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WEATHER

Max: 30.3°C
Min: 23.7°C
RH: 71%
Rainfall: Trace
Forecast: Cloudy sky, moderate rains likely. Max/Min temp. 32/23ºC

COVID-19 COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+50,883)	(+847)
19,06,121	39,819

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+1,286)	(+12)
TS: 68,946	563
(+9,747)	(+67)
AP: 1,76,333	1,604

CASES AROUND THE WORLD

1,85,71,754

DEATHS

7,00,387

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES 213

worldometers.info/coronavirus

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari; Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shravana Bahula Dwitiya till 10.52 pm
Star: Danistha till 9.31 am
Varjyam: 5.15 pm to 6.59 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.57 am to 12.47 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon to 1.30 pm

HIJRI CALENDAR

Zulhijja 14,1441 AH

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.51 am
Zohar: 12.32 pm
Asar: 4.49 pm
Maghrib: 6.53 pm
Isha: 8.06 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.47 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.56 AM
MOONRISE TODAY -
MOONSET TOMORROW 7.12 AM

COUNTER POINT

You have to vacate the bed for a VVIP!

IN BRIEF

Ex-MLA Rajaiah passes away

Khammam: Former MLA of Bhadrachalam and CPM leader Sunnam Rajaiah, who was known for his simple living, passed away due to Covid-19 on Tuesday. He was 60, and is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son, none of whom is in politics. Rajaiah's funeral was held at his native village Sunnamvarigudem, which was allotted to AP during state bifurcation. He had a fever and had cleared his first test for Covid-19. When he did not recover, a second test was taken and the result was positive. Rajaiah's health condition deteriorated and he was shifted to Vijayawada, where he died in a hospital.

■ Full report on Page 2

H-1B out, Trump orders US to hire only Americans

Washington, Aug. 3: In a huge blow to Indian IT professionals eyeing the US job market, US President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order preventing federal agencies from contracting or subcontracting foreign workers — mainly those on H-1B visa — from hiring.

The move came over a month after the Trump administration in June 23 suspended the H-1B visas along with other types of foreign work visas until the end of 2020 to protect American workers in a crucial election year. The new restrictions took effect from June 24.

The H1B visa, most sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China. "Today I am signing an executive order to ensure that the federal government lives by a very simple rule, higher American," Trump told reporters in the Oval Office of the White House before signing the order against hiring H1B visa holders for federal contracts.

Trump told reporters that his administration will not tolerate firing of hardworking Americans in the pursuit of cheap foreign labour. "As we speak, we're finalising the H-1B regulation so that no American workers be replaced ever again. H-1B should be used for top highly paid talent to create American jobs, not as inexpensive labour programmes and destroy American job," said the president. — *PTI*

TRUMP: INDIA HAS BIG PROBLEM IN STOPPING COVID

Washington, Aug. 4: President Donald Trump has said that as compared to big countries, America is doing "very well" in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, while India is having a "tremendous problem" battling the disease and China is witnessing a "massive flare up" in infections.

India's Covid-19 tally increased to 18,55,745 on Tuesday with 52,050 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day. China on Tuesday reported 36 new cases across the country, down from 43 the previous day.

The country's Covid-19 cases crossed the 100-mark on July 29, for the first time in over three months, sparking the fear of a rebound.

Priyanka backs temple, wishes for era of unity

Kamal Nath credits Rajiv Gandhi for temple; Ayodhya spruced up for big day

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

In a significant shift in her party's stand on the Ram Mandir, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday expressed the hope that Wednesday's *bhoomi pujan* at Ayodhya will be an occasion for "national unity, fraternity and cultural congregation". The Congress hasn't been invited to the Ayodhya ceremony on Wednesday where Prime Minister Narendra Modi and over 100 VIPs are expected to be present.

After the Supreme Court's verdict in November that a temple should be built on the disputed site in Ayodhya, the CWC passed a resolution that welcomed it. Congress chief spokesman Randeep Surjewala had said then the party was in favour of temple construction.

On Tuesday, Ms Vadra, AICC general secretary in charge of UP, tweeted: "Simplicity, courage, restraint, sacrifice, commitment are the essence of the name Deenbandhu Rama. Ram is with everyone".

"With the message and grace of Lord Ram and Mother Sita, the *bhoomi pujan* (will be) an occasion for national unity, fraternity and cultural congregation," she added.

Former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath said the temple construction is "with the consent of every Indian". He also held a recital of the Hanuman Chalisa. Mr Nath noted it was former PM Rajiv Gandhi who paved the way for the temple construction in 1986.

Congress MP Manish Tewari posted several tweets on the *bhoomi pujan*, including a video message where he sang Mahatma Gandhi's favourite Ram *bhajans*.

For the BJP, the beginning of construction of a grand temple in Ayodhya is an ideological victory over its rivals with many Opposition leaders now welcoming the development.

Meanwhile, police barricades, yellow banners, walls with a fresh coat of paint and the sounds of *bhajan* mark parts of Ayodhya as the city awaits its big day on Wednesday, when the first brick will be laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Ram temple. The event at the Ram Janmabhoomi will be attended by 175 people who figure in a select guest list of seers and politicians.

Concerned over the spread of coronavirus, the authorities are encouraging others not to come to the temple town, asking them to mark the occasion by celebrating at their homes.

The ground breaking ceremony will start at around 8 am and end at about 2 pm. The main "bhumi pujan" is expected to take place at 12.30 pm and the foundation stone will be laid at 12.40 pm.

The groundbreaking ceremony of the Ram temple will be telecast live.

Above: Workers decorate an area in the town of Ayodhya on Tuesday ahead of the ground breaking ceremony of Ram temple. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for the temple, which was marred in decades of controversy and was a subject of protracted litigation.
Left: A model of the proposed Ram temple at Ayodhya. — *PTI*

SIMPLICITY, COURAGE, restraint, sacrifice, commitment are the essence of the name Deenbandhu Rama. Ram is with everyone. With the message and grace of Lord Ram and Mother Sita, the bhoomi pujan (will be) an occasion for national unity, fraternity and cultural congregation,"

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA, *Congress leader*

India crosses 19L, Pradhan positive

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

India went past 19-lakh mark in Coronavirus case tally, with the addition of over 50,000 new cases on Tuesday. Union Oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan and former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah were the high-profile persons, who tested positive on Tuesday.

Pradhan, who had met home minister Amit Shah, had got himself tested for Covid-19 and found to be positive. He has been admitted to the hospital, where Shah is being treated.

The country, which has been adding over 50,000 new cases since last few days, has topped the world in reporting new infections as the spread of the disease has slowed down in the United States and Brazil. If this rate of new infections, India could cross 20-lakh figure on Thursday.

Health secretary Rajesh Bhushan has admitted that the virus has spread into new areas in the country — a development which, unless controlled, could lead to emergence of new hotspots for the virus.

The secretary, however, added that 82 per cent of the total Coronavirus cases continue remain limited to 10 states, while 50 districts account for 66 per cent of the total caseload of Covid-19.

Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) chief Dr Balram Bhargava on Tuesday said some mutation in the coronavirus has been noticed but it is very minor to make much of a difference.

Virinchi Hospital too loses licence for treating Covid

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

The state government on Tuesday withdrew permission to treat Covid-19 patients to a second corporate hospital in the city in as many days, announcing that Virinchi Hospitals in Banjara Hills will no longer be allowed to admit Covid-19 patients.

The health department in its orders said the hospital was "charging exorbitant rates," indulging in "improper and surplus billing and not adhering to the ceiling guidelines. Several complaints have been received against Virinchi Hospitals, Banjara Hills. On enquiry, it was found that the complaints against Virinchi Hospitals given by various sources were found to be correct," Director of Health Services Dr G. Srinivasa Rao said in a news release.

The hospital first to lose permission to treat Covid-19 patients was Deccan Hospital in Somajiguda, also for similar reasons.

The department has made it clear that the currently admitted Covid-19 patients in Virinchi and Deccan hospitals will continue to receive treatment at the facilities at the rates prescribed by the government. The government had capped charges for treatment in ICU at ₹9,000 per day.

■ Page 2: Private hospitals in city have 4,244 patients

Etala castigates pvt hospitals over fees

BALU PULIPAKA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

The government on Tuesday castigated corporate and private hospitals, accusing them of acting without any sense of responsibility and calling their functioning during the Covid-19 pandemic "the worst behaviour on record."

"If a patient looks like he or she is not likely to survive, some corporate hospitals are sending them to Gandhi Hospital," health minister Etala Rajendar said, adding, "this is just wrong." He was addressing a media meet here.

"In some instances, patients who arrive at private hospitals in a serious condition, irrespective of the cause, are not being admitted. We appeal to these hospitals not to act in such a manner," Rajendar said, adding that the first priority is to treat and save a patient's life.

■ Page 2: Start treating the patient first, says Etala

BORDER | BACKLASH

Ambani or Adani may step in for 2020 IPL; Vivo likely to return next year

Chinese mobile firm Vivo exits 2020 IPL

MOSES KONDETY I DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

The Sino-India border conflict has led to a different board game. Irked by the rising anti-China sentiment in the country and the call to boycott its products post the June military confrontation in Galwan Valley, Chinese mobile phone company Vivo on Tuesday checkmated the Indian cricket board by backing out as title sponsor of the cash-rich Indian Premier League's 2020 season beginning in the UAE on September 19.

That leaves little time for the BCCI to float a tender and find an alternative. The cricket board has not made any announcement yet, but insiders admit to jitters in the Board even as they are sure that a suitable sponsor will be found within the short window.

The BCCI has been slammed on social media after the IPL Governing Council on Sunday announced that it was retaining all sponsors for the 2020 edition, a barrage that may have caused Vivo to look for the exit. The door is not entirely closed on the Chinese firm though, it could be back in 2021 and extend its tenure by an year, till 2023.

Vivo's five-year deal worth ₹2,199 crore signed in 2017 runs till the 2022 edition of IPL and fetches the BCCI ₹440 crore every year.

However, unlike the hostility in Galwan Valley, Vivo's severance will be conflict-free, it is learnt.

● VIVO'S FIVE-year deal worth ₹2,199 crore signed in 2017 runs till the 2022 edition of IPL and fetches the BCCI ₹440 crore every year. However, unlike the hostility in Galwan Valley, Vivo's severance will be conflict-free.

The BCCI and Vivo are likely to reach a harmonious settlement and resume their partnership subject to improvement of relations between India and China.

The BCCI has opened channels to rope in short-term sponsors. "Adani or Ambani could be in the mix," said an official with connections in the Board.

"Reliance Industries is such a big firm and has presence everywhere, from petrol to telecommunications to insurance. Similar is the stature of the Adani Group. One of them just might jump in," he added.

Others say Gulf-based firms could also be in fray.

"With the tournament being played in oil-rich UAE, companies can gain massive mileage out of the glitzy league. I am sure they would be eyeing the event," another official said.

All said, it's a game of Chinese checkers for now. Whoever said sports and politics don't mix.

ANTI-CAA STIR STARTS ONCE AGAIN IN ASSAM

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, AUG. 4

After a five-month gap, protests against the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act have started resurfacing in Assam.

The All Assam Students Union on Tuesday held a motorcycle rally in Dibrugarh. The protests were sparked soon after the Centre sought three more months to frame the CAA rules.

■ Full report on Page 7

SHORT TAKES

NO GRAPHIC PICTURES ON TOBACCO ITEMS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

Pictorial warnings prohibiting the use of tobacco products has been deferred by the Union ministry of health and family welfare, which had earlier agreed to display them.

Graphic pictures of people suffering from oral cancer were to be displayed to dissuade new users. Implementation of the measure during the pandemic would have helped as risk and severity of pulmonary infections damages upper airways and also decreases immunity of the body.

Dr Rakesh Gupta, who works for tobacco cessation, said, "By delaying pictorial warnings on tobacco products, the health ministry is contradicting its own advisory to hold back tobacco use during the pandemic. It is going to adversely impact the motivation of tobacco users to quit. This deferment is under the pressure of the tobacco industry which is a big blow to those who have worked hard to come to this stage."

In India, 27 crore adults use tobacco and it kills more than 13 lakh users every year. Pictorial health warnings were an easy and cost-effective tool for educating against tobacco use.

HC IMPOSES ₹50K FINE ON VILLAGE PANCHAYAT SECY

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

Justice T. Vinod Kumar of the Telangana High Court on Tuesday imposed a fine of ₹50,000 on the Landapur village panchayat secretary of Nirmal district, for furnishing fabricated documents before the court and concealing the original papers which reflected irregularities in allocating fishing rights to fishermen in local water bodies.

The allegation was that the official went by the advice of minister A. Indrakaran Reddy, who had allegedly developed a grudge against the fishermen co-operative society of Talveda village for not supporting the TRS in the 2018 Assembly elections.

Society members approached High Court, stating that, due to political pressure, the police was not allowing them to nurture fish in the water tanks of the village and preventing them from catching fish.

Apart from the merits of the case, the court found that the documents and payment slips of allotment of water tanks were fabricated and contrived, by concealing old documents. Justice Vinod Kumar imposed the fine and directed the collector to take action against the panchayat secretary for unlawful activity.

FIVE HELD FOR STEALING PHONES WORTH ₹1.5 LAKH

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA T. | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

Police have arrested five youngsters of a courier service in Shamshabad for stealing mobile phones meant for delivery to customers. Six mobile phones worth ₹1.5 lakh have been seized from them.

Police said Mohd. Muzamith, M. Anil, T. Malla Prashanth, and K. Bablu, residents of Shamshabad and C. Shiva of Shabad, all in their early 20s, had been working as helpers at Hyderabad Hub E-com Express, a courier company at Rasheedguda in Shamshabad. In the last week of July, Muzamith stole an MI phone. When he did not find anyone at the company being aware of the theft, he decided to continue stealing phones and shared his modus operandi with his friends.

Security and Loss Prevention executive of the company, A. Koteshwar Reddy, realised that a mobile phone, which was supposed to be delivered to a customer, was missing. Two days later, Reddy found that six more phones of MI and Lenovo had gone missing, apart from two chains that were to be delivered to customers.

He lodged a complaint with the police, who took up investigation. When confronted, the five youth confessed that they had stolen the mobile phones and chains, which were recovered from them. All the five have been arrested and produced before a court on Tuesday.

Umbrella distancing

Devotees at the Peddamma temple at Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, hold umbrellas provided by the authorities to maintain social distancing while standing in a queue on Tuesday. The devotees are expected to hold the umbrellas for the duration of their stay in the temple. — *R. PAVAN*

Lockdown takes toll on kids with special needs: Experts

Parents say there is no replacement for physical, sensory therapy

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

Children with special needs are getting left behind due to the Covid-19 and lockdown conditions, say experts. Since the advent of online education and training, children with disabilities have faced major disadvantages with lack of regular interaction with their teachers, peers, and no physical, sensory and occupational therapy.

The lockdown has aggravated the erratic behaviour of kids with disabilities making it more difficult for parents to handle the situation. One such case is that of Ten-year-old Madhav (name changed) who attended a non-verbal school until the lockdown. He used to spend his days learning from a special education teacher working with speech, physical and occupational therapists. Ever since the school shut, the 10-year-old's moods worsened and his distractions grew by the day. The behaviour perturbed the family. Even after he calmed down after a few weeks, the family wasn't able to understand his erratic behaviour.

"A lot of kids with disabilities find comfort in routine. When that routine gets disrupted, their anxiety goes up and they tend to behave differently,"said Dr Garima Vegivada, clinical director, speech language pathology, Hear 'N' Say Clinic, Secunderabad.

WHILE there are online therapy options to explore, parents say it limits the scope to enhancement of only academic skills of children. For sensory integration and body balance, a therapist is required hands on.

While there are online therapy options to explore, parents say it limits the scope to enhancement of only academic skills of children. "Initially we were worried that lockdown would mean a setback for my daughter who suffers from autism. She has adapted well to online therapy that is limited to enhancing her academic skills. For specific issues like sensory integration and body balance, a therapist is required hands on. Parents can be guided but some exercises are best handled by experts," said Neha, a special needs parent.

Dr Garima was of the view that online therapy will prevent loss of the work done prior to the lockdown and ensure some continuity.

"The lockdown has reduced the number of parents and children seeking help due to restrictions in movement. There is hardly a 10 per cent inflow to my clinic, as compared to earlier. We are encouraging parents to opt for tele-rehabilitation to retrieve the situation and provide much needed solace to children," she said.

This is a need of the hour treatment option that needs greater awareness for more and more children and parents in distress and those in the remote areas with no access to such therapies, Dr Garima added.

KCR may give pension sop to farmers today

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

K. Chandrashekar Rao

SOURCES IN the government said the announcement had got delayed in view of the Covid-19 crisis.

THE GOVERNMENT givs of ₹5,000 per acre per season to each farmer under Rythu Bandhu besides extending Rythu Bhima insurance.

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao is likely to discuss in the Cabinet a new sop for farmers, something he had promised during the inauguration of the Kondapochamma Sagar on May 29.

The Cabinet is meeting at 2 pm on Wednesday in Pragathi Bhavan.

After inaugurating the project, Rao had said at a press conference that he would soon make an announcement for the benefit of farmers which will be unprecedented and never attempted by any other state. He had asked the farmers to bear with the suspense for just a few more days.

He said, "I will be making some major announcements for the farmers very soon. The finances have already been worked out."

Sources in the government said the announcement had got delayed in view of the Covid-19 crisis.

The government has been already giving financial assistance of ₹5,000 per acre per season to each farmer under Rythu Bandhu besides extending the Rythu Bhima insurance scheme.

The Chief Minister has kept the scheme as secret and even ministers, MLAs and officials are curious about what it could be. One guess is that the CM could announce a pension scheme for farmers.

As per the official agenda, the Cabinet will discuss the possibility of reopening schools in the first week of September, and the anti-Coronavirus measures to be implemented by educational institutions.

It is also expected to discuss the construction of the Secretariat complex and regulatory farming methods and the river water dispute with Andhra Pradesh.

Sources revealed that apart from the above issues, the Cabinet may take up the issues of enhancing the retirement age of government employees, financial situation of the state apart from the new scheme for farmers.

Rao on Tuesday held a marathon review meeting with the officials of the roads and buildings, irrigation, agriculture and finance department officials at Pragathi Bhavan.

Uttam asks KCR to get AP to stop project in Seema

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

TPCC CHIEF N. UTTAM Kumar Reddy wrote an open letter to the Chief Minister stating that the plan of the AP government was illegal and against the law, as water was being taken outside the Krishna basin and to the Pennar basin. This was against the interests of the people of Telangana state.

TPCC president N. Uttam Kumar Reddy and Ram Mohan Reddy, the party's Krishna Water Protection Committee convener, have requested Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao to immediately intervene and to take action to stop the construction of the Rayalaseema lift irrigation project by the Andhra Pradesh government.

Both the leaders wrote an open letter to the Chief Minister on Tuesday stating that the plan of the AP government was illegal and against the law, as water was being taken outside the Krishna basin and to the Pennar basin. This was against the interests of the people of Telangana state.

They said that in spite of two letters written by the Krishna River Board chairman, the AP government without giving a reply was going ahead with the construction of the project floating tenders.

They told Rao, "in case the AP government does go ahead with physical execution of the work, the Congress demands that you accept moral responsibility for failing to protect the interests of Telangana and you should resign as CM."

The Congress leaders said that if the AP government was not stopped, irrigation under the projects in the Krishna basin like the Nagarjunasagar, Palamuru-Ranga Reddy, Dindi, Srisailam Left Bank Canal and A. Madhava Reddy projects would be adversely affected. "There is a real danger of the undivided Mahbubnagar, RR and Nalgonda districts turning into a desert," they said. Drinking water supply to Hyderabad would also be affected.

The Congress leaders told the CM: "It is indeed surprising and shocking that when the government of India calls for an Apex Mouncil meeting on such an important subject, you have chosen to hold a Cabinet meeting for the Secretariat design the same day."

They said if AP completes the Pothireddypadu expansion from 44,000 cusecs to 80,000 cusecs per day and builds the Rayalaseema project to draw 3 tmc ft of Krishna water per day, the very purpose of creation of a separate state — to prevent injustice in allocation of water — will be defeated.

TS TESTS A LITTLE MORE, FINDS 1,286 POSITIVE

KANIZA GARARI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

Ranga Reddy and Karimnagar again registered a surge with 121 and 101 new cases of Covid-19 reported on Monday, according to the state health department bulletin released on Tuesday. The total cases in the state on Monday stood at 1,286, and the reports of 919 samples are still pending. The overall caseload stands at 68,946.

The state tested 13,787 samples on Monday, against 9,443 on Sunday and 19,202 on Sunday. The state had recorded 983 and 1,891 cases respectively on those two days.

Twelve deaths were registered on Monday, taking the toll to 563.

The state has 18,708 active cases and the doubling time is 10.5 days. This indicates there is a need for more testing to find out more asymptomatic patients.

The districts have seen a rise in cases with more people getting tested. Double-digit numbers were recorded in Warangal Urban (63), Nizamabad (59), Jogulamba Gadwal (55). Five per cent of these cases were listed as serious. Anti-viral drugs are available only in government hospitals and one or two private hospitals have been given permission.

In areas like Mahbubnagar, there are no specialists and all the serious cases are sent to Hyderabad for treatment. Those who can afford treatment go to private hospitals while those who cannot are sent to Gandhi Hospital.

TWELVE DEATHS were registered on Monday, taking the toll to 563.

Rajaiah, who took bus as MLA, dies of Covid-19

RAVINDRA SESHU | DC
KHAMMAM, AUG. 4

Sunnam Rajaiah

Former MLA of Bhadrachalam and CPM leader Sunnam Rajaiah, who was known for his simple living, passed away due to Covid-19 on Tuesday. He was 60, and is survived by his wife, two daughters and a son, none of whom is in politics.

Rajaiah's funeral was held at his native village Sunnamvarigudem, which was allotted to Andhra Pradesh during state bifurcation.

Rajaiah had a fever and had cleared his first test for Covid-19. When he did not recover, a second test was taken and the result was positive. Rajaiah's health condition deteriorated and he was shifted to Vijayawada for treatment, where he died in a hospital.

Rajaiah was elected to the Assembly from Bhadrachalam in 1999, 2004 and 2014. Rajaiah was known to be idealistic and used to travel by autorickshaw to the Assembly and Secretariat in Hyderabad. He was once stopped by the police while entering the Assembly after getting down from an autorickshaw. He had to then show the police his MLA's identity card.

Rajaiah was also known to travel to Hyderabad and back home by RTC buses.

In one instance, a person from Bhadrachalam went to meet Rajaiah in Hyderabad on a minor problem that he was facing, related to the Scheduled Tribes students hostel. Rajaiah took him to the office in an autorickshaw and had the issue resolved by talking to the officials concerned.

As an MLA, he never tried to secure a government job for his children, nor inducted them into politics. One of his daughters, who completed her BTech, is working in a private company and the other two children are doing small jobs.

The people of Bhadrachalam recalled his services and paid tributes to Rajaiah. B. Sankar Reddy, a political leader in Bhadrachalam, said, "Rajaiah was an impeccable leader. Rajaiah was never egoistic and used to receive people warmly and hear their woes. He used to move with the people to solve their problems."

Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao, former CPI general secretary Suravaram Sudhakar Reddy and several political party leaders condoled the demise of Rajaiah. Sudhakar Reddy said Rajaiah was a dedicated Communist who remained committed to the party in spite of various hurdles.

CPI-M Khammam and Bhadradri-Kothagudem district committees expressed shock and grief. CPI-M Khammam district president N. Nageswara Rao said, "Sunnam was a committed and discipline leader of the CPI-M"

Transport minister Puvvada Ajay said, "The people of Khammam and Bhadradri districts have lost a perfect leader".TRS MP Nama Nageswara Rao, former MP P. Srinivasa Reddy, former minister Tummala Nageswara Rao and Sattupalli MLA Sandra Venkata Veeraiah expressed their grief.

PVT HOSPITALS IN CITY HAVE 4,244 PATIENTS

From Page 1

The charges for treatment in in shared general ward in private hospitals was capped at ₹4,500 a day.

According to the Covid-19 bulletin issued on Tuesday, as of 8 pm on Monday, Virinchi had 118 admitted Covid-19 patients while Deccan Hospital, as on Sunday evening, had 26 Covid-19 patients. The private hospitals that are allowed to treat Covid-19 patients had between them 4,244 admitted as Coronavirus cases as per Tuesday's Covid-19 bulletin.

Health minister Etala Rajendar, meanwhile, said the intention of the government was not to shut down private hospitals but to ensure they mend their ways. "We want them to follow the rules, fee ceiling and treat people humanely. This is a serious health crisis and private hospitals should treat it as such and not exploit patients," he said.

THE PRIVATE hospitals that are allowed to treat Covid-19 patients had between them 4,244 admitted as Coronavirus cases as per Tuesday's Covid-19 bulletin.

Start treating the patient first, orders Etala

From Page 1

He said the health department received thousands of complaints on overcharging, excessive billing and other aspects related to Covid-19 treatment at private and corporate hospitals. "When we gave permission to treat Covid-19 patients after High Court issued orders, we said this is a serious pandemic, you should play your part, show humanity and not bleed people of their money," he said.

Rajendar said: "But they, have in many ways, have not followed the spirit of the decision. They are seeking lakhs of rupees in deposits, charging ₹1 lakh to ₹2 lakh a day for treatment. If a patient dies, they are not allowing the body to be taken away by the families unless the money is paid."

"This is the worst behaviour, that has been recorded," he said.

The minister said despite repeated appeals not to charge more than ₹9,000 a day and issuing orders to that effect, some hospitals had not mended their ways. "More punishments for the hospitals are underway. If they do not change their ways, then more action will be taken. Some hospitals are destroying the image of all," he said.

Rajendar said every government healthcare facility and all other hospitals have been instructed to first admit a patient even if no test has been done to confirm Covid-19. "Start treating the patient first. Depending on whether Covid-19 positive or not, continue the treatment as required and prescribed," he said.

On Monday, during a conference with eminent doctors, it was again established that the tablets used do not cost more than 15 paise each and injections required are about ₹10 each. Only if the patient comes in late and in a serious condition are expensive medicines needed.

Even if a patient is to be put on oxygen for ten days, it does not cost more than ₹2,500 for that, he said.

From AP

TELUGU POET VANGAPANDU PASSES AWAY

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 4

Revolutionary writer, singer and lyricist, Vangapandu Prasad Rao, died at 77 in the wee hours of Tuesday. Vangapandu was a popular singer with his revolutionary songs influenced by Communism. He died of age-related illness at his residence in Parvathipuram of Vizianagaram district. He is survived by his daughter Vangapandu Usha and two sons.

Vangapandu wrote over 300 folk songs that depict the lives of various depressed communites in North Andhra and also tribals. His song *Yem Pillado Yeldamoshtava Veldamostava,* which was used without his permission in the Ram Charan starrer *Magadheera* created a big controversy, and finally the producers reached a compromise with him.

Songs like *Jajjanaka Janare, Sarkaru Dawakhanuaku* and *Uttarandhra Palle Pilupu* made him popular in both Telugu states.

Born in Pedda Bondapalli village, Parvathipuram mandal in 1943, Vangapandu was influenced by the Naxalite movement and founded the Jana Natya Mandali, a cultural wing of the People's War Group in 1972. Later, he was popular after he wore a black blanket with turban, as 'Uttarandhra Gaddar'. During Samaikhyandhra agitation, he participated in activities across the present state of Andhra Pradesh. Recently, Vangapandu also wrote and sang a song on Covid-19. He was awarded the Kalaprapoorna award by AP.

HC ISSUES STATUS QUO ORDER ON AP 3 CAPITALS ACT

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

The AP High Court has issued a status quo order on the implementation of the two Acts dealing with setting up three capitals and repeal of CRDA until August 14, during its virtual hearing here.

The High Court bench, comprising Justice Rakesh Kumar, Justice A.V. Sesha Sai and Justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy, heard the case and issued an order to maintain status quo on implementation of the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act and the AP Capital Region Development Authority (Repeal) Act.

When the government pleader asked the court to give the state 10 days on the issue, the court directed the government to file a counter affidavit and posted the hearing to August 14.

It may be mentioned that the state government earlier passed the two bills in the Assembly and sent them to the Council for passage. The council recommended the two Bills for consideration by its select committee.

Subsequently, the state government passed them again in the Assembly on June 16 and sent them to the Council which adjourned sine die without their passage. As the Council had not taken any decision on the two Bills, the state government considered them passed in the Council after 30 days and sent them to the Governor for his approval on July 18.

Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan finally gave his assent to both Bills after holding talks with legal experts on July 31 and the state government too issued a gazette notification making them into Acts the same day.

Drainage flood

Drainage covers the road near Parade Ground, Secunderabad, for a distance of about one km on Tuesday. This inconvenienced motorists, especially two-wheeler riders, and pedestrians. — *S. SURENDER REDDY*

India Covid test rate is low: WHO expert

If +ve rate crosses 5%, it means enough testing isn't being done

ADITYA CHUNDURU I DC
HYDERABAD, AUG 4

Soumya Swaminathan, chief scientist at the World Health Organisation (WHO), said that the testing rate across India was lower than those of countries that have done well in managing the Covid-19 pandemic, such as Germany and South Korea.

She was speaking via video conference at a meeting of pharmaceutical industry leaders organised by IT minister K.T. Rama Rao at Genome Valley in the city. Repeating the words of WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Swaminathan noted that without sufficient testing, "it is like fighting a fire blindfolded." Stressing the need for more testing, she said, "We need benchmarks for public health departments such as tests per million population and positivity rate."

Swaminathan said that if the test positivity rate is more than five per cent, it indicates that testing isn't being done on an adequate level. It may be noted that Telangana state has consistently reported daily positivity rates much higher than five per cent.

"For the foreseeable future, at least for around 12 months, we need to put in place public health and social measures that have been shown to work. This is on the governments and public [...] We know lockdowns were a temporary measure. The idea was to buy time for governments to put in place systems to tackle the virus," she said.

Commenting on the development of vaccines, Swaminathan said that the safety and efficacy of vaccine candidates would be known in the next few months. She added that through the COVAX facility, a global mechanism designed to ensure equitable access to the vaccine, WHO aims to send out two billion doses by the end of 2021.

Covid vaccine expected next year, KTR sees role for TS

DC CORRESPONDENT
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

Speaking at an event in Hyderabad on Tuesday, leaders of pharmaceutical majors said that several vaccines for Covid-19 would start appearing for public use during 2021. IT minister K.T. Rama Rao moderated a discussion on the subject with heads of Bharat Biotech, Biological E and Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL) at Genome Valley, titled 'The Vaccine Race: Balancing Science and Urgency.'

Mahima Datla of Biological E said that globally, at least five vaccine candidates could be granted licences between the first and third quarters of 2021. She, however, added that she couldn't comment on how long the vaccines would offer immunity from the virus and whether they might need repeated shots.

Anand Kumar of IIL said that his company's vaccine could be ready for use between Q2 and Q3 of 2021. He said that IIL's vaccine would be a live attenuated one and would potentially therefore offer longer protection from the virus.

K.T Rama Rao speaks at Genome Valley

Krishna Ella of Bharat Biotech, which is working on candidate vaccine Covaxin, said there could be as many as 15 vaccines available in the global market through 2021. He refused to comment on a timeline for his company's vaccine.

Discussing the need for reforms, Ella said there was a need for decentralisation of regulation for faster approvals. He noted that clearances needed to come from Delhi, though a vast majority of the industry was located in the southern part of the country.

Datla noted that the funding for vaccine development was very fragmented and said the Indian government could work with the World Bank to secure funds. She also noted that there were still no guidelines for efficacy and other matters that would be needed to licence a vaccine.

Meanwhile, Rama Rao, referring to Telangana state as the 'vaccine capital' of the world, said the state government would play an enabling role in global efforts for vaccine development.

The IT minister noted at the conference that India's vaccine sector would play a critical role in developing and producing a vaccine at scale for distributing across the world.

One stabbed in row over Id banner

Hyderabad: A dispute between two youngsters over installing a banner to convey Bakrid wishes ended up in one of them attacking another with a knife. The victim, Mohd Shoaib, a flower decorator from Tappachabutra, received multiple stab injuries and has been admitted to Osmania General Hospital for treatment.

Tappachabutra inspector G. Santosh Kumar said that on the day of Bakrid, a group of people had installed a banner near Shoaib's house at Sarvarnagar, conveying their festival greetings. Shoaib raised an objection, which to a heated argument between them. Later, the locals intervened and pacified them.

At around 10 pm on Monday, when Shoaib was at home, the accused called him over the phone to come out of the house to talk. When he went out, the suspects stabbed him with knives in the abdomen and fled from the spot, the inspector said.

Inspector Santosh said that Shoaib was admitted to OGH for treatment.

2 killed at hands of drunk drivers

JAYENDRA CHAITHANYA T. I DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

A drunk businessman in the city rammed his car into four vehicles, which resulted in the death of a man and injuries to another person. The accused, Boda Keshava, 45, was chased and nabbed at Shamshabad on Monday night and arrested on Tuesday.

The Rajendranagar police said the victim, Srinivas, 40, a private employee from Kismatpur, was returning home from his sister's house in Mailardevpally after getting a rakhi tied, when Keshava's car rammed into his bike.

Keshava, a caterer from Langer Houz, consumed alcohol while celebrating the birthday of his son, and then went to Kismatpur village in a car to collect money from a client. On the way, he hit a car parked near an ATM kiosk. He drove on to Rajendranagar where he hit an autorickshaw at Budwel.

He escaped towards Shivarampally and on the way rammed into the bike of Srinivas. The biker who suffered severe injuries died on the way to the hospital. Keshava attempted to drive away and rammed into another bike at Mailardevpally, where the biker G. Shiva suffered injuries. "The locals followed the accused and intimated the police. Keshava was chased and nabbed at Sathamrai in Shamshabad. In the breath alyser test, the Blood Alcohol Content of Keshava was recorded as 550 mg/100 ml," said Rajendranagar inspector G. Suresh.

In another incident of drunk driving, a 24-year-old woman died while her friends suffered injuries when the bike the trio was travelling met with a road accident at Biodiversity junction on Monday night.

Raidurgam police said that Kameshwari, 24, along with Rathod Vikram and M. Dhanush was going to Filmnagar from Chandanagar when Vikram, who was drunk, could not control the bike and fell down.

HIGH COURT ORDERS SA BUILDERS TO COOPERATE WITH ED

VUJJINI VAMSHIDHARA I DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

The Telangana High Court has ordered the promoters and managing partners of SA Builders of Hyderabad to cooperate with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in its investigation of the alleged money laundering by the Heera Group of Nowhera Shaik. The Heera Group had allegedly collected ₹5,600 crore from around 2 lakh people of the Muslim community by offering higher returns on their investment.

Justice Gandikota Sri Devi was dealing the petition of Syed Akther, Syed Afsar and Syed Qaiser, who are related to SA Builders and Developers, requesting the court to give directions to the ED to not arrest them and not force them to appear before the officials in the name of investigation.

The ED is investigating alleged money laundering by the Heera Group. ED officials found that an amount ₹148.16 crore was transferred to SA Builders from the bank accounts of Heera Group. The officials recorded the statements of the owners of SA Builders. They were said to be evasive and were not appearing for questioning when they were summoned to the ED office.

They cited self-isolation due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other reasons and approached the High Court. ED counsel Namavarapu Rajeshwar Rao explained to the court that the petitioners were using these tactics to avoid appearing for questioning. The summons were issued as witnesses to their earlier statements.

Justice Sri Devi directed the petitioners to cooperate with the investigation authorities. It also ordered the Enforcement Directorate to not take coercive steps against the petitioners.

LOOKING FOR SOMETHING?
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EAST CENTRAL RAILWAY
OPEN E-TENDER
Open Tender Notice No.:- SPJ-ST-S-09-2020
DRM (S&T)/Samastipur invites open e-tenders on behalf of president of India for following work.
Name of work with its location : Signalling work in connection with "Electrification of Dauram Madhepura (Excl) - Purnea (77.3 RKM) section of Samastipur Division". **Approx. cost of the work:** Rs. 5,56,48,769 (Rupees Five Crore Fifty Six Lakh Forty Eight Thousand Seven Hundred Sixty Nine Only), **Earnest Money to be deposited:** Rs. 4,28,300/- (Rupees Four Lakh Twenty Eight Thousand Three Hundred only), **Date & Time for Submission of tender :-** 21/08/2020 Up to 16:00 Hrs. **& opening of tender:** 21/08/2020 at 16:30 Hrs. **Particulars of website where full details of tender may be seen: www.ireps.gov.in**
Note:- For any corrigendum (if any) in above tender, the details will be uploaded/available on website.
For further details please visit the website **www.ireps.gov.in**
Divisional Rail Manager (S&T)
E.C. Railway, Samastipur
PR/0496/SPJ/S&T/T/20-21/32

SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE: VIJAYAWADA
(An institution of National Importance under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India) S.No. 4/4, ITI Road, Vijayawada – 520 008, Andhra Pradesh, India
Advt.No.SPAV/DTCP/2020 Dated 03.08.2020
WEB NOTICE
Applications are invited for GIS Specialist, Research Associate and Research Assistant on purely temporary and contractual basis. The application can be downloaded from institute's website and filled application may be sent to recruitmentdtcp@spav.ac.in on or before 14.08.2020. For further details regarding qualifications, remuneration etc, please refer the SPA Vijayawada website www.spav.ac.in.
Sd/- Registrar

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ATOMIC ENERGY
DIRECTORATE OF PURCHASE & STORES
NRB PURCHASE & STORES UNIT (NRBPSU)
E-TENDER NOTICE
NRBPSU invites **ONLINE** tenders for the supply of items mentioned below as per the tender notice given in our E-Tender portal **https://etenders.dpsdae.gov.in**. The suppliers need to get enrolled in the E-Tender portal and only online tenders will be accepted. However, EMD in the form of DD, drawn in favour of **PAY & ACCOUNTS OFFICER, NRB, MUMBAI** should be sent by post to our Mumbai Office, so as to reach us by the tender opening date. **No paper quotation will be accepted**.

Sr. No	Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date of Uploading the tender	Opening Date of the tender
1	DPS/NRBPSU/09/N1/243/TPT	Melter Transfer System	30/09/2020	30/09/2020
2	DPS/NRBPSU/01/N1/232/PT	Supply of Centrifugal Fan Set along with Spare Parts	14/09/2020	14/09/2020
3	DPS/NRBPSU/01/N2/157/PT	Single Stage SISW Blower	14/09/2020	14/09/2020

Details of EMD, Pre-Bid Meeting (if applicable) are given on the above portal. Bidders shall ensure that, minutes of pre-bid meeting and / or corrigendum if any uploaded on the E-Tender portal would be viewed / verified for any modification before uploading their offer.
For details on Bid Preparation, please see the user manual in the portal. For technical assistance please contact help desk 020-25315555 or email: support.dpsdae@nextenders.com Website-etenders.dpsdae.gov.in
Part II opening date in the tender will be intimated after evaluation of part-I to only those bidders who have been technically selected. Date of pre-bid meeting if any, is given the tender.
The online bids for tenders floated through the above portal are required to be digitally signed.
Regional Director, (NRBPSU)

RAIL COACH FACTORY, KAPURTHALA
On-line bids are invited by PCMM, RCF on behalf of President of India for following items:-

S. No.	Tender No. & Due Date	Description	Qty. (NOS./ Sets)	EMD (₹)
1.	05201210 01/09/2020	Roof Ventilator Argtt.	7371 Nos.	3,23,950/-
2.	17201288 04/09/2020	Set of SS CHEQD. Floor Sheets for LHB High Capacity Parcel Van,	190 Set	7,17,360/-
3.	17201342 01/09/2020	i) Seats for 2nd AC Chair Car LHB Coach (78 Seater),	05 Set	7,65,920/-
		ii) Seats for LHB Non AC Chair Car Coaches.	33 Set	
4.	17201285 02/09/2020	Stainless Steel Step Complete	4352 Nos.	5,44,730/-
5.	14201100 31/08/2020	Adhesive for LHB Coaches	97196 Litre	16,12,560/-
6.	17201345 31/08/2020	Lavatory Pan Orient Type for LHB Coaches	1934 Nos.	1,58,120/-
7.	12201142 28/08/2020	Transverse Upper Berth	4138 Nos.	8,25,530/-
8.	14201102 28/08/2020	i) HPL Sheet 3X1220X2440MM to PL No. 75904287	49242 Nos.	13,15,640/-
		ii) HPL Sheet 4X1220X2440MM to PL No. 33530166	199 Nos.	
		iii) HPL Sheet 1.2X1220X2440MM to PL No. 33530208	24 Nos.	
		iv) HPL Sheet 3X1220X2440MM to PL No. 33530361	84 Nos.	
		v) HPL Sheet 1.2X1220X2440MM to PL No. 75980216	2600 Nos.	
9.	12201145 28/08/2020	i) Water Tank (30 LT) Mounting	3051 Nos.	20,00,000/-
		ii) Water Tank (2x685 LT) complete with upper & lower frame.	788 Nos.	
		iii) Mounting Tanks Assembly for LHB SCN Coaches	237 Nos.	
		iv) Water Tank (450LT) with upper and lower frame.	285 Nos.	
		v) Water Tank (450LT) complete with upper & lower frame for Power Car & LHB DD Coaches	34 Nos.	
10.	12201143 27/08/2020	Intercar Gangway Mounting	2136 Nos.	14,97,540/-
11.	17201272 27/08/2020	Entrance door (RH and LH) and Door Arrangement (RH & LH) 6 Types	200 Set 610Nos.	20,00,000/-
		223 Nos., 1119 Nos., 767 Nos., 932 Set		
12.	07201062 28/08/2020	Welding Wire Wire 1.2 MM PL No. 76116244	16000 KG	NIL
13.	05201239 27/08/2020	Pillar	17318 Nos.	2,41,370/-

Note for Sr. No. 1: Rs. 250/- extra CD cost (if applicable).
1. For details and making On-line tenders, visit Website **http://ireps.gov.in.** Drawings / specifications, wherever required can be downloaded from RCF website **http://www.rcf.indianrailways.gov.in.** Class IIIb digital signature certificate required for on-line biddings, can be obtained from licensed certifying agencies listed at **http://www.cce.gov.in.** 2. Tenders will close at 14.25 Hrs. on due date and will be opened at 14.30 Hrs. Tenders Sr. No. 2 to 11 will be opened at RCF Kapurthala and Sr. No. 1,12 & 13 will be opened at Tilak Bridge, New Delhi. 3. For queries, contact IREPS heldesk at 011-24102855, 011-24105180 or RCF helpdesk at 011-23378658.
Note: GST Number of RCF is 03AAAGM0289C1ZT. All the suppliers are advised to quote this in dispatch documents for the supplies made by them. "All above mentioned tenders are e-tenders and all tenderers are quested to submit their bids on-line through the IREPS website at **https://www.ireps.gov.in.** For more details regarding the above mentioned tenders and other supply tenders please visit IREPS website. **PCMM**
CORRIGENDUM
The following amendment is authorized against Tender No. 01201073 of Dempers for LHB Coaches (Six Types) due on 14/08/2020 instead of 13/07/2020. **PCMM**
T. No.: G-122-01/PCMM/049/2020-21 **Dated: 04.08.2020**

Bhatti: Govt failed to protect Dalits

IRREDY SRINIVAS REDDY I DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 4

Congress Legislature Party leader Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka expressed unhappiness over the attacks on Dalits and alleged the government had failed in protecting their rights.

Speaking to the media at the Assembly on Monday, Mallu Bhatti said, "We fought for a separate state for self-respect and the betterment of lives of the people, but after the bifurcation, attacks on Dalits have increased and Constitutional protections for the Dalits is out of the question,"

He noted that a Dalit farmer from Veluru village in Warangal mandal of Siddipet district had died by suicide as he feared he would lose his land for the construction of Rythu Vedikas. The issue was taken to the notice of DGP M. Mahendar Reddy, but we did not receive any, he said. "The attacks on Dalits have continued by the TRS. We have decided to complain to the Governor about the ongoing attacks on Dalits," the CLP leader said.

He said he was surprised by Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's decision to postpone Apex Council meeting to discuss river water disputes with AP. "I have never seen any CM who betrays his state and acts in favour of another state," he said.

STRONG | BREEZE **Weather over sea causes unusual conditions**

31kmph wind blows over city

T.S.S. SIDDHARTH I DC
HYDERABAD. AUG. 4

Certain pockets of the city are witnessing wind speeds of up to 31 kmph, or 16 knots. The average for this time of the year is 9.8 kmph.

According to the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), Kapra, Rajendranagar and LB Nagar had the wind blowing at 31.7 kmph, 16.1 kmph and 19 kmph respectively.

"There are two weather systems that are brewing in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. The conjuncture of these systems is causing the winds to blow over the peninsular region," said Rajanikanth Poolla, an independent weather observer from the city. There could be another reason as for the stiff breeze, said experts. "There is a low-pressure circulation over the state, which could have led the winds towards pockets of the city. The wind undergoes a funnelling effect when it passes through narrow lanes," said Ashok Karumuri, a professor of the Centre for Earth and Space Sciences, University of Hyderabad. Officials of the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) concurred with the professor's explanation.

"During the early morning, there was some wind activity that prevailed over the city. There is a system that is moving over the state. This is what brought along strong gusts of wind," Dr K. Naga Ratna, director, IMD Hyderabad, told *Deccan Chronicle.*

HOW TO MEASURE THE WIND
WIND SPEEDS ARE USUALLY MEASURED ON A BEAUFORT SCALE

BEAUFORT NO.	NAME	WIND SPEED
0	Calm	<1 kmph
1	Light air	1-5 kmph
2	Light breeze	6-11 kmph
3	Gentle breeze	12-19 kmph
4	Moderate breeze	20-28 kmph
5	Fresh breeze	29-38 kmph
6	Strong breeze	39-49 kmph

ACCORDING TO the Telangana State Development Planning Society (TSDPS), Kapra, Rajendranagar and LB Nagar had the wind blowing at 31.7 kmph, 16.1 kmph and 19 kmph respectively.

A large cloud rises into the air after two explosions rocked the Lebanese capital Beirut on Tuesday. — *AFP*

2 blasts hit Beirut, many feared dead

Áfter threat, Netanyahu denies Israel's role

Beirut, Aug. 4: Two explosions that shook Beirut on Tuesday left 27 people dead and 2,500 injured, according to "preliminary estimates" announced by health minister Hamad Hassan.

"It is a disaster in every sense of the word," he said in an interview with several television channels while visiting a hospital in the Lebanese capital.

The explosions flattened much of the port, damaging buildings and blowing out windows and doors as a giant mushroom cloud rose above the capital.

An Israeli government official says Israel had nothing to do with the blast. Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group are bitter enemies, and tensions have been high following a series of recent clashes.

Earlier Tuesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Hezbollah Israel would not hesitate to strike again if it felt it was necessary.

But late Tuesday, the Israeli official said Israel was not involved in the Beirut explosion. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the matter with the media.

A civil defense official on the scene of the blast said his men had evacuated dozens to hospitals and that there were still bodies inside the port, many of them under debris.

The cause of the blast was not immediately known. It was stunning even for a city shaken by civil war, suicide bombings and bombardment by Israel.

Dozens of ambulances ferried the injured from the port area, where the wounded lay on the ground, Associated Press staff at the scene said. Hospitals called for blood donations.

The head of the Lebanese Red Cross told local TV there were hundreds of casualties although many were superficial wounds from broken glass.

Video taken by residents showed a fire raging at the port, sending up a giant column of smoke, illuminated by flashes of what appear to be fireworks. Local TV stations reported that a fireworks warehouse was involved.

The fire then appeared to catch at a nearby building, triggering a more massive explosion, sending up a mushroom cloud and a shock wave over the city.

It was like a nuclear explosion, said Walid Abdo, a 43-year-old school teacher in the neighbourhood of Gemayzeh near Beirut.

Charbel Haj, who works at the port, said it started as small explosions like firecrackers, then the huge blast erupted and he was thrown off his feet. His clothes were torn. — *AFP*

U.S. SCIENTISTS FIND POSSIBLE COVID-19 CURE

Washington, Aug. 4: US scientists have found a potential therapeutic treatment for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes Covid-19, and other Coronaviruses.

The study, published in *Science Translational Medicine,* has found that small molecule protease inhibitors show potency against coronaviruses.

These coronavirus 3C-like proteases, known as 3CLpro, are strong therapeutic targets because they play vital roles in coronavirus replication.

Said Kyeong-Ok Chang, a professor at Kansas State University: "This paper describes protease inhibitors targeting Coronavirus 3CLpro."

The study demonstrates that this series of optimised Coronavirus 3CLpro inhibitors blocked replication of the human coronaviruses MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV-2 in cultured cells and in a mouse model for MERS. — *AFP*

MUGHAL-E-AZAM SCREENPLAY FOR OSCAR LIBRARY

London, Aug. 4: Indian cinema classic "Mughal-e-Azam" celebrates its 60th anniversary this week with director K. Asif's son Akbar Asif presenting the screenplay of the film to the Oscars library in Hollywood. Akbar Asif, the UK-based son of the late director, said he presented the screenplay to the Academy Awards to mark the big anniversary of his father's historical epic starring Prithviraj Kapoor, Dilip Kumar and Madhubala, which falls on Wednesday.

Three versions of the legendary screenplay — in Hindi, Roman text and English translation — are now available at the Margaret Herrick Library, a world-renowned reference and research collection of the Academy devoted to the history and development of the motion picture as an art form and an industry.

PIO MURDERED WHILE JOGGING IN TEXAN CITY

Houston, Aug. 4: A 43-year-old Indian-origin woman researcher in the US was killed while she was out jogging and police have initiated a homicide investigation, according to media reports.

Sarmistha Sen, who was based in Plano city in the state of Texas, was randomly attacked and killed while jogging on August 1 near the Chisholm Trail Park. Her body was found lying in the creek-area near Legacy Drive and Marchman Way by a passer-by. — *PTI*

Trump rails as Nevada opts for mail-in ballots

Carson City (US), Aug. 4: Nevada lawmakers passed a bill on Sunday that would add the state to a growing list of US states that will mail active voters ballots ahead of the November election amid the Coronavirus pandemic.

The bill now heads to Gov. Steve Sisolak, a Democrat. If he signs it as expected, Nevada will join seven states that plan on automatically sending voters mail ballots, including California and Vermont, which moved earlier this summer to adopt automatic mail ballot policies.

President Donald Trump called the bill's passage "an illegal late night coup" in a tweet on Monday morning. He accused Sisolak of exploiting Covid-19 to ensure votes in Nevada would favor Democrats.

"Nevada's clubhouse Governor made it impossible for Republicans to win the state. Post Office could never handle the Traffic of Mail-In Votes without preparation ... See you in court!" Former US Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid applauded the lawmakers'decision and called Trump's comments desperate. "He's lying about our state leaders and threatening a bogus lawsuit simply because Democrats made it easier for people to vote," Reid said in a statement. Trump has claimed the mail ballots would lead to fraud and compromise the integrity of the election.

The consensus among experts is that all forms of voter fraud are rare. Nevada Secretary of State Barbara Cegavske told lawmakers on Friday that she wasn't aware of any fraud in the June primary, when Nevada mailed all active voters absentee ballots and only opened a limited number of polling places to prevent the spread of Coronavirus.

Limited polling places in Reno and Las Vegas resulted in lines of up to eight hours. In the June primary, all Nevada counties had one polling place except for Clark County, which had three in the Las Vegas area. — *AP*

3 write SOS on sand, rescued from island

Wellington, Aug. 4: Three men have been rescued from a tiny Pacific island after writing a giant SOS sign in the sand that was spotted from above, authorities say.

The men had been missing in the Micronesia archipelago for nearly three days when their distress signal was spotted on Sunday on uninhabited Pikelot Island by searchers on Australian and US aircraft, the Australian defense department said on Monday.

The men had apparently set out from Pulawat atoll in a 7-metre (23-foot) boat on July 30 and had intended to travel about 43 kilometers (27 miles) to Pulap atoll when they sailed off course and ran out of fuel, the department said. Searchers in Guam asked for Australian help.

The military ship, Canberra, which was returning to Australia from exercises in Hawaii, diverted to the area and joined forces with US searchers from Guam. The men were found about 190 kilometers (118 miles) from where they had set out. — *AP*

NOTICE

Behalf of my client **Mr. Lakkavaram Sai Krishna,** S/o. Sri. L.V.P. Saradhi, aged about 34 years, Occupation: Software Engineer, R/o. Flat No. B 401, Aparna Hills Park, Silver Oaks, Chanda Nagar, R.R. District, is given below mentioned public notice that my client lost his Sale Deed No. 4319/2011, registered before Sub Registrar Office, Rajendra Nagar, Ranga Reddy District., on 20-10-2019 at Chanda Nagar bus stop while waiting for auto-riksha somewhere he lost his bag which contained the above mentioned document. According all possible efforts were made to trace out his bag but could not trace his sale deed. Hence, anybody having any objection towards the above said document shall intimate me in writing along with supporting documents on or before 14-08-2020, from the date of this publication failing which any objection hereafter will not be entertained and shall be considered as waive. Hence, this public notice dated 4-8-2020.

Sd/- **(M. Vara Prasada Rao)** LLM., Advocate,
H. No. 8-2-268/1/3, Srinikethan Colony,
Banjara Hills, Road No. 3, Hyderabad-500 034.
Mobile: 9440501854

(S/2021/D00379)

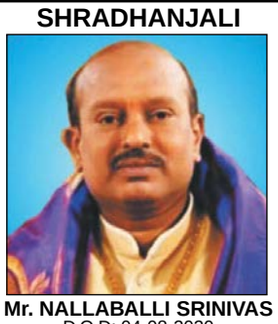
SHRADDANJALI
WE ALL MISS YOU A LOT
OM SHANTHI

KASULA VIDYA SAGAR
DOB: 16-05-1950 DOD:27-07-2020
Inseterd by:
KATARI FAMILY, REBBA FAMILY, THOTA FAMILY, GOPALDAS FAMILY

SHRADHANJALI

PARUL. C. SHAH
W/o Chetan. C. Shah
Words cannot express our grief
- **Deepak Stores** - Sec'bad
- **Priyanka Enterprises** - Sec'bad
- **Trupix Publicities** - Sec'bad
Khantilal B. Shah
Deepak - Divya
Bharat - Bina

SHRADHANJALI



Mr. NALLABALLI SRINIVAS
D.O.D: 04-08-2020
We Kitty Friends of Secunderabad
Deeply mourn on his demise.
We will never forget you
Dear Friend, by each one of us.
Kitty Friends, Sec'bad.

(S/2021/D00384)

11th Day Ceremony

Your beautiful memories always in our heart.
May your soul rest in peace.
"We miss you"

Husband : **P.Sankar Reddy**
Sons : Daughters-in-law
P.V.Ramana Reddy - Syamala
P. Sudhakar Reddy - Sreevardhini
P. Muralidhar Reddy - Sreedevi
Grand Children : Tejeswar, Karthik, Divya, Aparajita

Late P. Sarojamma
DOD : 1-2-1939 ; DOD : 26-7-2020
11th DAY CEREMONY on 05-08-2020, Wednesday, at 202, Aishwarya Apartments, Nehru Nagar, Kurnool, A.P.

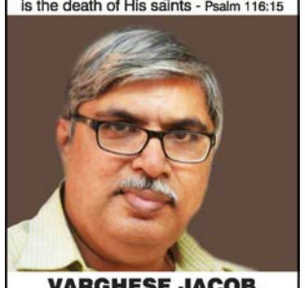
SHRADHANJALI

Sri DUNDUMULLA VENKATA RANGA REDDY GARU
S/o Late Lakshmi Narayana Reddy Garu

DASHA DINA KARMA
Date of Death 24-07-2020
Your memories will ever remain in our hearts.
Dasha Dina Karma on 05-08-2020 at Gajula Ramaram, Qutubullapur Mandal.
Inserted by:
VIJAYA LAKSHMI, RAVI KIRAN AND ADAPALA FAMILY
"WE ALL PRAY FOR THE DEPARTEED SOUL TO REST IN (ETERNAL) PEACE"
Phone No. 9000587165

(S/2021/D00370)

OBITUARY
Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints - Psalm 116:15

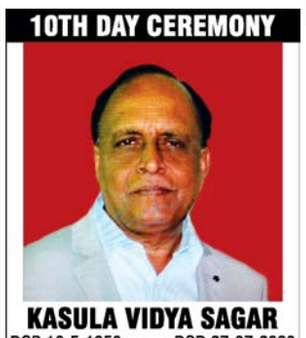


VARGHESE JACOB
DOB: 16.06.1966 DOD: 04.08.2020
S/o Prof. Jacob George
H/o Mrs. Marie Varghese
Funeral conducted on 04.08.2020
at the Narayanguda Cemetery, Hyderabad
Inserted by Father, Wife, Children, Brother & family

OBITUARY

Sikender Ali Rtd. AG Office(CPWD)
S/o Late Fateh Ali
Expired on 4/8/2020 - 12:15 am
Ziyarat on 6/8/2020 @ Masjid e Kulsum, Amaan Nagar 'A', after Asar.
You will forever remain alive in our hearts and memories. May Allah Forgive you and provide best place in **JANNAH** Ameen.
Inserted by: Widow, Sons & Daughter
Cell: 6300131337, 8801974834

10TH DAY CEREMONY



KASULA VIDYA SAGAR
DOB:16-5-1950 DOD:27-07-2020
Your memories are always rememberd in our hearts forever
INSERTED BY
Kasula Anitha Wife
Son's & Daughter in laws

KATTA KRISHNA KUMAR
DOB:19.5.1952 DOD:25.7.2020

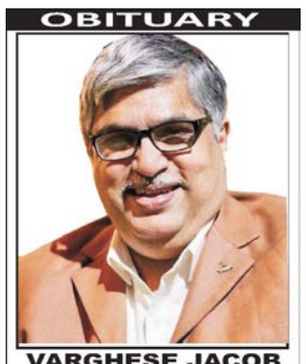
SHRADDHANJALI
Deeply Mourned by:
KATTA JAYASREE (Wife),
KATTA AJAY KUMAR & MANASA
GUNTURU VANI & VAMSHI
KATTA ROJA BAI (Mother)
KATTA SRIDHAR
POLEPALLE PARIMALA & SATYAMURTHY
PIRLAMARLA PARANJYOTHI & CHANDRASHEKER
ALL GRAND CHILDREN

(S/2021/D00369)

INNALLAHI WA INNAL RAJIOON

MIRZA MAZHAR BAIG
S/o: Late Mirza Mahboob Baig
DOB:09/01/1967 DOD:04/08/2020
May allah forgive all the sins and grant him the highest ranks in jannah
ZYARAT Is on Thursday 06/08/2020 after NAMAAZ E ASAR
Address:9-5-27 Ibrahimbagh, Hyd

OBITUARY



VARGHESE JACOB
Expired : 4.8.2020
May Your Soul Rest in Peace
We Will Miss You
Shahbaz Husain & Family

SHRADHANJALI
" To live in the hearts of those we love is never to die "
In fond memory of

PADALA SATYANARAYANA
(Central Excise & Customs)
who passed away on 03-08-2020 at HYD
In Loving Memory
Wife: **P. SUNANDINI**
Family Members and Near & Dear

SAD DEMISE

PARUL. C. SHAH
W/o Chetan. C. Shah
Expired on 04-08-2020
May her soul rest in peace.
- **Chetan & Co.,** - Sec'bad
Chetan Enterprises, Feelkhana
Chandrakant B. Shah Parivar
Sailesh - Anita
Pankaj - Pinakini
(M): 9849023556

OBITUARY

Smt. GOMPA VIJAYALAXMI
Inserted by
Husband - **Gompa Venkata Rao**
Sons : **Gompa Chandra Mouli**
Gompa Aswini Kumar
Cermony will be held on 5th Aug 2020 at Vizag
9885395555, 9885615555

ONE MONTH HAS PASSED SINCE YOU LEFT TO HEAVEN
"Surely he shall not be moved forever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance." Psalm 112:6

ARLENE GERTRUDE D'SILVA (STUDDEN)
W/o Lucas D'Silva
(Retd Teacher, St Patrick's School)
D.O.B 01-01-1943 D.O.D 05-07-2020
Those we love remain with us, for love itself lives on. Cherished memories never fade, because a loved one is gone. Those we love can never be, more than a thought apart, For as long as there's a memory, they live on in our hearts.
Inserted by: **B.M. John Vinayasager, Sharon Sunayna, Seleena Samantha**

(S/2021/D00376)

OBITUARY

MOHAMMED SAMI
S/o Late Mohammed Ismail
Retd. Inspector Police Greyhound
DOB: 25-12-1954 DOD: 01-08-2020
Buried in First Lancer Graveyard.
For more details Contact: **9492035817**

I am the ressurection and life (Jn-11:23)
3rd Day Memorial Ceremony
In ever loving memory of

STEPHEN PATRICK D'CRUZ
DOB : 25-10-2000 DOD : 03-08-2020
Inserted by :
Parents, Uncle's, Aunties, Brothers, Sisters and Sisters-in-law

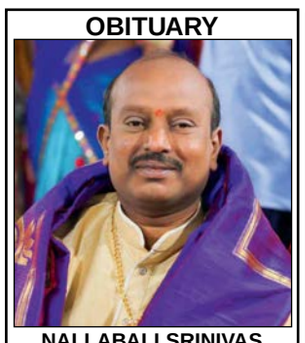
SYED SIRAJ UDDIN HUSSAINI
Syed Siraj Uddin S/o Syed GhaniullahShah Hussaini Sajjadah Dargah Hazzath Syed Meeraji Hussani (R.H) passed away on 02-08-2020 Namaz-E-Janaza was held at Masjid Syed Ghaniullah Shah Hussaini after Namaz-E-Fajr and burial done at Dargah Hazzrath Syed Meeraji Hussaini R.H. He is survived by 6 sons & 3 daughters. Fateha will be held on Tuesday 4th August 2020 at Masjid Syed Ghani Ullah Shah Hussaini.
Ph: 9948356838, 9849191526

(B/2021/D00031)

SHRADHANJALI

LATE. NALLABALLI SRINIVAS (53 Yrs)
S/o. Nallaballi Venkatesham
Expired on : 04-08-2020
"Your memories will be always in our hearts forever".
Inserted by:
Cheera Satyanarayana (Srikanth) & Family

OBITUARY



NALLABALI SRINIVAS
DOB: 27-08-1967 - DOD: 04-08-2020
"Your memories are always in our hearts forever."
Inserted by: **GANGA VIJAY KUMAR & KUSUMA AND FAMILY MEMBERS**
Ph: 9849668544

Sad Demise

Mr. Abdul Gaffar Khan
Advocate, Notary & Educational consultant
S/O Dr. G. S. Khan
Expired on 30th July, 2020
Rest in Peace in Heaven Daddy
We all will miss your presence and support

2nd DEATH ANNIVERSARY
A gracious Woman retains honor. Prov. 11:16
I have fought a good fight. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness. II Tim.4:7,8.

Smt. K. ESTHER RANI
W/o Rev. K.PRABHUDASS
(Ex-Chaplain, Prayer Tower, Baptist Church, Hyderabad)
(D/o . Late Rev. SANAVALA JOSEPH)
DOB: O8-11-1949 DOD: O5-08-2018
"Your precious memories remain in our hearts for ever."
Inserted by: **HUSBAND , CHILDREN, GRAND CHILDREN & FAMILY MEMBERS**

ONE MONTH HAS PASSED SINCE YOU LEFT TO HEAVEN
"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:4

ARLENE GERTRUDE D'SILVA (STUDDEN)
W/o Lucas D'Silva
D.O.B 01-01-1943 D.O.D 05-07-2020
Your life was a blessing, your memory a treasure, You are loved beyond words and missed beyond measure.
Inserted by: **MARGARET PARTRIDGE & MICHAEL PARTRIDGE NATHAN, TAYLA AND BRIELLA**

(S/2021/D00377)

"I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. (Ps 23:6)
IN LOVING MEMORY OF

KETHURA WAGHMARE
W/o Akash Waghmare
Born 05-03-1979
Slept in the Lord 02-08-2020
Inserted by: **FAMILY & FRIENDS**

(S/2021/D00380)

3rd DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Late. YADAVALLI SIVARAMA SASTRI
(Sr. Advocate & Freedom Fighter)
DOB: 13-07-1926 DOD: 05-08-2017
"Your memories remain in our hearts forever."
Inserted By:
Y. N. LOHITA (Advocate)
PH:9849026271

We regret to inform that our beloved father **P.R. Srinivas Naidu** passed away on **26th July, 2020.**

Sri P.R. SRINIVAS NAIDU
"We pray to God for his soul to rest in peace"
We are performing the
11th Day Ceremony today the August 5th 2020 at our residence H.No: 7-80/2/38 Venkataramana colony, Dammaiguda, Hyderabad 500084.
Inserted by: **NAIDU FAMILY**

1st ANNIVERSARY
I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever Psalms.23:6

Late. Mrs. DEVA KRUPA
W/o. K.L. Vijjai
20.07.1942 - 05.08.2019
Forever in our hearts
Inserted By :
S.Vijay, Dr. K. Ruth Nischala, K.S. Neeraj, Jyothi & Grand Children
Ph: 9292955338

2nd DEATH ANNIVERSARY
In Loving Memory of our Dearest Dad.
The memory of the just is blessed.
Proverbs 10:7

MARTHANDA DENNIS PRABHU CHARAN
Asst. Director (Retd) RJD, Kamareddy
Promoted to Glory on 05 August 2018
In Memory of a life so beautifully lived, a heart so deeply Loved.
Inserted by:
Wife: **Smt. Florence Prabhu Charan**
Children : **Nancy Kataksham (Teena)**
Rahul Rohit (Tona) Nikhil Preetham (Titto)

REMEMBRANCE
SPECIAL REMEMBRANCE OF MY MOTHER

Mrs. G.L. LUKE
11-07-1928 05-08-1997
W/o Late Bishop G.S. Luke
CSI Dornakal Diocese
"SAFE IN THE ARMS OF JESUS"
Dr. Jetti Indira Oliver & Siblings

God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.
5th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Smt. SHAKUNTHALA
Slept in the Lord on 5th August 2016
Deeply mourned by:
Sons, Daughters, Sons-in-law, Daughters-in-law & Grand Children

(S/2021/D00386)

8th DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF MY BELOVED SON

THAKUR S. SUDHIR SINGH
DOB: 4-3-1970 DOD: 5-8-2012
Your memories are always remembered in our hearts forever.
Inserted by:
Smt. Saroj Shanker Singh
Thakur S. Shailender Singh
Sushma Rani, Smt. Sapna, S. Sagar, