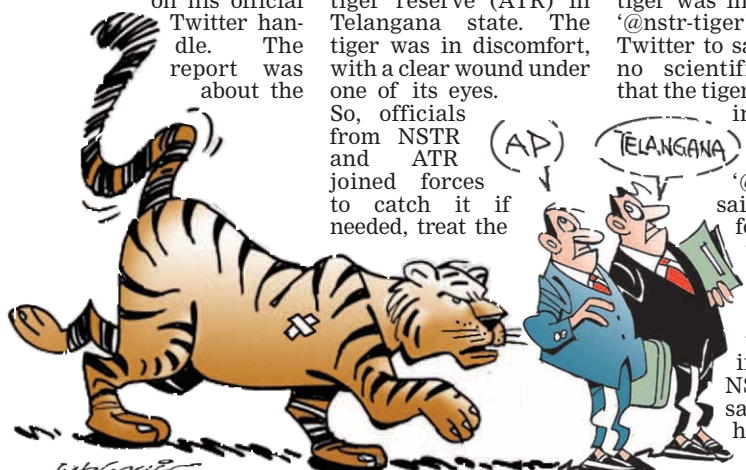
Neta natter

Hell hath no fury like officials scorned!

Our bureaucrats seem to get a tad touchy when someone points out their negligence. A recent report in these columns on a wounded tiger enraged them to such an extent that one of them called the reporter a "rascal" on his official Twitter handle. The report was about the

efforts of forest officials in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana state in catching and providing treatment to an injured tiger. The tiger which belongs to the Nagarjunasagar tiger reserve (NSTR) in Andhra Pradesh was spotted in the Amrabad tiger reserve (ATR) in Telangana state. The tiger was in discomfort, with a clear wound under one of its eyes. So, officials from NSTR and ATR joined forces to catch it if needed, treat the

wound, and save the tiger. But the report in this newspaper about the tiger being injured in NSTR and moving into ATR was enough to ruffle the feathers of some babus. NSTR officials seemed to be upset over the report saying the tiger was injured in AP '@nstr-tiger' took to Twitter to say there was no scientific evidence that the tiger was injured in AP. In another tweet, '@nstr-tiger' said the reason for the injury was yet to be found. "A rascal" wrote that it was injured in AP," an NSTR official said, venting his ire!



Muthyala Raju finally gets a Herculean task

Finally, R. Muthyala Raju, who entered the AP Chief Minister's Office more than two months ago, has got something to do, with his immediate boss Praveen Prakash allocating him some subjects. Raju, who has earned for himself the tag of a hardworking and sincere officer, had to wait for a longer period than most. He has now got housing and CM Relief Fund besides the Herculean task of addressing the problems of elected representatives. Ideally the subject of resolving issues raised by MPs and MLAs should be handled by senior officials as they involve inter-departmental consultations which need lots of pushing and pulling of strings. Apparently, all senior officers in the CMO avoided the task, which the babus consider a headache. Maybe they could have learnt a lesson from former chief secretary S.V. Prasad's unparalleled handling of the CMO during the Naidu regime. With an everlasting smile, Prasad used to receive MPs and MLAs, lend a patient hearing and try to resolve their issues. However, his successors with some exceptions like Ajay Kallam have avoided meeting people's representatives, leave alone addressing their problems.

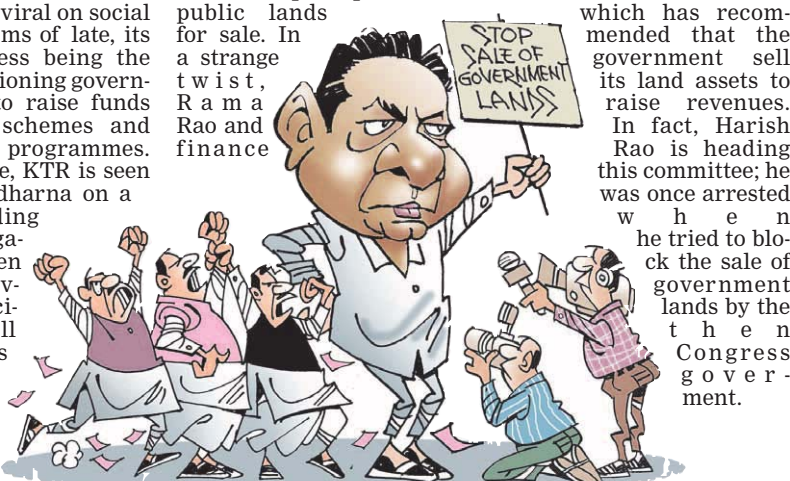
Old photo of KTR opposing sale of state lands goes viral on social media

Political parties and leaders adopt divergent stands on specific issues while in power and when they are in the Opposition. An old picture of IT minister K.T. Rama Rao has gone viral on social media platforms of late, its newsworthiness being the row over auctioning government lands to raise funds for welfare schemes and development programmes. In this picture, KTR is seen sitting on a dharna on a road holding placards against the then Congress government's decision to sell land parcels in Hyderabad to raise funds. The placards read, 'Stop

sale of government lands' and 'State government must stop indulging in real estate business'. Now, the TRS is in power and the government has put up public lands for sale. In a strange twist, Rama Rao and finance

minister T. Harish Rao, who had strongly opposed the land sale by the previous Congress government, are now the members of the Cabinet sub-committee on resource mobilisation

which has recommended that the government sell its land assets to raise revenues. In fact, Harish Rao is heading this committee; he was once arrested when he tried to block the sale of government lands by the then Congress government.



Mega vax drive to cover 1 lakh Vizagites today

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 19

The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) has geared up for the mega Covid-19 vaccination drive on June 20 to cover nearly one lakh citizens in a single day. The drive will be held from 7 am to 5 pm at all 580 Covid vaccination centres attached to respective village secretariat offices in all 98 wards from Bheemili to Anakapalle.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, GVMC chief medical officer Dr K.S.L.G. Sastry said they identified nearly 90,000 people who are above 45 years and also mothers having children below 5 years. "Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy is keen on covering all eligible mothers in the mega

drive as a safety precaution to tackle the likely third wave of the Covid," he said.

The people who already took the first dose can come for the second dose. "Earlier, we used to conduct the regular vaccination programme at only 32 designated centres in the city. But on Sunday, we will open nearly 580 centres to prevent crowds and infection of the virus besides easy accessibility," Dr Sastry said.

All necessary arrangements like requisite benches, staff, electricity, computers, drinking water, and safety tools were provided at the vaccination centres as part of the mega drive, the city public health head said. The ward volunteers were also instructed to mobilise the people and safely handle them at the

centres, and a special orientation programme was also conducted on how to organise this drive without any interruptions, said GVMC Commissioner G. Srijana in an official release.

On the other hand, the state medical and health officials said that the number of Covid-19 cases was also decreasing in the city compared with previous April and May. During the last 24 hours till June 19, Visakhapatnam district registered 215 fresh Covid-19 cases and three deaths. Nearly 70 per cent of the cases were reported from the GVMC limits.

The city has nearly 25 lakh population. Nearly 20 per cent of the population was vaccinated so far at different levels including the private hospitals and regular vaccination centres, officials said.

RESOLVE LAND ISSUE, SAYS NTPC

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 19

The NTPC Simhadri thermal power plant ground general manager Diwakar Kaushik requested Visakhapatnam district collector V. Vinay Chand to address the issue of proceedings against the already alienated government land as per a GO issued by the state government in 2018 in the name of NTPC Simhadri.

Daily variations in new Covid cases

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 19

The fluctuation of Covid-19 new infections is continuing in Andhra Pradesh with coronavirus cases decreasing slightly on Saturday with 5,674 new cases compared to 6,341 cases on Friday. Around 8,014 patients were discharged after recovery in the last 24 hours.

