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CHENNAI | THURSDAY 6 | AUGUST 2020

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CHENNAI | THURSDAY 6 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 35°C
Min: 27°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 22
Tithi: Thrithiyai
Star: Sathayam/ Puratathi
Rahukalam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam:
6 am to 7.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.39 am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.32 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.52 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+54,252)	(+919)
19,60,865	40,739

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 5,175)
TN:2,73,460 4,461

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,88,37,615

DEATHS

7,07,218

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213

worldometers.info

MLA cocks a snook at DMK

Chennai: DMK MLA representing Thousand Lights constituency, Ku Ka Selvam, cocked a snook at his party by visiting 'Kamalalayam', the BJP State headquarters in Chennai, to a grand reception on Wednesday even while claiming that he continued to be in the DMK. Though DMK President M K Stalin cracked the whip, removing Selvam from the posts of headquarters office secretary and HQ executive committee and seeking an explanation as to why he should not be dismissed from the party, the MLA was hobnobbing openly with the BJP State leaders.

MP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan discharged

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan was on Wednesday discharged from a Bhopal hospital after recovering from COVID-19, an official said. Doctors have advised Chouhan, who was in the hospital for 11 days, to be under home quarantine and self-monitor his health for a week. Chouhan, 61, who tested COVID-19 positive on July 25, had tweeted on Sunday that he was healthy and not showing any symptoms of the infection, adding he would be discharged if a sample collected for tests during the day returns negative.— PTI

COUNTER POINT



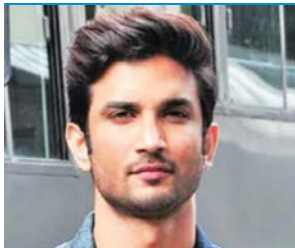
Not Arabian sea, sir... these are the main roads of Mumbai!

Centre orders CBI enquiry into SSR death

New Delhi, Aug 5: The Centre on Wednesday issued a notification asking the CBI to probe the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput, that occurred in June at his Mumbai residence, officials said. A copy of the notification has been sent to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) asking it to probe the case, they said. The move comes after the Bihar government on

Tuesday recommended a CBI probe to the Centre in the sensational case at the request of Rajput's father. Rajput, aged 34, was found hanging from the ceiling of his apartment in suburban Bandra in Mumbai on June 14 and since then Mumbai police has been probing the case keeping in mind various angles.

While hearing a case in connection with the actor's death, the Supreme Court



Sushant Singh Rajput

on Wednesday said the truth behind the death of

the "gifted and talented artist" should come out.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told the court that the Bihar government's recommendation has been accepted and the case has been transferred to the CBI. Bihar police had registered a case against Bollywood actor Rhea Chakraborty and five others, including three of her family members, under IPC sections 306

(abetment of suicide), 341 (wrongful restraint), 342 (wrongful confinement), 380 (theft in dwelling house), 406 (criminal breach of trust) and 420 (cheating).

Besides Chakraborty, the others named in the FIR are three of her relatives - Indrajit Chakraborty, Sandhya Chakraborty and Shobhik Chakraborty, and two others - Samuel Miranda and Shruti Modi.

— PTI



Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays the first brick as part of the groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya on Wednesday.

— PTI

coincides with the first anniversary of nullification of the contentious Article 370 by the Modi government, another core issue of the Sangh Parivar and BJP's poll promise.

"I believe that like Lord Ram, the grand temple will be a symbol of Indian culture and tradition and will inspire humanity till eternity...Lord Ram teaches us to move forward with time, he favours change, he favours modernisation, one must never forget that when humanity believes in him, it developed, when it strayed it walked on the destructive path....through mutual affection and brotherhood we need to build the temple," said the PM while addressing saints and seers and other invitees after the ground laying ceremony and began his

speech by chanting 'Jai Siya Ram.'

He also said that social harmony was the core principles of Lord Ram's governance and said it was a "historic and proud day for India." The PM asked people to make sure that teachings of Lord Ram, message of the Ram Mandir and India's thousands years old tradition should be spread across the world. He also paid respect to those who sacrificed their lives for the Ram Mandir.

The PM was dressed in a traditional attire - golden coloured kurta and dhoti. He later tweeted: "A blessed day in Ayodhya. This day will remain etched in the memory of every Indian. May the blessings of Bhagwan Shri Ram always be upon us. May India scale new

heights of progress. May every Indian be healthy and prosperous."

Hailing the occasion as a "sabko saath lekar saath chalne ki vidhi ka adhishthan(establishment of a method to walk along with everyone)," RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, who was also one of the invitees by the

Shri Ramjanambhoomi Teeth Kshetra Trust, said the occasion marks the beginning of India, which is "paramvaibhav sampann aur sabka kalyan karne wala(glorious and welfare for all)." Mr Bhawat also said that it is a joyous occasion as it is a culmination of a pledge (for the temple construction) taken almost three decades ago and also a joyous occasion because Mr Modi was performing the ceremony.

Ram Lalla set to move from tent he occupied for decades

YOJNA GUSAI | DC NEW DELHI, AUG 5

At 12:44 pm on the 'abhijit muhurut' on Wednesday, which many believe is the same auspicious time of the day when Lord Ram was born, Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed the "bhoomi puja" at the "garbhagriha (sanctum sanctorum)" of the to be constructed "bhavya (grand) Ram Mandir," in Ayodhya which the Prime Minister said will be the "modern symbol of India's tradition, its eternal faith, national spirit and collective pledge of crores of people."

Mr Modi said Lord Ram is a common thread of India's unity in diversity. The Prime Minister and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, who was also invited for the ceremony, asserted that "Ram Sabke Hain, Sab Main Hain Ram" as he said that the wait for centuries has ended.

Considered in political circles as a polarising issue, Ram Mandir will be completed ahead of the next general elections in 2024 and was one of the core demands of the RSS-led Sangh Parivar and one of the poll promises of the BJP.

Before the Supreme Court's verdict last year, some portion of the temple complex was part of the disputed site where once stood the Babri Masjid, constructed in the 16th century and demolished in 1992 by karsevaks while the Hindus maintained that the mosque was built by demolishing the temple, which was the birth place of Lord Ram.

Incidentally, the bhoomipujan ceremony

Ram is everyone's, Ram resides in everyone, PM says in his speech

ARCHITECT LEFT OUT IN THE COLD

ANIMESH SINGH | DC NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

He was the architect of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement who catapulted the BJP from two Lok Sabha seats in 1984 to 120 in the 1991 general election. But on Wednesday, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi presided over the Ram Mandir "bhoomi puja" in Ayodhya, Lal Krishna Advani possibly watched the ceremony on television as the party and organisers tried hard to "explain" his absence at the event.

In September 1990 Mr Advani began his rathayatra from Somnath till Ayodhya to mobilise nationwide opinion for building a Ram temple at the "exact location" where Lord Ram was believed to have been born (and where the Babri Masjid stood). His "Mandir Wahin Banayenge" slogan was a nationwide chant during the Ram Janmabhoomi stir, that led to the Babri Masjid's demolition on December 6, 1992, making Mr Advani the party's Hindutva poster boy.

Ironically, though, neither Mr Advani nor Murli Manohar Joshi, who was BJP president when the Babri Masjid was demolished, were on the dais with Mr Modi at Wednesday's bhoomi puja ceremony.

Rahul says Ram is love, justice

DC CORRESPONDENTS NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday offered his prayers to Lord Ram after the "bhumi puja" ceremony, calling him the ultimate embodiment of the best human qualities. "Maryada Purshottam Lord Ram is the ultimate embodiment of supreme human values. He is the core of humanism embedded deep in our hearts. Ram is love, he can never appear in hatred. Ram is compassion, he can never appear in cruelty. Ram is justice, he can never appear in injustice," Mr Gandhi tweeted.

BSP chief Yashwanthi credited the Supreme Court for paving way for the construction of the Ram temple, while Samajwadi Party supremo Akhilesh



Yadav struck a cautious note when he expressed his hope that present and future generations will do well to sincerely follow the path shown by the "Maryada Purushottam". Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee called for preserving brotherhood between communities and the age-old legacy of unity in diversity.

RSS chief says temple will make India self-reliant

Ayodhya, Aug. 5: The ground breaking ceremony of a Ram temple in Ayodhya has spread joy across the country and will establish the self confidence needed for making India self-reliant, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday said.

Recalling the three-decade-old struggle of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its ideological family members for the construction of the temple, he hailed the contribution of veteran BJP leader L.K. Advani, late VHP president Ashok

Singhal and Mahant Ramchandra Das Paramhans.

There are many people who worked hard and some even sacrificed their lives for the temple, many may not be here physically, Mr Bhagwat said remembering Singhal and spiritual face of the temple movement late Paramhans. "While there are some like Advani ji who led Rath Yatra but could not come due to the current situation (Covid-19 pandemic). He must be watching this from his home on TV," he said.

OPPN MEETING FOILED



Authorities on Wednesday sealed the Gupkar road ahead of a meeting of the political parties called by National Conference parliamentarian Farooq Abdullah at his residence. Restrictions were imposed in other parts of Srinagar city in view of first anniversary of Article 370 abrogation.

— H.U. Naqash

More Covid-19 cases in districts near Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG 5

Fresh infections and fatalities due to Coronavirus infection was on a high in the three districts adjoining Chennai on Wednesday when the total death toll was 112 and new cases 5,175 in the State.

Compared to neighbouring districts - Chengalpattu 487 infections and seven deaths, Kanchipuram 342 cases and six deaths and Thiruvallur

472 cases and six deaths - Chennai's infection rate was low at 1,044 and death toll was 25. A total of 59,156 persons underwent the test through the State.

Advising people not to ignore feverish feelings but seek early medical help, State Health Minister C Vijayabaskar said the government had improved the facilities for treatment in the government hospitals in Chennai.

After inspecting the

facilities at the Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital and the Kilpauk Medical College Hospital, Vijayabaskar said there were 150 ICU beds in RGGGH, from where over 15,000 persons had been discharged following successful treatment.

Rising to the needs of the patients admitted to the hospital, the government had now appointed feeding nurses to help those who were unable to eat on their own.

DAVP:19142/11/0001/2021

DECCAN Chronicle

6 AUGUST 2020

Ditching secular legacy won't protect Congress

Political expediency cannot be blamed for All India Congress Committee general secretary Priyanka Gandhi-Vadra's volunteering to pledge her support to the Ram temple project in Ayodhya and calling it a symbol of national unity. Even political novices are aware of the energy and efforts Hindutva forces have spent for the project, and the blood of innocent people they caused to spill across the nation after Lal Krishna Advani mounted the "Ramrath" in the 1990s. Even a distant observer of Nehruvian legacy, leave alone his political heirs, will not miss the objection the first Prime Minister of India raised when President Rajendra Prasad chose to attend the consecration of the renovated Somnath temple in Gujarat, for the celebration of a community is rightfully theirs, not of a secular state nor its head. That the temple is coming up on a spot where Babri Masjid once stood, and the apex court had sanctioned its construction there only after calling the vandalism at the Masjid, including damage done to it in 1934, placing of idols under its central dome in 1949 and its destruction in 1992, "egregious violations of rule of law", would have been reason enough for the Congress leader to hold back her horses, instead of joining forces with those who are out to display "triumphalist bigotry", as another senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor would put it.

Protagonists of the Indian National Congress, save Pandit Nehru, have displayed a congenital tragic flaw when they were told to act on the contentious Ayodhya issue, and Ms Gandhi can be seen as no exception. Rajiv Gandhi, then Prime Minister and Congress president, did it twice: in 1986 when he ordered opening of the locks of the disputed site which his grandfather had shut down and then allowing the *shilanyas* in 1989. P.V. Narasimha Rao, then Prime Minister and Congress president, watched in silence when karsevaks razed the minarets in 1992. The Congress' attempts were clearly to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, but it failed, miserably and naturally. The party that had placed itself at the secular liberal side of the polity lost pathetically when it chose to run the rightist course, for the people had a better lineup to represent that ideology to opt for.

Ms Vadra and those in the Congress who smart at being not invited for the programme in Ayodhya owe the people an explanation how their interpretation of national unity as seen in the Ayodhya project squares with the "the ideals Lord Ram epitomises: justice for all, righteous conduct, fairness and firmness in all dealings, moral rectitude and courage", as Shashi Tharoor would put it. It is time the Congress realised that secularism is not a standalone idea; it's very much part of a larger project which seeks to recognise every human being shorn of all the artificial classifications such as caste, religion, sex, region and so on. The party has to make a choice whether it sides with that grand project. Otherwise, the *bhajans* heard at Ayodhya could be the requiem for the grand old party of Indian politics as well.

IPL must drop China firms

The IPL will have to look for a title sponsor now that the Chinese mobile phone maker Vivo is pulling out of the 2020 season. Otto Bismarck said, "Politics is the art of the possible, the attainable," and Indian cricket seems to have taken to that path of reconciling competing interests. To say politics and sport must be kept separate is idealistic but it hardly applies to the current situation in which each Indian is sacrificing a lot in the time of the pandemic. Furthermore, he is sacrificing a lot in terms of nationalistic pride when the dragon is breathing fire on the border. China is, in fact, an aggressor now occupying chunks of Indian territories across the LAC.

Globally, pro sport sees itself as an entertainment industry and cricket in India is very much in that category. But it was extremely poor form on the part of a cash-rich league run by the BCCI to be seen to be so willing to accommodate Chinese sponsors on the premise that they are long term supporters who should be retained because, come what may, the show must go on. Not just Vivo, but Paytm, Alibaba and many others supporting the eight teams are also part of the game. The league must drop all of them and not wait conveniently for Chinese sponsors to walk out on their own.

TV rights and sponsorships drive the engine of modern sport more than spectators and jingoism. The IPL, an international smorgasbord barring only players from Pakistan, is more a medium of tribal loyalties than flag-waving nationalism. Even so, the IPL has to behave responsibly and always in the larger national interest. Sacrificing a little money is the least it can do now. The BCCI is morally obliged to filter out all Chinese companies from the forthcoming IPL edition lest it be seen as a selfish beast uncaring of the national mood when India is facing a Chinese threat.

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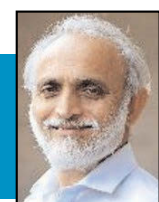
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Subhani



Puja at Ayodhya: Modi's bid to seal BJP's future?



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

It will be futile to bewail the violation of secularism with Prime Minister Narendra Modi participating in the "bhoomi puja" of the Ram Mandir a little after Wednesday noon. Secularism has been squarely checkmated time and again from the 1989 Lok Sabha election onwards. The question now is how this would benefit the future of the BJP and Mr Modi himself.

Will Wednesday's ceremony ensure that the BJP and Mr Modi will return to power in 2024? The BJP and Mr Modi would like to believe that it will, and they have taken all the pains to prove that the temple was now happening because the party had fought for it, turned a local property dispute in obscure Ayodhya into a political issue of national importance. But he did not say any of this in his address to the limited gathering at the Ram Janmabhoomi site after the foundation stone-laying ceremony.

He waxed eloquent about the Ram of Valmiki and Tulsi, of Kabir and Nanak, of Mahatma Gandhi, though he deftly inserted the Hindutva narrative of undoing a historical injustice, which was a half-truth. He tried to project Ram as the symbol of national culture, of inclusiveness and modernity. But it was simply rhetoric in the service of BJP politics. He was careful enough to avoid mentioning the other part of the Ayodhya settlement as directed by the Supreme Court in its November 2019 ruling — the allotment of land for Muslims to build a mosque in the place of the Babri Masjid that stood at the temple site. Obviously, the

Prime Minister did not want to dilute the "Hindu civilisation and culture" line of his argument.

The dispute was settled in favour of the Hindu side by the Supreme Court and not by the Narendra Modi government. The BJP leaders know that they cannot take credit for what the court had done, because if they were to do it that would mean that the Modi government had influenced or arm-twisted the highest court in the land. But the non-government trust set up to build the temple as mandated by the court was handpicked by the BJP, as is evident in the choice of the former principal secretary to Prime Minister Modi as head of the panel of the temple construction committee, and to express their gratitude to the BJP and the Prime Minister, the members of the trust asked Mr Modi to be the chief guest at the stone-laying ceremony.

The BJP government in Uttar Pradesh under chief minister Yogi Adityanath had walked the extra mile to conduct the temple construction ceremony to make the bold declaration that this was a BJP event and that the temple trust was almost like a fig leaf to keep the separation between the BJP's Modi government and the tem-

Did the BJP ever dare fight an election on the Ayodhya issue? It did not because its leaders, including Atal Behari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, were not too sure that it would pay dividends

ple, between state and religion.

As Mr Modi and his colleagues project themselves to be admirers of the Constitution as the supreme philosophy of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, they are keen to maintain the fictional distance between the government and the Hindu faith. Mr Modi might have participated in the temple ritual like a believer — and he has every right to do so as a private citizen — but he did not keep it as an affair in the private sphere of Hindus, whether they are in India or abroad. The Prime Minister seemed to have got carried away by the emotion of the moment and said the temple marks a happy moment nationally and globally. Of course, he meant Hindus. He spoke as Prime Minister and for the nation, and he seemed to genuinely believe that Ram as a national symbol was acceptable to the followers of all religions in the country. But he would not want to say it because then he would lose the Hindu base of his party, and neither he nor the party can afford to do so.

Did the BJP ever dare fight an election on the Ayodhya issue? It did not because its leaders, including Atal Behari Vajpayee and Lal Krishna Advani, were not too sure that it would pay dividends. Despite the 1990 rath yatra of Mr Advani, the party did not gain much in the 1991 Lok Sabha election, nor did it forge far ahead in the 1996, 1998 and 1999 general elections. After the defeats in 2004 and 2009, the party again

Will Wednesday's ceremony ensure that the BJP and Mr Modi will return to power in 2024? The BJP and Mr Modi would like to believe that it will, and they have taken the pains to prove... the party had fought for it...

fought two general elections in 2014 and 2019 under the redoubtable Hindutva icon, Mr Modi. But it still did not dare fight the election on the issue of the temple in Ayodhya. It can be argued that the BJP leaders displayed sufficient political savvy in keeping silent on the temple issue, along with that of the abrogation of Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir. They were not whether they would be able to romp home based on these two evocative questions. Mr Amit Shah, when he was in charge of the BJP's election campaign in Uttar Pradesh in 2014 and as president of the party in 2019, followed the rule-book as it were. He said that the Ayodhya issue had to be settled either through mutual consent between the two communities — the Hindus and Muslims — or through the court's decision. Neither he nor his party said that if they get a parliamentary majority, they would bring in the necessary legislation to enable the construction of the temple.

The sense of triumph of Hindu nationalism is unmistakable, and it is useful to remember that since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, religion has been the defining characteristic of national politics in many countries, in Russia and Turkey, and also partially in the United States of Donald Trump. India is following a global trend. The question is to see how it will play itself out because the politics of religion is generally based on hatred. It is sure to come in the way of India's economic progress and social well-being. Mr Modi wants modernism as well as divisive religious nationalism. But history shows that religion is beautiful and sublime if it is not made a national political issue. However, the BJP has chosen, like many others elsewhere, to make it a national issue.

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

NEW ERA BEGINS

August 5, 2020 will ostensibly go down as one of momentous days in the political history of India as it marks the beginning of construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya with Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself inaugurating the *bhoomi puja*. If Ayodhya is associated with Hindu faith as the birth place of Lord Ram and Ram Rajya he presided over after his triumph over evil in country's history and mythology, it has a special place in country's politics as it was associated with mammoth Hindu political mobilisation, rise of BJP as a greater political force to be reckoned with, Hindu-Muslim tensions and communal violence. As Ayodhya gears up for a grand temple construction, it is an opportune occasion to make it as the beginning of a new era of pluralism, secularism and communal harmony.

M. Jeyaram Sholavandan

PAPER TIGERS

HANY BABU and the likes of Varavara Rao are citizens of this country and claim themselves to be intellectuals or at least the media dub them so. When they propagate ideas detrimental to the interest of the country as a whole they cannot escape from the clutches of law since their intellectualism does not insulate or grant them any special exemption from the force of law. Naxalism is a menace to the peace and progress of this country and the country knows well the havoc and destruction the Naxalites have caused that had retarded the progress of the country both in the past and present. There is no point in wailing or getting angry with the Government if it arrests those who block the progress and development by deeds, speeches and writings. I find all these leftist elements that put up brave faces in public that they are not afraid of arrest etc. are very timid at heart! The facts that they try to get bail the very moment they smell arrest never hesitate, to knock the doors of every court. This reveals that the Indian leftists and intellectuals are in fact no more than mere paper tigers.

Kooduthuraiyan Coimbatore

Aakar Patel



How the media, like politics, has become bigoted and intolerant

The mainstream media refers to the established houses of journalism, mostly newspapers but to some extent also television. Newer sources of media like websites or apps that don't have a physical presence in the form of a printed product or broadcast channel are not yet thought to be mainstream media even though some of them have quite a deep presence. In India, websites like *The Wire* and *Scroll* have been around for about a decade or so and have large readerships.

However, these new places don't have the size of reporting resources that the mainstream media does. And at least so far, they haven't been able to fill the space that the mainstream media is rapidly giving up.

The media space in India is funded primarily by advertising. The reader or viewer pays very little by way of subscription and our newspapers are the cheapest in the world. But the share of print in the overall advertising pie is shrink-

ing. In 2019, for the first time, digital jumped over print in India, and by a lot. Digital got 27 per cent of advertising money spent in India, while print got 22 per cent. Television remained number one at 43 per cent, but both TV and print were expected to shrink further in 2020 and give up share to digital. The Covid crisis has accelerated this process.

We should understand that "digital" means essentially two companies, Google and Facebook, which now take more advertising money in India than the Times of India or Hindustan Times or any other large Indian newspaper. This process will continue, and newspapers will continue to fade away. This trend is visible and is happening before our eyes.

There is a second trend that is also visible and has also come before our eyes. It's that the media has taken a majoritarian, Hindutva edge. What is meant by Hindutva or majoritarianism? The idea that one part of society is privileged and entitled to primacy. Conversely,

that the others must exist on sufferance and have to be tolerated.

Of course this has happened hand in hand with a change in the political language and narrative of the State in India. During the Congress period, whether or not you agreed with the party, the fact is that the tone and tenor was inclusive. It was not trying to divide Indians on the basis of the background they were born into.

The BJP exists precisely because it was successful at mobilising on the basis of division. It has nothing else that is markedly different from any other party except the fact that it is willing to be openly bigoted.

This view is now mainstream and acceptable in the media. It's acceptable to blame one religion for spreading a virus that has infected the entire world. It is fine to look away when members of another religion go ahead with their events despite the same threat of spread.

The media can look away today from the government's failures at the actual business of governance. The enemy occupies land that 3,000

Indians died fighting to defend in 1962. But we are being regaled with shlokas about the landing of five warplanes. Are they going to be used to kick the invader out? No, the story is merely that they have arrived.

Last Saturday brought the news that there was 70 per cent more demand for MNREGA work in July 2020 than July 2019. More than three crore households had asked for it, meaning that at least 15 crore Indians were dependent on it. Another piece of news was that the government was considering extending the "moratorium" on defaulting loans. Companies had been allowed to skip EMIs on their term loans and individuals with house and automobile loans had also been given this opportunity to not pay now and pay with more interest later.

The finance minister said it was possible this facility would be extended because of demand from some sectors that were still, four months after the lockdown began, unable to make their regular pay-

ments. Automobile and two-wheeler sales in India have been declining year-on-year for 18 of the last 19 months. Commercial vehicle sales have not grown since Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in 2014, meaning that industrial growth has been hammered.

But the media is focused on the suicide of one young man. The misuse by the Prime Minister's Office of the Enforcement Directorate even in this matter is not a problem or issue of concern. The story is that people of one religion have captured the entertainment industry.

A decade ago, even though that sentiment might have been felt in large parts of the media, it was not expressed. There was a reserve and there was a culture that adhered to the principles enshrined in the Constitution. That we were a diverse and secular nation. That has ended now in politics, and it has ended in the media too.

Aakar Patel is a senior journalist and columnist

HOW THE STRUGGLE
UNFOLDED

1528-29 Babri masjid is built by Mir Baqi, commander of Mughal emperor Babar, at the site that is believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram.

1855 First recorded instance of communal violence near the site after Hindus tried to take possession of the place.

1885 a suit is filed by Raghubar Mahant Das which confined to claim for Ramchabutra which was dismissed by the Sub-Judge, Faizabad

1857 Fence is erected to allow separate access to both community members.

1934: Another communal incident in the course of which damage was sustained to the mosque which was subsequently restored.

1946: Hindu Mahasabha's wing Akhil Bharatiya Ramayana Mahasabha starts an agitation for the possession of the site.

1949: On 12 November a police picket is posted in the area. On Nov. 29, SP Faizabad writes to his superiors saying several *hawan kunds* have been constructed around the mosque and bricks and lime was found in the area.

December 10: Waqf Inspector Mohd Ibrahim submitted a report to the secretary of the Masjid stating that Muslims were being prevented from offering namaz Isha (the namaz at night) at the mosque, due to the fear of Hindus and Sikhs and there was an apprehension of danger to the mosque

1949: December 22-23 night Ram and Sita idols were placed inside the site by a group under the central dome outside the disputed structure leading to protest from Muslim community. The government declares the site disputed and locks its gates.

1950: Government takes charge of the disputed site on January 5.

1950: Gopal Simla Visharad and Paramahansa Ramachandra Das file different suit in Faizabad district court for rights to worship the idols of Ram.

1959: Nirmohi Akhara files suit seeking possession of the site.

1961: UP Sunni Central Waqf Board files suit for possession of the site.

1984: A committee is created to build a temple on the site.

1986: District court of Faizabad orders to remove the lock and open the site for Hindu worshippers.

1989: On July 1 a title suit is instituted by a next friend on behalf of the deity Bhagwan Shri Ram Virajman and the birth-place of Lord Ram (Asthan Shri Ram Janmabhumi) represented by "next friend" Deeki Nandan Agarwala, a former judge of the Allahabad High Court. More title suits are filed and on July 10, 1989, all suits were transferred to the High Court of Judicature at Allahabad. On July 21, 1989, a three-judge Bench was constituted by the Chief Justice of the High Court for the trial of the suits. On an application by the state of Uttar Pradesh, the High Court passed an interim order on August 14, 1989, directing the parties to maintain status quo with respect to the property in dispute.

1989: VHP begins campaign for the construction of Ram temple.

1990: Then BJP chief L.K. Advani builds up the momentum, undertakes Rath Yatra from Somnath on September 25 for Ram Temple.



Dec 6, 1992: Babri Masjid is demolished by kar sewaks that led to a communal riot.

1992: Union Government sets up Liberhan Commission to probe the destruction of the disputed structure of the Babri Masjid.

SHORT TAKES

INDIA'S COVID
TALLY CROSSES
19 LAKH

New Delhi, Aug. 5: India's Covid-19 infection tally raced past 19 lakh on Wednesday, two days after it crossed the 18-lakh mark, with 52,509 people testing positive for the novel coronavirus in a day, while the recoveries have mounted to 12,82,215, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The total coronavirus cases in the country surged to 19,08,254 while the death toll climbed to 39,795 with 857 people succumbing to the disease in a span of 24 hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

The recovery rate among Covid-19 patients has risen to 67.19 per cent while the fatality rate has further dropped to 2.09 per cent, the data stated. There are 5,86,244 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country presently which contribute 30.72 per cent of the total caseload.

The total number of confirmed cases also includes foreigners. This is the seventh consecutive day that Covid-19 cases have increased by more than 50,000.

According to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), a cumulative total of 2,14,84,402 samples have been tested up to August 4 with 6,19,652 samples being tested on Tuesday.

Covid-19 cases continued to be high in the districts as Telangana's tally crossed the 70,000 mark. A total of 2,012 Covid-19 cases were registered on Tuesday, and the tally stands at 70,958. The number of tests conducted rose again, with 21,118 samples collected, and results of 1,167 are awaited.

According to the state health department bulletin issued on Wednesday, which contained data for Tuesday, Medchal Malkajgiri district reported 198 cases.

Temple work to be
over in 3 yrs: VHP

Original model slightly changed to give Ram Temple grand look

Indore, Aug. 5: The construction of the grand Ram temple at Ayodhya, whose *bhoomi puja* was performed on Wednesday, is expected to be completed in the next three years, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) said.

VHP international president Vishnu Sadashiv Kokje said there is enthusiasm among Hindus across the world over the foundation stone laying ceremony for the Ram temple.

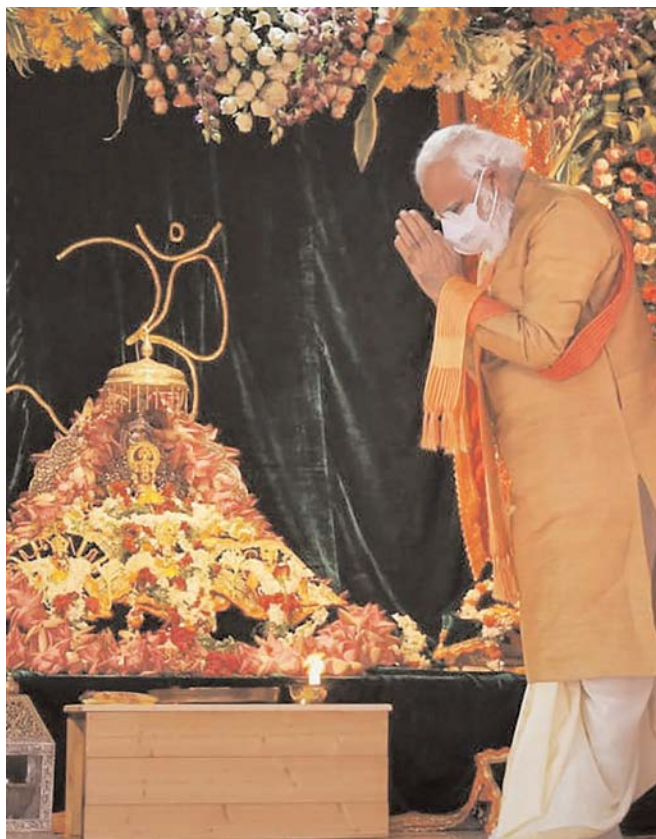
He blamed the Congress for the delay in the temple's construction.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed the groundbreaking ceremony in Ayodhya for the temple at the spot where many devout Hindus believe Lord Ram was born, marking the beginning of its construction.

Kokje said, "There is enthusiasm among Hindus across the world over the foundation stone laying for the Ram temple in Ayodhya. "The smooth manner in which the work of temple construction has been going on after the formation of Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra by the central government is amazing."

He said, "We hope that the Ram temple in Ayodhya will be completed in three years."

Kokje, a former judge of the Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan high courts, said the temple will be constructed with a slight change in the model prepared by the VHP under which stones were being carved for the last three



Prime Minister Narendra Modi offers prayers while attending the foundation stone laying ceremony for the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on Wednesday.

- PTI

decades.

"Our model has been modified slightly to give the Ram temple a grand appearance. We have already carved stones for two floors which will be used in the construction of the temple," the VHP leader said.

The VHP, which spearheaded the Ram temple movement, started carving stones for the structure at its workshop in Ayodhya in 1990.

Kokje said post-Independence, the plan to build a Ram temple in Ayodhya lagged behind due to "vote bank" politics of the Congress. He said, "Now Congress leaders are trying to show themselves as friendly towards Hindus in the changed atmosphere in the country."

Meanwhile, BJP Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya said that control of state power by Hindus is absolutely essential for sustenance of Dharma.

His comments, in a series of tweets, came on a day when Prime Minister performed the groundbreaking ceremony for the Lord Ram temple at Ayodhya. "Dear Hindus, Most important lesson is that control of State power by Hindus is absolutely essential for sustenance of Dharma."

"When we didn't control State, we lost our temple. When we regained, we rebuilt. The 282 (seats) in 2014 and 303 (seats) in 2019 to Sri Narendra Modi made today possible!" Surya, who is also the party's BJP youth Wing state general secretary, tweeted. He also said that the survival of India depends on the survival of Sanatana Dharma. "The Sanatana Dharma, that is nationalism," Sri Aurobindo had said in his Uttarapara speech.

But what does it mean? Along with Jai Sri Ram, the purohitis also chanted *Bharat Mata Ki Jai* - That is Dharmic nationalism. If Dharma survives, India survives," he said in another tweet.

IUML not
happy with
PriGa's views

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 5

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) which is the second largest constituent of the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) in Kerala has expressed its displeasure over Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi's statement welcoming *bhoomi puja* at Ayodhya in connection with construction of Ram temple.

The IUML national leadership which met in Panakkad in Malappuram district of Kerala on Wednesday, passed a resolution against Ms Gandhi's statement supporting the Ayodhya event.

"We have expressed our displeasure over Ms Gandhi's statement as we believe it was out of place," said IUML national leader and Lok Sabha Mr P. K. Kunhalikutty.

Priyanka Gandhi had stated that the programme being held with the blessings of Lord Ram and his teachings, should become a symbol of national unity, brotherhood and cultural amalgamation.

The IUML leaders had taken up statements made by Congress leaders including Kamal Nath, with the state leadership.

WORLD

IN BRIEF

Tropic storm Isaias
whips up, 6 killed

Windsor (US): At least six people were killed as Tropical Storm Isaias spawned tornadoes and dumped rain Tuesday along the US East Coast after making landfall as a hurricane in North Carolina, where it caused floods and fires that displaced dozens of people.

Two people died when Isaias spun off a tornado that struck a North Carolina mobile home park. Another person died in Pennsylvania when their vehicle was overtaken by water and swept downstream. Two others were killed by falling trees toppled by the storm in Maryland and New York City, and a sixth person died in Delaware when a tree branch fell on them, authorities said.

Brazil firemen rush
to stop Wetland fire

Pocon: A tractor cuts a fire-break through the vegetation of the Pantanal, the world's biggest tropical wetlands, as firefighters race to contain the blazes that have been devastating one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth. The Brazilian Pantanal suffered a record 1,684 fires last month, triple the number from July 2019, according to satellite images. It was the worst month on record for fires in the region, which sits on the southern edge of the Amazon rainforest and stretches from Brazil into Paraguay and Bolivia. Firefighters have been working around the clock to contain the blazes, with the help of residents of the city of Pocon and the surrounding area.

Beirut blast toll over 100, PM seeks help

2,700 tons of ammonium nitrate stored at port since its seizure in 2014 were triggered by fireworks

Beirut, Aug. 5: An official with the Lebanese Red Cross says at least 100 people were killed and more than 4,000 wounded in the massive explosion in Beirut on Tuesday. The official, George Kettaneh, says the toll could rise further. The blast in Beirut's port appeared to have been triggered by a fire. It was the most powerful explosion ever seen in the city, which has endured civil war, conflicts with Israel and terror attacks.

Residents of Beirut awoke to a scene of utter devastation on Wednesday, a day after a massive explosion at the port sent shock waves across the Lebanese capital, killing dozens of people and wounding thousands.

It was unclear what caused the blast, which appeared to have been triggered by a fire and struck with the force of an earthquake. It was the most powerful explosion ever seen in the city, which was on the front lines of the 1975-1990 civil war and has endured conflicts with neighboring Israel and periodic bombings and terror attacks. "L'Apocalypse," read the front page of Lebanon's French L'Orient Le Jour newspaper. Fireworks and ammonium nitrate appear to have ignited the explosion, experts and videos of the blast suggest.

Lebanese interior minister Mohammed Fahmi, in comments to a local TV station, made no mention of fireworks but said the blast was caused by detonation of more than 2,700 tons of ammonium nitrate stored in a warehouse.



An aerial view shows the massive damage done to Beirut ports grain silos and the area around it on Wednesday, one day after a mega-blast tore through the harbour in the heart of the Lebanese capital with the force of an earthquake, killing more than 100 people and injuring over 4,000.

— AFP

Trump: Generals suspect an attack

Washington, Aug. 5: President Donald Trump said US military generals have told him that they "seem to feel" the massive explosion that rocked Beirut on Tuesday, killing at least 70 people, was a "terrible attack" likely caused by a bomb.

Trump was asked why he called it an attack and not an accident, especially since Lebanese officials say they have not determined the cause of the

explosion. He told reporters at the White House: "It would seem like it based on the explosion. I met with some of our great generals and they just seem to feel that it was. This was not a — some kind of a manufacturing explosion type of a event. ... They seem to think it was a attack. It was a bomb of some kind, yes." Trump offered condolences to the victims and said the United States

stood ready to assist Lebanon.

"It looks like a terrible attack," he said. A Pentagon spokesman declined to comment on the matter Tuesday night, referring questions back to the White House. The explosion flattened much of a port and damaged buildings across the capital, sending a giant mushroom cloud into the sky. In addition to those who died, more than 3,000

other people were injured, with bodies buried in the rubble, officials said.

The cause of the blast was not immediately known, but initial reports suggested a fire had detonated a warehouse at the port. Abbas Ibrahim, chief of Lebanese General Security, said it might have been caused by highly explosive material that was confiscated from a ship some time ago and stored at the port. — AP

Global leaders reach
out to help Lebanon

Beirut, Aug. 5: Russia's emergency officials say the country will send five plane loads of aid to Beirut after an explosion in the Lebanese capital's port killed at least 100 people and injured thousands on Tuesday.

Russia's Ministry for Emergency Situations will send rescuers, medical workers, a makeshift hospital and a lab for coronavirus testing to Lebanon.

International aid in the form of emergency workers and medical personnel is heading to Lebanon a day after a massive explosion devastated Beirut's port, killing at least 100 people and wounding thousands.

France says it is sending two planes with dozens of emergency workers, a mobile medical unit and 15 tons of aid.

French President Emmanuel Macron's office says the aid should allow for the treatment of some 500 victims.

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Wednesday offered condolences and medical support to Lebanon after a huge blast at Beirut port devastated entire neighbourhoods of the city.

Tehran "is ready to offer medical and medicinal aid and help treat the injured and other assistance", Rouhani wrote in a message to his Lebanese counterpart, according to the government website.

LEBANON'S MAIN
GRAIN SUPPLY TO
LAST A MONTH

Beirut: Lebanon's main grain silo at Beirut port was destroyed in a blast along with the wheat inside, leaving the nation with less than a month's reserves of the grain although other vessels with supplies are on the way, the economy minister said on Wednesday.

Raoul Nehme said, a day after Tuesday's devastating blast that Lebanon needed reserves for at least three months to ensure food security and was looking at other storage areas.

He said reserves now stood at "a bit less than a month". The explosion was the most powerful ever to rip through Beirut. — Agencies

Qatar began flying field hospitals and medical aid to Beirut on Wednesday to ease pressure on Lebanon's strained medical system after the previous day's devastating explosions.

— Agencies

SHORT TAKES

Babar shines in first Test vs Eng

Manchester: Pakistan's Babar Azam underlined his status as one of the world's leading batsmen with a fine unbeaten fifty before rain stopped play on the opening day of the first Test against England at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

Pakistan were 121-2, with Babar 52 not out, when the umpires ordered an early tea in Manchester.

Together with left-handed opener Shan Masood (45 not out), he had put on an unbroken 78 for the third wicket before the weather intervened.

Pakistan were 43-2 when Babar came in to bat after captain Azhar Ali, who had won the toss, fell ill for a duck to Chris Woakes.

After the interval the 25-year-old, who had scored four hundreds in his five previous Tests, unfurled an array of stylish attacking shots.

— AFP

Brief scores: Pakistan 121/2 in 41.1 overs (Shan Masood 45, Babar Azam 52, C. Woakes 1/4) vs England.

Stirling, Balbirnie star in Irish win

Southampton: Paul Stirling and Andrew Balbirnie starred as Ireland claimed only a second win over England in its history after overcoming the world champions in the final over.

Brief scores: England 328 in 50 overs (Morgan 106, Banton 58, Willey 51, Young 3/53) lost to Ireland 329/3 in 49.5 overs (Stirling 142, Balbirnie 113).

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Editor: ADITYA SINHA

New Delhi, Aug. 5: The IPL teams want a three-day quarantine for their players arriving in the UAE instead of the six days mentioned in the BCCI draft SOP and have also sought the board's permission to organise team and family dinners with "adequate" advanced notice.

"These points, along with their request to have food ordered from outside via contactless deliveries to the hotel, will be discussed in the team owners' meeting with IPL officials on Wednesday evening, a BCCI official said.

As per the existing BCCI SOP which can be tweaked, the players and support staff will be tested on Day 1, Day 3 and Day 6 of their quarantine in the UAE and after clearing that, they will be allowed to train. After this, they will be tested every fifth day during the 53-day event beginning September 19.

"Most players have not had much game time in the last 6 months and are looking forward to as much practice as possible," the official said.

The BCCI has told the teams to leave for UAE not before August 20 though some of the teams, including CSK, wanted to leave early.

"Can teams be allowed to arrive anytime post August 15, instead of August 20 as mentioned to accommodate the quarantine period and still have enough time for practice and preparations of players? Currently the SOP suggests that they cannot interact with the squad, unless they are a part of the bubble. Owners will not be able to spend 3 months in a bubble" read the note.

During the quarantine in the UAE, players will not be even allowed to interact with other team members and can only do so after clearing at least three Covid-19 tests.

Teams will be staying at separate hotels and since it is a long tournament, they want the players to

SOP OPERA

IPL franchises want procedures tweaked



● **IPL teams want three-day quarantine instead of the proposed six days by BCCI.**

● **Franchises also seek permission to organise family dinner with adequate notice.**

● **Sides want access to facilities like golf among others to unwind during the league.**

● **Requests have also been made for contactless food delivery options at hotels.**

unwind by playing golf and attending team and family dinners.

"One big area of concern is the wellbeing of the players as they stay in a bubble for 80+ days. The

pressures of competitive sport do not make it any easier. Can IPL consider this with advice of medical professionals?" the note read.

— PTI

LEAGUE IN UAE WILL BE CHALLENGING: RAINA

Mumbai, Aug. 5: Chennai Super Kings' star all-rounder Suresh Raina believes the upcoming Indian Premier League, to be played in the UAE amid the Covid-19 pandemic, will pose a lot of new challenges for the players, and clarity of thought would be key for a player to succeed.

"This IPL would be very interesting to see how the players are thinking," Raina said in a webinar after being named as the global brand ambassador for a sporting app.

"You are playing in different circumstances and you have a lot of protocol from ICC and at the same time you are going to go through (Covid-19) tests every two-three weeks," he added.

— PTI

No champ Nadal show at US Open

Madrid, Aug. 5: Defending champion Rafael Nadal will skip the U.S. Open because of the coronavirus pandemic, putting on hold his bid to equal Roger Federer's men's record for Grand Slam titles.

Nadal explained his decision in a series of tweets sent in Spanish and English on Tuesday.

The situation is very complicated worldwide, the Covid-19 cases are increasing, it looks like we still don't have control of it, Nadal wrote.

The 34-year-old from Spain called sitting out the tournament scheduled to begin Aug. 31 in New York a decision I never wanted to take, but added that he would rather not travel.

Rafa is one of the greatest champions in our sport and we support his decision," U.S. Open tournament director Stacey Allaster said.

The current No. 1-ranked woman, Ash Barty, already had announced she would be missing the U.S. Open.

The U.S. Tennis Association's entry list announcements Tuesday noted that 2019 women's champion Bianca Andreescu is in the field.

— AFP

NAGAL IN MAIN DRAW FOR GRAND SLAM

New York, Aug. 5: Young Indian tennis player Sumit Nagal is set to compete in his second Grand Slam main draw after receiving a direct entry into the US Open, which several top players will miss due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The world number 127 is the last man to receive a direct entry, according to the tournament website.

It will be Nagal's second appearance at the US Open, starting August 31, and he is the only Indian in the men's field with Prajesh Gunneswaran, ranked 132, missing out.

"It feels good to make a main draw of a Slam again since I have only made one main draw yet. I understand the situation is not the same this year. I am looking to fly to USA after my challengers in Czech Republic," Nagal said.

Last year, Nagal reached his maiden Grand Slam at the US Open.

— PTI



Italian tennis player Camila Giorgi returns to during her women's singles match at the Palermo Ladies Open on Wednesday.

LIVE RICH FINANCIAL Chronicle

quick BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	37,663.33 -0.07
Nifty 50	11,101.65 0.06
S&P 500*	3,327.08 0.62
Dollar (₹)	74.94 0.14
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.85 0.14
Euro (₹)	88.47 -0.04
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	56,181▲1,365 2.42
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	46.06 1.63
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.826 -0.007
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.539 0.026

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Ajay Tyagi gets 18 months' extension at Sebi

Ajay Tyagi was given an 18-month extension, till February 2022, as the chairman of Sebi, a Personnel Ministry order said. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by PM Modi has approved extension of Tyagi's term for 18 months, with effect from Sept. 1, 2020 up to Feb. 28, 2022, it said. Tyagi, a 1984 batch IAS (retired) officer of Himachal Pradesh cadre, was appointed as the Sebi chairman in March 2017 for three years.

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■ Precious metal races past \$2,000-mark Gold at new high, set to rally more

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

Gold in the international market breached the psychological level of \$2,000 per ounce as the dollar continued to weaken amidst a gloomy global economy.

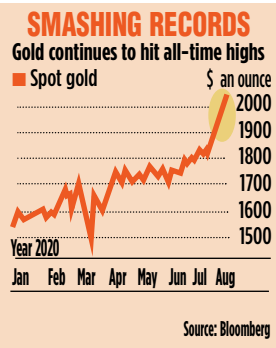
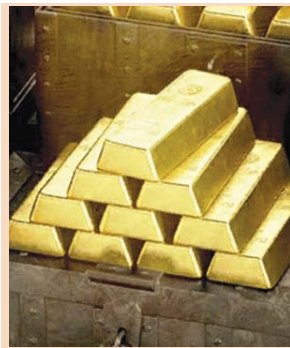
In the international market gold made a new high of \$2,043 per ounce after crossing the crucial level. This took gold prices to record high on the Multi Commodity Exchange to Rs 55,280 per 10 gm. In the Delhi bullion market, 24 carat gold was seen trading above Rs 57,000 per 10 gm.

In the international market, gold has provided handsome year-on-year return of 34 per cent and year-to-date return of 29.7 per cent. In the Indian futures market, gold has given returns of 40.7 per cent since the beginning of the year.

The weakening US dollar provided the necessary trigger for gold to move up above \$2,000. Falling US treasury yields and expectations of another stimulus package have been pulling down the US dollar, which has an inverse correlation with gold.

From 103 levels in March, the dollar index has come down to 92.5 levels and was seen trading around 92.9 on Wednesday as the market kept guessing on another stimulus, said Himanshu Gupta, vice president and head of commodities and currencies research, Globe Capital.

"We believe that a \$1



trillion (stimulus) or something along those lines has already been priced in. At the same time, we also believe that markets could be looking close to \$3 trillion in the next round of stimulus. However, in order for gold prices to move much higher, substantially more additional stimulus would be needed from the Federal Reserve," said Sriram Iyer, senior research analyst at Reliance Securities.

Most of the central banks have been adopting an accommodative monetary policy, supporting safe haven demand in gold.

"The liquidity push by central banks across the globe has been a deciding factor for premium in gold prices as the pandemic continues to ravage the global economy. The easy money policy is resulting in to chasing higher yields on asset classes which are considered to be safe in times of uncertainty, and nothing like gold, the safe haven asset which has historically been a go-to invest-

ment for investors," said Prathamesh Mallaya, AVP-research, Angel Broking. Technically, a resistance is seen for August gold at \$2,055 and a break above that could push prices to \$2,088 and a break above the second resistance could push prices to \$2,125, says Iyer.

"A possible level of \$2,200 in the medium term might see gold moving above Rs 58,500 in the Indian market," said Gupta.

A Bloomberg report said gold could extend gains as governments and central banks respond to slowing growth with vast amounts of stimulus. Goldman Sachs Group Inc. forecasts a rally to \$2,300.

"The stage has been set for gold to continue to climb higher," Paul Wong, market strategist at Sprott Inc., said in a report. "We see increased fiscal spending ahead, extremely accommodative monetary policy in place for years and a challenging economic recovery."

Ban to cover more apps from Xiaomi, Baidu

SANKALP PHARTIYAL & ADITYA KALRA
NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

The government has banned some mobile apps of Chinese companies such as Xiaomi Corp and Baidu Inc, three sources told Reuters on Wednesday. The government in June outlawed 59 Chinese apps for threatening the country's "sovereignty and integrity", including ByteDance's video-sharing app TikTok, Alibaba's UC Browser and Xiaomi's Mi Community app.

Another ban was imposed in recent weeks on about 47 apps which mostly contained clones, or simply different versions, of the already banned apps, the sources said.

Unlike its June move, the government did not make its latest decision public, but there are a few new apps that have made it to that list, including Xiaomi's Mi Browser Pro and Baidu's search apps, the sources said.

It wasn't immediately clear how many new apps have been affected.

India's IT ministry and the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi did not respond to a request for comment.

A spokesman for Xiaomi in India said the company was trying to understand the development and will take appropriate measures.

— Reuters

Hotel occupancies stay below 20% in June qtr

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

Occupancies of hotels in key cities remained well below 20 per cent in the June quarter as the revenue per available room (RevPAR) dropped by more than 80 per cent.

Goa hotels witnessed the lowest occupancies at 9.4 per cent. The highest occupancy was recorded in Mumbai at 23.2 per cent in June quarter, as per JLL's Hotel Momentum India Q2 2020 report.

Vande Bharat Mission remained a major demand generator for hotels in key cities. Under the mission, Indians who were repatriated from other countries were kept under quarantine in hotels of their respective cities.

All key markets in India reported a decrease in RevPAR performance in Q2 2020 over the same period last year. Mumbai remained the RevPAR leader in absolute terms, despite a decline of 81 per cent compared to Q2 2019. Goa saw the



Driven by the weak numbers of Q2, the hospitality industry reported a decline of 43.5 per cent in RevPAR for the first half of the year over the same period of 2019, found JLL.

Average daily room rate (ADR) too was the highest in Mumbai and the lowest was in Jaipur. While Jaipur saw a decline of 54 per cent in ADR, the lowest decline was seen in Gurugram at 29 per cent.

"Whilst hotels in certain cities opened in early June, guests have not yet returned. We believe that demand in business cities will take time to recover and it will only happen when companies allow their employees to travel through their revised travel advisories. Leisure demand may pick up around large cities wherein close friends and family groups may start traveling by road in the coming months," said Jaideep Dang, managing director, Hotels & Hospitality Group (India), JLL.

sharpest decline in RevPAR in Q2 2020, with a 93.9 per cent drop. Other cities such as Kolkata (88.9 per cent), Bengaluru at 88.5 per cent, and Ahmedabad (85.5 per cent) also witnessed sharp decline in performance.

According to another report by global hospitality consultancy HVS and Anarock, in the month of June, average occupancies across the country were down 67 per cent against the same month last year. This led to an 80.5 per cent decline in RevPAR.

Airtel partners Amazon to grow cloud biz

New Delhi, Aug. 5: Bharti Airtel Ltd and Amazon Web Services (AWS) will join forces to develop the Indian telecoms firm's cloud business, allowing it to offer a wider range of products to its enterprise clients, the two companies said on Wednesday.

Airtel Cloud currently provides data centre and cloud services to compa-

nies and governments via different partnerships.

"AWS with the depth and breadth of our platform, and Airtel with its deep reach and expertise and focus, I think together we can build a set of really differentiated cloud products and go serve customers at scale in India," Puneet Chandok, president, India and South Asia at Amazon Internet

Services told a virtual news conference.

New products could include data analytics, artificial intelligence and machine learning, and security services among others, the two companies said.

The public cloud services market in India is expected to be worth \$7.1 billion in 2024, up from \$3.4 billion this year.