The Covid-19 recovery percent is 95.6 per cent with total recoveries of 17,67,404 and the positivity rate is 5.5 per cent in the State. Corona deaths percentage is 0.6 per cent with an overall toll of 12,269 deaths.

As many as 1,08,935 samples were tested in the past 24 hours. The state has conducted a total 2,10,50,846 tests across the 13 districts.

The total infections in 13 districts was 1,84,4917 in which total recoveries were 17,67,404. There were 45 new deaths.

East Godavari district has reported the highest daily new infections with 1,068 followed by Chittoor district with 854, West Godavari 758, Prakasam 451 and Krishna 435. As many as 388 new infections were reported in Kadapa district, 360 in Guntur, 326 in Anantapur, 245 in Srikakulam, 235 in Nellore.

Itihaas ko kalam se nahin, kadam se likha



Milkha Singh
1929-2021

TD neta throws NRIs' success party

A mega agglomeration of companies is on an aggressive mode of acquisitions. The recent addition to its basket is a group of educational institutions set up by non-resident Indians. It owns an engineering and two medical colleges besides intermediate colleges. The company is also close to completing the acquisition of a corporate hospital in Hyderabad's financial hub. The mega company had its humble beginnings in the irrigation sector and made enormous strides within a short span of time. The company no doubt owes a lot to late chief minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy for the first break.

The company earned the reputation of honouring its commitments, and that helped it grow across India and win friends cutting across party lines.

The vision of the man behind the company's success is that irrigation works have been reaching the saturation point and diversification is the only answer.

The company made forays into oil and gas, battery-run vehicles, realty and has now entered the education sector. Joyous over a friend's success, the flamboyant son of a veteran Rayalaseema Congress leader currently sailing with the Telugu Desam threw a grand party recently to celebrate the takeovers!

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DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 19

The Railways decided to extend the duration of cancelled trains until July first week due to the ongoing second wave of Covid-19 and poor patronisation of the trains.

According to an official release here on Saturday, the trains cancelled till July 1 include train 08528 Visakhapatnam - Raipur, 08527 Raipur - Visakhapatnam, 08445

Stalker opens fire, lands in police net

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, JUNE 19

The Bairreddypalli police arrested a 25-year-old tailor who created ruckus by opening fire with a country-made gun in Kadapa Nattam village in Chittoor district. The incident took place on Thursday night but

came to light on Saturday with the police arresting the accused and sending him to remand.

According to the police, the 25-year-old accused, identified as Chand Basha, allegedly opened fire in the air in front of a minor girl's house in the village, after she rejected his love.

VIZAG STEEL FUNDS AU'S CENTRE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, JUNE 19

The RINL - Vizag Steel Plant granted ₹32.5 lakh for establishing a Centre for Medical Genetics at Andhra University.

The RINL-VSP CMD K.C. Das handed a cheque of the fund to the AU vice chancellor Prof. Prasad Reddy.

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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.



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

- PTI

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 (14,856), 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.

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/grandfather have made similar sacrifices for the nation, they will also be provided jobs in the government.

- PTI

FRESH | START

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.

AIIMS chief: Third wave is inevitable

Guleria says it could hit the country in six to eight weeks

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, AIIMS chief 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, which is lowest after 74 days, and daily recoveries continue to outnumber daily new cases for the 37th consecutive day. India's Recovery Rate has reached 96.16 per cent and daily Positivity Rate stands at 2.98 per cent.

With the pace of vaccination still slow, health experts feel that vaccination is the only way to prevent vulnerability to infection. Union health secretary Ajay Bhalla has written to states to vaccinate as many people as possible in an expeditious manner.

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 Brenan 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.

Rising cement prices causes concern

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 Rs 520 in the State while it was sold for Rs 370 in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh and for Rs 350 in Delhi, Yuvaraj said 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 utilization.

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 government 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 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 Rs 370 earlier and it was now Rs 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.

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 Tanay 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 Sarkariya, 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 (73 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

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

Record 2nd day high in Moscow

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

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"

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 Belarus called for a vote. The measure was approved with

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

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, describing the website as "like-

ly 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, RedTube, 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 TrafficHub 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

DECCAN Chronicle

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Ranjona Banerji

Off the beaten track

Man, they don't write songs like that anymore

When I was about 11, my parents bought the album of Andrew Lloyd Weber-Tim Rice's rock opera, *Jesus Christ Superstar*. It was a family favourite and to this day, we all know the lyrics and music by heart.

There was a special something for me there too. It was Ian Gillan's voice, as Jesus Christ (although every performer on that original album was superb). His rendition of "Gethsemane" (I only want to say) can still move me to tears, over 55 years later.

From there it was a bang, clash, crash straight into rock music. In 1974, Alyque Padamsee put up a fabulous version of *Jesus Christ Superstar* in Bombay. The performers were Bombay's best from Nandu Bhende as Judas, Madhukar Chandra Dhas as Jesus, Poornima Bhende as Mary Magdalene and Keith Stevenson as Herod, to name just a few of that stupendously talented cast. It was a glorious masterpiece and one which Padamsee recreated. I watched it again in 2015, recovering from surgery and wanting to get out of myself. The electrifying performance of Tirthankar Poddar as Judas was the standout.

But over and over, as I was allowed to operate the family record player myself (careful with the needle, don't scratch the records, put them back carefully), it was Ian Gillan's voice and from there a quickstep to Deep Purple and their *Machine Head* album. There was no looking back after that.

But maybe I've started all wrong. Maybe I should start at the beginning, with my parents and how their taste in music set the foundation for whatever followed. I belong to an in-between generation. Born in 1962, we were on the edge of change and rebellion but never part of it. Philip Larkin said something or the other about this too. So too were my parents — young enough to twist and shout but too old to be hippies!

The luxury of owning a record player meant that you spent delightful hours at Bombay's Rhythm House or Melody Corner (and much later in Calcutta), going into those curtained booths to listen to records and choose. My parents' best friends had an Osibisa album they all loved, with the Afro-rock band's signature psychedelic flying elephants on the cover. Which is why I refused to go to their concert when they performed in Calcutta, a few years later. Eeee, music my parents listened to!

And what appalling snobbery that was! Our house was filled with Carole King, Joan Baez, Judy Collins, Joni Mitchell, Don McLean, Elton John. Yehudi Menuhin and Ravi Shankar's East Meets West concert conducted by Andrew Previn was a big favourite. As was Offenbach's *Gaite Parisienne* as my sister and me pretended to be ballet dancers.

At some point though, you make a break. Cassette players meant that you could have your own music and your own mixes. Somebody's somebody's cousin might bring down a latest album which hadn't hit the Indian market yet, and it would be painstakingly shared.

I remember clearly the first two major breaks I made with family listening time — Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* and then eponymous Dire Straits debut album. This meant a big fight with my grandparents — both sides — who had commandeered the family music system for Nazia Hassan's *Disco Deewane*. Don't ask.

But while I was choosing between bands and fandoms, we went to the Jazz Yatra, 1977, at Kala Mandir, Calcutta. And a giant parallel movement was born in my head. This was mighty competition to rock and so many decades later, I still don't know who won.

In between of course, there was Rabindrasangeet and that proverbial *master-moshai* who never missed a single afternoon lesson in the sapping Calcutta heat. We resented a bit then but now find ourselves in family singalongs. Age can be a really nasty experience, the way it proves your parents right!

And all those old Hindi film songs that my Mother hummed and sang and listened to, the movies we saw together in the 1960s and 70s, and the music that wafted up from Tardeo to our flat on the top of Altamont Road in Bombay. About 90 per cent were songs from Rajesh Khanna films, because that's the time frame. Those never go away. Nor do the voices of Begum Akhtar and Bhimsen Joshi.

Of course, if you listened to music in 1970s India as a teenage girl, you could not escape the horror of teenage boys. Full of know-it-all swagger, they were ready to lecture you on the nitty-gritty of the lives of every rock, pop and disco star. I mean, come on. Being female didn't mean that you could not read a magazine or the back of an album cover! Just for the fun of it I would invent rubbish about musicians, just forcefully enough to sow confusion into their minds. If any of you are reading this, no, Giorgio Moroder was not Donna Summers in disguise.

I also invented names of sports cars to annoy big talkers because I found the topic interminably boring. "You mean you've never heard of a Lamborghini Aubergine Orecchiette? And you call yourself a fan?" But that's another story. Sorry.

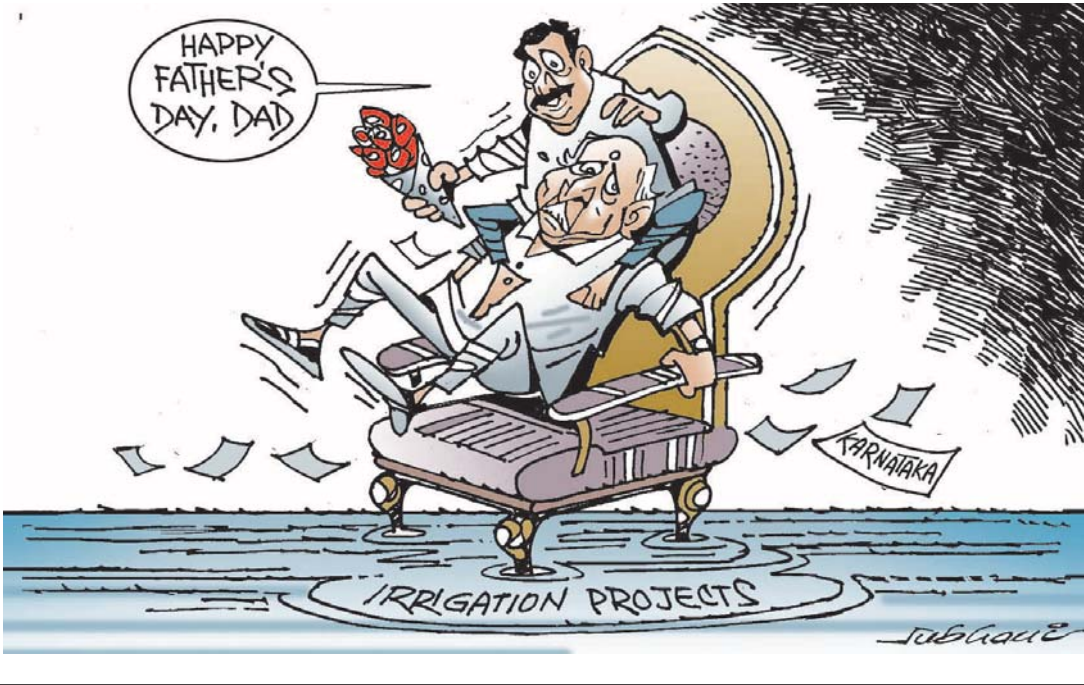
The upshot is that from this century to that, I haven't moved. I'm stuck somewhere between 1964 and 1990s. All right, maybe a few forays into the early years of the 21st century. Where would you place Guns & Roses? Somewhere there. And of course, whatever music they played at Totos and Ghetto. That would do.

I should be embarrassed, shouldn't I? I had to look up Dua Lipa the other day. Nothing that I read about the Grammys makes sense to me any more. And since I stopped travelling by Mumbai autos and going to the gym, I know nothing about what's happening now music-wise.

But I do remember those goosebumps the first time I heard Roberta Flack singing "Killing Me Softly". Who cares about the rest?

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on media affairs, politics and social trends. She tweets at @ranjona.

Subhani



Modi pause on Chumar set the tone for Galwan



Manish Tewari

State of the Union

On June 15, 2020, 20 Indian soldiers were martyred in a barbaric clash with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in the Galwan Valley. It was the most grave confrontation after the October 20 1975 ambush by the Chinese at Tulung La in which four Assam Rifles personnel lost their lives.

On June 20, the Prime Minister gave a rather bizarre twist to the entire tragedy when he told an all-party meeting that "neither have they intruded into our border, nor has any post been taken over by them (China)". Then why did we lose 20 braves? Did India then intrude into Chinese territory?

Herein lies the nub of the problem qua China. The NDA/BJP government by repeatedly underplaying both the aggressiveness of Chinese intent and blatant intrusions into areas that lie within the Indian perception of what is the Line of Actual Control (LAC). This has exposed a serious chink in their armour that the Chinese have now exploited to the very hilt. That fissure is the government's desperation to protect its narrative of muscular nationalism at any cost. It makes them both muddle and mask the truth.

The problem started way back in 2014 when Modi decided to swing with Xi Jinping in Ahmedabad deliberately playing down the Chinese transgression into Indian territory in Chumar. It is inconceivable that the PLA would embark on this adventurism on the LAC without explicit political clearance from the standing committee of the politburo especially when Xi was visiting India.

The Chinese had tried this stunt a year earlier too in Depsang plain's area. The 19-kilometres deep incursion by an armed patrol of China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) into the strategically delicate Daulat Beg

Oldie sector in the Aksai Chin region was noticed on April 16, 2013, and immediately interdicted by the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP). It came just weeks before Chinese premier Li Keqiang's visit to India between May 19 and 21 and Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's visit to Japan later that month between May 27 and 30.

The Depsang incursion was designed to send twin messages. First, Chinese were experimenting their new found assertiveness after Xi's triple anointment as general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), president of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the chairperson of the Central Military Commission (CMC). Second, it was also a caution to India against expressing overt support to Japan against the background of steadily worsening tensions between China and Japan over the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands.

The Chinese were as worried then as they are today about the Quad then. The Standing Committee of the Politburo China's top decision making forum apprehended that the US was again engaged in putting together a broader alliance in the Asia Pacific comprising India, Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines and Australia to contain China's rise.

The Depsang intrusions were handled firmly but with élan by the then UPA government. It was acknowledged upfront that the Chinese had indeed come across India's perception line. A firm message therefore was sent to Beijing that Premier Li Keqiang who was undertaking his first foreign trip would not be very welcome in Delhi if status quo ante was not restored. On May 5, 2013, the Chinese fell back to their default position on the LAC.

As B.G. Verghese pointed

out in a signed column on May 28, 2013, "that the government can stand its ground and take farsighted decisions was proven by the way it handled the Chinese intrusion into the Depsang plain without getting rattled or pushed by chauvinistic clamour. At the end of the day, the Chinese blinked and pulled back. That the joint statement issued later did not mention the word 'intrusion' — the PM used the phrase 'incident' — signified a welcome restraint and desire to avoid teasing statements".

However, a year later when Chumar happened on the cusp of Xi Jinping's visit from September 17 to September 20, 2014, an over-sanguine Prime Minister desperate to flaunt his new-found importance in his backyard of Gujarat did not send word to Xi Jinping that he would not be very comfy in India if the Chinese did not withdraw before the visit commenced. Having recently won an election, Prime Minister Modi had the political capital to do that but he blinked. This set the tone for the future.

In Doklam, in the June of 2017, the NDA/BJP government was more interested in a propaganda triumph rather than a substantive outcome. Not only was the withdrawal sequential rather than simultaneous with India withdrawing first, but the Indian government took its eye off the ball and allowed the Chinese to occupy substantial parts of the Doklam plateau within one year of the standoff.

This was followed by the opaque summits in Wuhan in 2018 and Mamallapuram in 2019. A subservient media and a deferential strategic community did

When Chumar happened, an over-sanguine PM desperate to flaunt his newfound importance in his backyard of Gujarat did not send word to Xi Jinping that he would not be very comfy in India if the Chinese did not withdraw before the visit commenced

not ask the hard questions as to what really was achieved at these informal tête-a-tête's. By that time the Chinese had sussed out the Indian leadership and had concluded that were they to launch an intrusion across a broad front along the LAC the NDA/BJP government would cover it up rather than deal with it candidly.

This is precisely what happened in April 2020. When the Chinese decided to saunter across the LAC first the government tried to palm it off to differing perceptions of the LAC.

In fact, they had already started running this narrative from December 2019 onwards. Speaking in the Lok Sabha on December 4, 2019, defence minister Rajnath Singh said, "Due to different perceptions of the LAC, sometimes incidents of incursion occur. I accept it. Sometimes the Chinese Army enters here and sometimes our people go over there."

The government stuck to this chicanery from April to the June of 2020 as a mortified country bristling under a harsh lockdown was trying to keep body and soul together. Only after the Galwan tragedy when the body bags could not be kept under the wraps did the nation wake up to the enormity of the challenge. There again the Prime Minister unleashed the mendacities that he has perfected to an art form much to the delight of the Chinese as it endorsed their position that they have never intruded into Indian territory.

One year later this sad saga continues unchecked. After vacating significant territorial positions on the South Bank of Pangong Lake under a yet-to-be-microscopically-evaluated disengagement plan the government tries to escape the antiseptic glare of sunlight by not even allowing Parliament to have a full-fledged debate on perhaps the most portentous national security challenge that India faces today.

The author is a lawyer, Member of Parliament and former Union information and broadcasting minister. The views expressed are personal. Twitter handle @manishtewari.

LETTERS

MILKHA LEGEND

Milkha Singh's greatest performance was the fourth place finish in the 400m final of the 1960 Rome Olympics ('Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh dies of Covid, DC, June 19). We miss him. RIP Milkha Singh.

Dr C. Ghanshyam Visakhapatnam

It is disheartening to know that the 'Flying Sikh', Milkha Singh is no more. Representing the country in an international event itself is a great achievement. In such a scenario, representing India in the Olympics in 1956, 1960, and 1964; and winning gold medals in Commonwealth Games held in 1958, and the Asian Games in 1958 and 1962 are stupendous achievements. It was so unfortunate that he missed the bronze medal in the Rome Olympics with a difference of just 0.1 seconds. However, his record time in 400 metres race in the Rome Olympics of 45.73 seconds, remained the national record for almost 40 years. With that we can understand how awe-inspiring he was. He earned accolades for our country with his hard work and dedication. The Government of India awarded him Padmashri in recognition of his contribution to the sport.

Dr Mejari Mallikarjuna Nadigadda, Chittoor

It is very sad to know that the deadly virus engulfed the Indian legendary athlete Milkha Singh who was popularly known as Flying Sikh. He was 91. To his credit he won four gold medals in Asian Athletics and a gold medal in 1958 Asian Games. He lost gold in 1960 Olympics in 400 mts running event narrowly. The government honoured him with Padma Shri in 1959. He faced hurdles in his childhood. He was an athlete who was different from others. He handed over his medals to Jawaharlal Nehru University instead of displaying in his living room.

Pratapa Reddy Yaramala

CM JOB CALENDAR

The innovative job calendar is laudable and the government deserves a pat (*CM releases job calendar for AP, DC, June 19*). No government in the past had this much clarity on filling up vacant posts in all departments. However, it must be mentioned that the previous government had hiked salaries of state government employees by granting 43 per cent fitment as was done in Telangana. That hike was hailed as the biggest ever bonanza. The present government corrected some of anomalies on consolidated payments to a certain categories like ASHA workers, Anganwadi teachers, etc.

Govardhana Myneedu Tiruvuru

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Accession to Kashmir is complete: PM

NEW DELHI, JUNE 19.

Addressing a mammoth public meeting in Handwara about 70 kilometres from here, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said the accession decision was taken by the people of Kashmir themselves and that could not be reversed now.

Mrs. Gandhi also addressed two public meetings in Gurez and Tangdhar earlier in the day.

Mrs. Gandhi today declared that "we are fully equipped to meet any aggression and will not be cowed down by any threat from any quarters" as reports of unprovoked firing by Pakistani troops came in from Maysampur on the eastern borders tonight.

Lessons in summitry: Meet 'em halfway

A.G. Noorani



Summits, as meetings between heads of state and government are called, are as old as mankind itself. The recent summits which President Joe Biden undertook hold lessons in summitry which has provoked a mass of literature of uneven quality. On his visit to the UK, he was treated to all the pageantry for which the British are famous. Of his 'summit' with Prime Minister Boris Johnson, the less said the better.

The entire objective of Biden's excursion was to repair the damage which Donald Trump had inflicted on America's ties with Western Europe and with Nato. "I want all Europe to know that the United States is there." He amplified "Nato is critically important to us" and that Article 5 is a "sacred obligation".

This provision of the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949 embodies the pledge that a military attack on a member of the alliance will be regarded as an attack on each and all. This was not evident after 9/11. The allies rushed to declare

their responsibility. President G.W. Bush decided to go it alone while asking for the allies to contribute their troops.

On June 16, Biden went to Geneva to meet Russia's President Vladimir Putin but not before he had let loose a volley of epithets on Putin. He had referred to him as a "killer".

It was Winston Churchill who first used the word 'summit' in 1953 soon after Stalin's death. He proposed that "a conference on the highest level should take place between the leading powers without long delay". He added that "if there is not at the summits of the nations the will to win the greatest prize... doom-laden responsibility will fall upon those who now possess the power to decide". After this speech the word became part of political vocabulary. However, Churchill's own foreign office balked at the idea. The US secretary of state was cool to it. Accordingly, only a foreign ministers' conference took place that year. The only postwar Big Four Summit to meet

was the Geneva Conference from July 18 to 23, 1955.

On the one side are those who regard summitry as a panacea for all international ills. On the other stand the critics who condemn it as worse than useless, as in fact positively dangerous.

There are examples of successful summits held not after some improvement in relations but while the countries were tottering on the brink. The Nehru-Liaquat meeting in 1950, for instance. What distinguished them was that, although the objective situation was bad, there was on both sides such an overwhelming desire to mend matters as to make the summit worthwhile. There must be at least the will to listen, to confer and to compromise. Without these, the best prepared summit will fail.

However, such is the complexity of most modern problems that even where the will to meet does exist, the summit would be futile if the diplomatic groundwork is not done well and in advance.

Lack of prior preparation is the principal ground of expert criticism of summits. George F. Kennan has explained the necessity for such preparation: "The multitude of ulterior problems that press upon a Prime Minister or a head of state is so great that no single subject, especially one not regarded as of primary importance, is apt to receive detailed and exhaustive attention. Nor can the senior statesmen stay with a problem for any great length of time. Their time is precious, other responsibilities take them away."

There has, however, recently come into being a new variant of the old summit. It is a summit at which you just get to know and to understand without professedly negotiating. Winston Churchill himself wanted a conference which "should not be overhung by a ponderous or rigid agenda, or led into mazes and jungles of technical details, zealously contested by hordes of experts and officials drawn up in vast, cumbrous array. ... It should meet with a measure of informality and a still

greater measure of privacy and seclusion". There is little question that where there exists some misunderstanding as to each other's intentions such talks could be useful. President Kennedy wanted to size up his man and warn him of the dangers of miscalculation at Vienna in 1961.

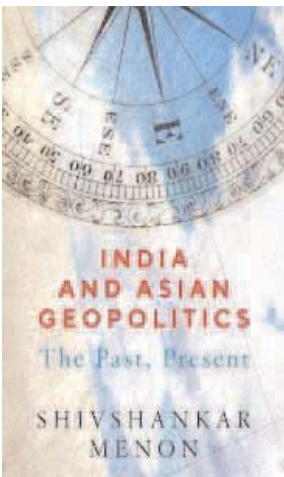
But such is the charm of the summit that these hazards are often lost sight of. The summit becomes an end in itself. The instrument of policy becomes its master.

The result is a complete absence of policy and a corruption of diplomacy. This then is the balance sheet. There are advantages and disadvantages. Whether a summit should be held or not is a purely practical question which should be answered without any sentimentality. Heads of state can resolve impasses better than officials. But preparation and a spirit of compromise are a must especially if problems are complex.

By arrangement with Dawn

INDIAN TOP 10
BESTSELLERS

NON-FICTION

1 **INDIA AND ASIAN
GEOPOLITICS: THE
PAST, PRESENT**
Shiv Shankar Menon
Penguin, ₹6992 **THE POWER OF
GEOGRAPHY**
Tim Marshal
Simon & Schuster, ₹6993 **INDIA'S POWER ELITE**
Sanjaya Baru
Penguin, ₹6994 **LANGUAGES OF TRUTH**
Salman Rushdie
Penguin, ₹7995 **WANDERERS, KINGS,
MERCHANTS**
Peggy Mohan
Penguin, ₹5996 **THE PREMONITION: A
PANDEMIC STORY**
Michael Lewis
Allen Lane, ₹9997 **THE FRONTIERS OF
KNOWLEDGE**
A.C. Grayling
Penguin Viking, ₹7998 **REMNANTS OF A
SEPARATION**
Aanchal Malhotra
HarperCollins, ₹5999 **REPUBLIC OF
HINDUTVA**
Badri Narayan
Penguin, ₹49910 **THE LIGHT OF ASIA**
Jairam Ramesh
Penguin Viking, ₹799

FICTION

1 **WHEREABOUTS**
Jhumpa Lahiri
Penguin, ₹4992 **KLARA AND THE SUN**
Kazuo Ishiguro
Faber & Faber, ₹6993 **TURN A BLIND EYE**
Jeffrey Archer
Pan Macmillan, ₹4504 **THE BEGUM AND THE
DASTAN**
Tarana Husain Khan
Tranquebar, ₹4995 **A GAMBLING MAN**
David Baldacci
Pan Macmillan, ₹6996 **THE LAST QUEEN**
Chitra Banerjee
Divakaruni
HarperCollins, ₹5997 **MURDER AT THE
MUSHAIRA**
Raza Mir
Aleph, ₹7998 **A TIME FOR MERCY**
John Grisham
Hodder & Stoughton
₹6999 **CLUB YOU TO DEATH**
Anuja Chauhan
Picador
₹49910 **SHUGGIE BAIN**
Douglas Stuart
Picador, ₹499

Bahrisons, New Delhi

Fantasy beats auto-fiction, but
'magic realism' trounced by fact

Farrukh Dhondy

review

This book could — and perhaps should — have been called “A Defence of Fantasy”. It's an eloquent, erudite and, in parts, startlingly informative defence of all forms of imaginative, or rather imagined fantasy.

Through essays, lectures, addresses and tributes to dead friends, these themes of the imagination in writing and art emerge, the dominant one being a defence of his own favourite fictional genre of “magic realism”. I don't think Salman likes the term and insists that the magic, the inheritance that contemporary writers, or at least those of a slightly previous generation, have been bequeathed by the legends and epics of all the nations of the planet, is the rabbit hole to reality.

Salman contends that publishing today favours the revealing, racially, sexually and culturally situated autobiography and names several black American writers (none of whom, I apologetically admit, I've read) who draw on or portray their own lives in their novels without the inventions of fantasy that the school of “magic realism” has in the past brought alive. His assessment, though he gives us no summaries or descriptions of the themes or stories of these writers, is fulsome — granting perhaps that there are many fictional vehicles which tell the truth.

There is enough evidence in Salman's career, with all the glittering prizes and accolades, with the “fatwa” which V.S. Naipaul cruelly alluded to as “the severest form of literary criticism”, and the sometimes nasty reviews of his work (even of this very book in, say, UK's *Observer* newspaper) to contend that his work is “Marmite”. You either love it or you hate it.

(I have taken the liberty of inventing the term in imitation of the word games that Salman says he used to play with his friend and supporter Christopher Hitchens).

The “haters” will be forced to admit that deriving inspiration from the epics, fables and parables from the *Arabian Nights*, from the *Panchatantra*, from *Beowulf* from *Götterdämmerung* is perfectly legitimate, but they may ask if the resulting constructs live up to the tasks of fiction — to what fiction owes to the “languages of truth”.

Consider the essay in which Salman, writing about the “hijras” of India, begins with a scene from John Irving's book *A Son of the Circus* in which a surgeon who is not a surgeon cuts off, without administering an anaesthetic, the penis and testicles of a voluntary male to turn him into a “hermaphrodite” or initiate him into being part of “another sex”. Irving's fiction is appallingly graphic and may have been the recreation of some researched piece. My own

queries to a renowned consultant urethra-genital doctor, about the hijra clans I saw in my childhood wandering around India's streets, resulted in a different account. Hijras, according to this medical scientist, are not “hermaphrodites” — whatever that is. They are “cryptorchids” — born male with penises, but as they grow the deviant bone structures in their crotches, crush their testicles and prevent them from dropping and developing. Hence, they, through early adolescence, manifest both male and female secondary features triggered by the body producing both male and female hormones — beards and breasts and altered skeletal development. In the West, this deviance in bone structure can be and is easily detected and rectified by nurses and doctors who check on boy babies and release their testicles, as a consequence of which there aren't any hijras stalking the weddings and traffic light crossings of London,

New York and the rest. Go figure!

These poor cryptorchids, handed over to the hijra clans by in all cases poor and even peasant parents in early adolescence, lead miserable lives as beggars and prostitutes. Turning this phenomenon of the tragic degradation of a society, which should but doesn't afford adequate medical care to children, into “magic realism” is, to some (me too, *yaar*!) unacceptable.

Salman's essay is not unsympathetic to the hijras and charts the structure of their social existence and pleads for some attention to the risks they face through HIV and AIDS. It's John Irving who sacrifices truth to fictional sensationalism — and some readers mistake it for the truth.

Salman deals at length in one essay about the adaptations of books into films. He finds the adaptation by David Lean of E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* absurd and clumsy, as do I, but he forgives him for having given the world *Lawrence of Arabia* and, for my money, *Doctor Zhivago*. He ventures no illuminating theory of adaptation from one form to another and, while telling us about the adaptation of his own *Midnight's Children* to the stage, says nothing about Deepa Mehta's film of the same novel. Since he wrote that film adaptation and it wasn't a successful film, to say the least, some consideration from his insightful mind as to what went wrong would have been illuminating.

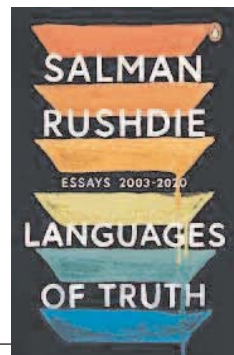
It's not the function of a reviewer to carp about what he wanted to read. The essays and speeches are peppered with insights into Salman's life as a child in Bombay (which is how he insists on remembering it — he doesn't approve of

“Mumbai”) and his experience of racism in public school in Rugby. There are insights into, or confessions about, his progress into becoming the writer he always wanted to be. And then, after the recollections and paens to dead friends such as Hitchens and Harold Pinter and a panegyric approval of writers such as Philip Roth and notes of his acquaintance with him, there are the outspoken pieces about writers subject to tyrannical, censorious silencing, jailing and death in China, Russia, Turkey and now in previously liberal India.

In an essay entitled “Osama bin Laden (Fish be Upon Him)”, Salman attacks the hypocrisy of Pakistani policy which supports terrorism while taking billions of dollars from the United States to purportedly fight it.

Salman professes in several of these pieces to be not simply an advocate against but an activist fighter for freedom of speech. He is clearly, in all his attitudes and accomplishments, against the denial of free speech and in support of the voices that have suffered neglect and suppression. It's a brave and commendable stance, but he doesn't go on to say what he thinks of the outcry against, for instance, J.K. Rowling's opinion that transgender women are not really women. Germaine Greer also has similar controversial opinions. Should they, in the interests of the free speech Salman so ardently argues for, be heard and challenged through argument rather than censored? A regrettable silence on that one. I would have liked to know.

In his words: “I am just a professional writer; which means I don't do blogs and try and get money for whatever I write.”



**LANGUAGES OF TRUTH:
ESSAYS 2003-2020**
SALMAN RUSHDIE
Penguin Random
House, pp. 356, ₹799

THE ELOQUENT OUTSIDER, LOVINGLY REMEMBERED...

Partha
Chatterjee
review

Yasser Usman's book on Guru Dutt is a labour of love but submerged in adulation, although there is a show of criticality. This is a work unlike that of Nasser Munni Kabir's whose book stuck closely to Guru Dutt's films while touching upon his life.

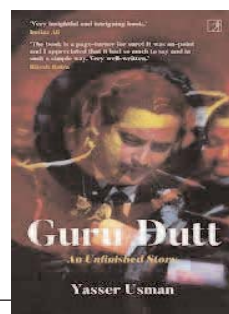
Usman's book is on the problematic though gifted director's life; a detailed record of it while being adulatory about the films.

Guru Dutt was only 39 when he died in 1964 of an overdose of sleeping pills, torn between two women; the first his wife Geeta Dutt (nee Roy), a gifted singer; the second, Waheeda Rehman, his very talented actress who featured in all his important films, whom he

had discovered. In his short, intense, sad but artistically fruitful life (in retrospect) he managed to communicate with a large audience who paid to see his films and sustained his production company; an absolute necessity in commercial Hindi cinema.

Guru Dutt had the rare ability of being loved and commanding the loyalty of those who came in contact with him. Dev Anand and he remained dear friends through the years of struggle to their superstardom in subsequent years. His unit members S. Guruswami, who ran Guru Dutt Films, Abrar Alvi, scriptwriter, V.K. Murthy who became an excellent cameraman, working with him, actors Rehman and Johnny Walker, who gave their best work in Guru Dutt's films remained staunchly loyal to him.

His training as a dancer under maestro Uday Shankar at his cultural centre in Almora and his inborn sense of rhythm gave his song picturisation a fluency and glow. Even almost 60 years later they hold our attention and evoke admiration. He was the first in Hindi



**GURU DUTT: AN
UNFINISHED STORY**
By YASSER USMAN
Simon & Schuster,
pp. 317, ₹599

an earlier New Theatres hit, President. All these characters were played onscreen by Guru Dutt. He was the first one to create sensitive individuals who did not belong in a society where herd mentality was the norm.

A word about *Kaagaz Ke Phool*. It did not fail because it was badly scripted but because it was about the short-lived fulfilling love between a really fine filmmaker, (unhappily married) and his talented protegee whom he leads to stardom but is forced to leave because of emotional blackmail by his underage daughter pressured by her snobbish, upper-class mother. In other words, legally a story about adultery to be condemned in public by people who love to be in love but have not the guts or heart to go through with it. The situation has not changed all that much. It is Guru Dutt's most moving film and most modern, also very expressively shot.

Partha Chatterjee writes on cinema, music, literature and related cultural matters. He is also a filmmaker.



FAST FACT: One of the most underrated writers of the last century? That would be the novelist Elizabeth Taylor. English critic Philip Hensher called her *The Soul of Kindness* a novel “so expert that it seems effortless”. Her nuanced yet trenchant *A Wreath of Roses* has been adapted into a film that never ceases to haunt the viewer. Taylor died of cancer at 63. She was briefly a member of the British Communist Party, then a Labour supporter.



A handshake across Himalayas, amid Terai rumblings



Anand K Sahay

review

Nepal's Turn to China”, the subtitle of this book, may be thought of as only an approximate summation of the 10 journalistic essays, replete with conversations and site reflections, that make up this work. The real thrust, captured in the last chapter, is far more unambiguous. Says the writer, “On that cold, wind-swept plain, 16,000 feet high, there was little imagination required to understand why Nepalis held a dramatic view of China as a superpower, a stark contrast to the view of India as an interfering, unsympathetic neighbour.”

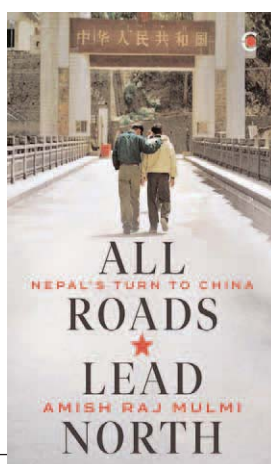
Mulmi's writing has exciting fluency for the better part. This is especially evident in the first section entitled “Borderlands” in which the Nepali-Tibetan social, commercial, and power encounters commencing in

mid-19th century are discussed. Some elements of the reportage, covering precarious journeys in the middle Himalayas where icy winds blow, are really quite thrilling. There are also charming vignettes here of letters, diary excerpts, even telegrams, sent home by Newari Buddhist traders from settlements on the Tibetan side of the line or messages received by them from loved ones back home.

The remainder of the book is less feature writing, more matter-of-fact stuff, sometimes impressionistic. There is frequent recital even of the recent record, which can get tedious. Mundane details such as trade statistics and of tourist arrivals in particular periods, to flag the deemed inevitability of China's occupation of the Nepali mind-space, fill many pages. The author's presentation may have

been more textured if the political imagination of the “terai” region had also been sought to be examined.

The Epilogue resembles more a set of newspaper clippings on domestic politics, rather less an extrapolation through reasoned discussion into Nepal's future relationships with major foreign powers. Was this required



ALL ROADS LEAD NORTH
By AMISH RAJ MULMI
Westland, pp. 290, ₹799

even to irrevocably etch a particular viewpoint, one wonders, when that thinking is reflected across the volume.

To wit, “Throughout history, China had been part of Nepal's imagination, an amorphous idea more than a reality, a ‘card’ against India than an actual hand. It was only in the 21st century that China became ‘real’ for Nepal... (It) is a superpower, a beneficent aid-giver, a friend in need, an essential provider... and a vision of a developed future... As China declares itself on the world stage, Nepal wants to tag along for the ride... Relations need to be sustained. It is in Nepal's interest to do so, and imperative to do it in a way that acknowledges its own aspirations.” The endorsement is pretty steamy.

However, an unquestionable lacuna is the absence of an attempt to engage with any suggestion that may indicate what that “aspiration” is or ought to be. We learn that republican Nepal backs China's “sovereignty project” in Tibet, that it stands against the anti-police state protests in Hong Kong, and that it backs Beijing's policies that trample on human rights in Xinjiang. There aren't

many countries that do all of these.

In addition, Nepali officials are taken to task by Kathmandu for publicising flagrant Chinese violations of the Tibet border with Nepal, and Nepal does not outright reject China's implied claims to Mount Everest. If this trend line in policy is sustained, who knows the PLA could be at the Indian boundary at Birgunj — scraping Bihar — before long, just as it crossed the LAC in Eastern Ladakh — and Kathmandu may be less than horrified even if it demonstrably wrings its hands, or some of its politicians do.

This is not a book on international relations or regional politics. It is not a history of Nepal-China or Nepal-India relations either, though prominent markers (not all) get a look-in. A decided strength of the book is that it fills crucial gaps for Indian readers on the rapidity with which China has captured the political, economic and strategic terrain in Nepal. (This is a reminder, if one were needed, of the failure of Indian journalism to inform its readers.)

The author's first book is well worth a read to better understand Beijing's ways.

Odia literary star's
fine vignettes,
wicked wit,
social insights

Rupa Gulab

review

Times change but human nature doesn't, which is why *Six and a Third Acres* is a hardy survivor. It was first serialised as *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* in *Utkal Sahitya* (a literary monthly) between 1897 and 1899, when India was under colonial rule.

A scripture-quoting narrator with tongue firmly in cheek relates the story of a devious zamindar and moneylender in a village in Odisha. He sees through all of Ramachandra Mangaraj's pretensions, including the religious fasts he strictly observes. Mangaraj's suffering and largely ignored wife is not his soul-mate—that honour is reserved for Champa, one of his large household's many maids. But perhaps the worst thing about Mangaraj is his covetousness. When he wants something, he will stop at nothing to get it.

Which brings us to the six and a third acres that Mangaraj has had his beady eyes on for years. It belongs to a childless couple from a weaver family, Bhagia and Saria. While Bhagia is not one of the world's greatest thinkers, he is perfectly content with his lot in life. Saria, however, is not in a happy place — her desire for a child drives her to distraction. This weakness is what the wily old zamindar and his cohort play on.

While the book deals with dark subjects, the hand that writes it is beautifully light, and gives you many occasions to smirk or even laugh out loud. The narrator with his wicked wit introduces you to almost every inhabitant of the village across the caste spectrum — what they do, where and how they live, and tops it off with some delicious gossip about them. As he says, “There can be a pond without fish, but no village without backbiters”, so be prepared for delightful incidents of subterfuge and counter-subterfuge!

There are marvellous descriptions of village life as well. Jackals with their hourly howling at night were like clocks to the villagers. They were useful in other ways too: “In the countryside, where there are no municipal commissioners, these agents see to the disposal of dead dogs, rats, cats, and assorted dirt and filth.”

Enjoyable digs are occasionally made at the British. There's a sessions judge who delayed court proceedings because he was “in the middle of scribbling a letter to his ‘My Dear Lady’”, anxious not to miss the weekly Wednesday mail to England. India's “gentlemen babus” are not spared either: “Flounder they might when asked to recite the names of their own grandfathers, but the names of 15 generations of the ancestors of British King Charles the Third roll off the tips of their tongues.”

Apart from the riveting story, it's the style—the dark humour in particular — that makes it one of the shining stars of Odia literature. Humour often gets lost in translation, but the translators of *Six and a Third Acres* — Leelawati Mohapatra, Paul St-Pierre and K.K. Mohapatra — have done a wonderful job.

Rupa Gulab is a freelance writer and the author of Girl Alone, Chip of the Old Blockhead and The Great Depression of the 40s

PENGUIN TO
PUBLISH TWO
TITLES BY
ANEES SALIM

New Delhi: Penguin Random House India on Friday announced the acquisition of two new titles by award-winning contemporary writer Anees Salim.

The two new titles, *The Odd Book of Baby Names* and *The Bellboy*, will be published under the Penguin's Hamish Hamilton imprint in 2021 and 2022, respectively. While *The Odd Book of Baby Names* is a historical fiction tracing the last days of one of the last kings in India who is rumoured to have fathered more than 100 children, *The Bellboy* is a story about a 17-year-old bellboy from an island that's slowly disappearing off the face of earth. “These two books are entirely different in terms of craft and characterisation. Salim's published works include *Vanity Bagh*, *The Blind Lady's Descendants* and *The Small-Town Sea*. “As in my previous works, I find a bit of myself in both these books,” said the author.

— PTI

SHORT TAKES

Kohli props up India on Day One

Southampton: Virat Kohli's watchful effort in challenging conditions helped India reach 120 for three at tea on day two of the World Test Championship final here on Saturday. 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). Kohli (35 not out off 94) had the company of his deputy Ajinkya Rahane (13 off 54) when early tea was taken due to bad light. Compared to the morning session, New Zealand's all pace attack showed much more discipline to not allow the batsmen any easy runs. Earlier, Rohit Sharma (34 off 68) and Shubman Gill (28 off 64) staved off the initial swing threat posed by the opposition pace attack with disciplined batting before New Zealand fought back to leave India at 69/two at lunch. — *PTI*

Brief Scores: India 120/3 (Virat Kohli 35 batting, Ajinkya Rahane 13 batting, Rohit Sharma 34; Kyle Jamieson 1/14, Neil Wagner 1/19) vs New Zealand.

Indian women reach 243/8 at tea

Bristol: Indian women reached 243/8 in their second innings at tea on the fourth and final day of the one-off Test against England here on Saturday. Five wickets fell in the eventful second session with the captain Mithali Raj (4) and Harmanpreet Kaur (8) getting out cheaply. Set batter Punam Raut also fell for 39 off 104 deliveries. Sneha Rana (27 not out) and Taniya Bhatia (3 not out) were batting at the tea break as India toiled hard to save the match. Earlier, Deepti Sharma (54) and Punam Raut (39) shared a 72-run stand for the third wicket in the second session as India wiped off the deficit after being forced to follow on by England on Friday. Overnight batter Shafali Verma was dismissed in the 30th over by left-arm spinner Sophie Ecclestone for 63. — *PTI*

Brief Scores (at tea): England Women 396/9 decl. vs India Women 231 & 243/8 (Shafali Verma 63, Deepti Sharma 54; Sophie Ecclestone 4/83).

Croatia held by Czech Republic

London: Patrik Schick moved top of the Euro 2020 goalscoring charts with his third of the tournament as the Czech Republic held Croatia 1-1 in Glasgow to edge towards the Last 16. Schick broke Scottish hearts on Monday with two goals to beat the hosts at Hampden Park 2-0. He had a much simpler task from the penalty spot to open the scoring, but Ivan Perisic's stunning strike early in the second half maintained Croatia's chances of reaching the knockout stage. The World Cup finalists will have to beat Scotland on Tuesday to either pip the Czechs to second place in Group 'D' or most likely head through as one of the four best third-placed sides. Meanwhile, 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. — *AFP*

Argentina boss over Uruguay

Brasilia: 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. Earlier, English-born Ben Brereton was the unlikely hero as Chile beat Bolivia 1-0. The 22-year-old Blackburn forward was born in Stoke-on-Trent to an English father and Chilean mother, and only made his national team debut on Monday when he came off the bench in Chile's 1-1 draw with Argentina. But Brereton was in the right place at the right time to hand Chile victory. — *AFP*

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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.

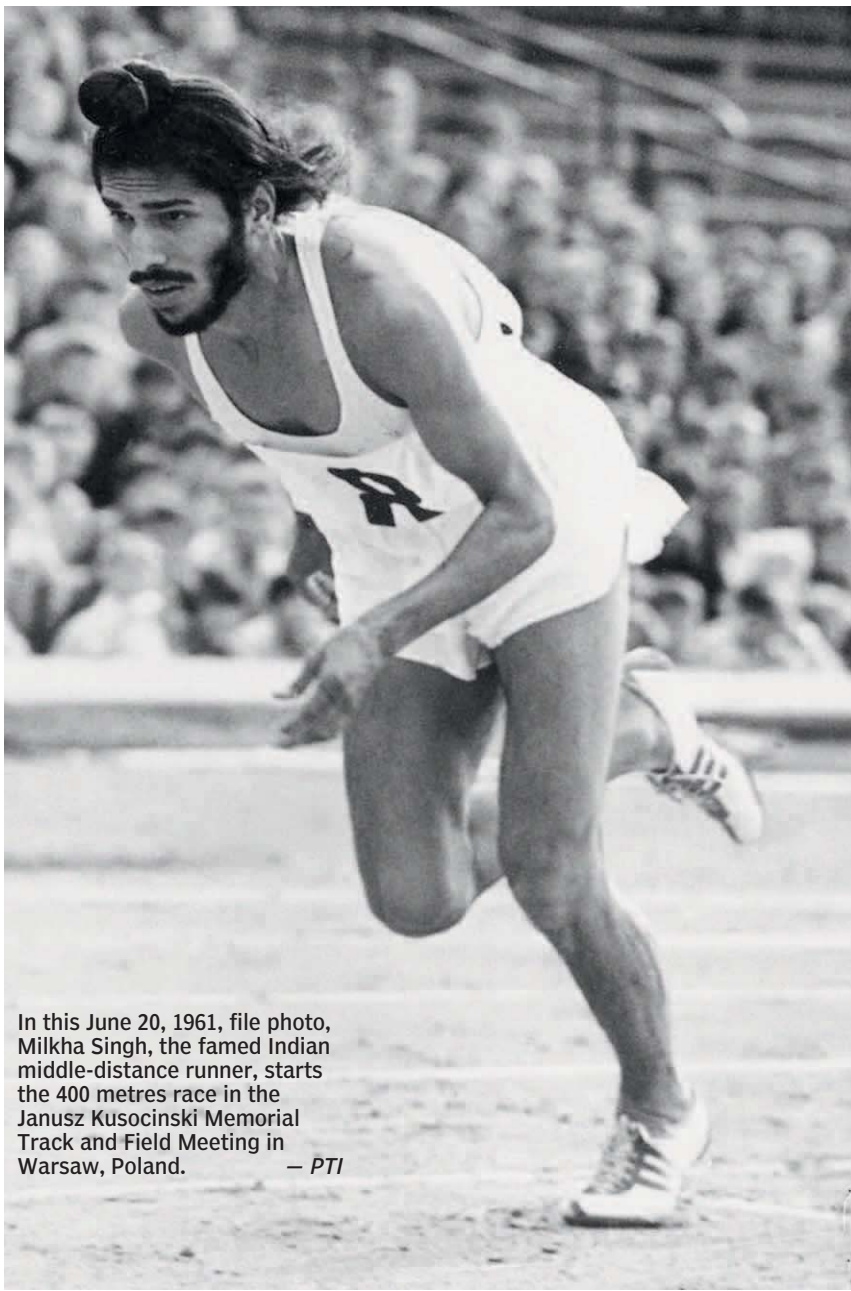
Who could have thought a man like that would get the sobriquet of "The Flying Sikh"? But Milkha earned it and earned it with a master-class on how to be bigger and better than one's circumstances.

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



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*

bestowed the Padma Shri 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 judgement 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*

Legend, positive right till the end

New Delhi, June 19: Even after testing positive to Covid-19, sprint legend Milkha Singh exuded optimism, a trait that he carried all his life, through triumphs and defeats.

"Yes *Bachcha*, I tested positive for Covid-19 yesterday (May 19). But I am fine, I have no problem, no fever, no cough. It will go away. My doctor told me I will be alright in three-four days," he said after tested positive for the virus.

The 91-year-old died at Chandigarh's PGIMER hospital on Friday night after battling the infection for a month.

Milkha was first hospitalised at Mohali's Fortis hospital on May 23 as a precautionary measure.

While there, he was joined by his former national volleyball captain wife Nirmal Kaur, who died six days ago on Sunday because of Covid complications.

The couple shared a room before Milkha was discharged on the family's request.

Milkha was subsequently hospitalised again on June 3 after his oxygen saturation levels dipped, this time at the PGIMER where he battled it out till Friday night.

"Our cook had fever but he concealed it from us. We

Yes *Bachcha*, I tested positive for Covid-19 yesterday (May 19). But I am fine, I have no problem, no fever, no cough. It will go away. My doctor told me I will be alright in three-four days.

— **MILKHA SINGH**
after tested Covid-19 positive

sent him to his home (native village). After that we thought it's better that all the family members should get Covid-19 tests done," Milkha had said during the May 20 conversation detailing what exactly led to the positive tests.

"I am surprised. How could I get this infection?" he wondered.

At that point Milkha did not feel any symptoms and said that he had even been jogging and exercising.

"I have been keeping indoors except for morning jogging and exercise. I did jogging just yesterday. Don't worry, I am in good spirits," he asserted.

And it was this lifestyle that he was banking on to recover.

"Though I am surprised to have tested positive, I hope to get over it soon," he said. — *PTI*



INDIAN CRICKETERS PAY HOMAGE, WEAR BLACK ARMBANDS

Southampton, June 19: The Indian cricket team on Saturday wore black armbands on the second day of the World Test Championship final against New Zealand here as a mark of respect to 'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh.

Top Indian players, including skipper Virat Kohli and coach Ravi Shastri, had already posted their condolence messages on Twitter and the entire Indian team on the day wore the arm band as a mark of respect for the departed soul.

This is one of the rare occasions when Indian cricket team wore black armbands for a legend of Olympic sports.

"The Indian Cricket Team is wearing black armbands in remembrance of Milkha Singhji, who passed away due to Covid-19," the BCCI media cell posted a message. — *PTI*

SPORTS UNIVERSITY TO HAVE A CHAIR AFTER FLYING SIKH

Chandigarh, June 19: A chair will be established after Milkha Singh's name at the Sports University, Patiala, Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh announced here on Saturday.

"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. — *PTI*

Sprint king 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 Rijju.

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

Punjab Governor and Chandigarh Administrator V. P. Singh Badnore, Punjab Finance Minister Manpreet Singh Badal, Haryana's Sports Minister Sandeep Singh were among the other dignitaries who attended the last rites.

Prof Jagat Ram,



Police personnel pay last salute to legendary sprinter Milkha Singh, who passed away on Friday night, in Chandigarh on Saturday. — *PTI*

'RECORD-BREAKER' PARAM PAYS TRIBUTE TO HIS IDOL

New Delhi, June 19: 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. The 91-year-old ran that memorable race in 45.6 seconds. "Milkha Singh 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," Paramjit said on Saturday.

"Milkha Singh Ji said he wants to see an Indian win an Olympic medal before he dies," said the 49-year-old, who broke the national record during the National Championships in Kolkata. Milkha was officially hand-timed at 45.6 seconds during his fourth-place finish in the Olympics, though an unofficial electronic timer at the Games clocked him at 45.73 seconds.

"It is a huge loss for the country that Milkha Singh Ji is no more. He was the pioneering legend of Indian athletics." — *PTI*

Compete abroad: P.T. Usha remembers Singh's advice

Chennai, June 19: "You must compete in international meets abroad to improve," was the piece of advice P.T. 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



P.T. Usha with Milkha Singh in this file pic.

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."

Usha said Milkha Singh 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 P.T. 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. — *PTI*

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."

— HIMMA 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 MilkhaSingh 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 heartfelt 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.

— FARIHAN 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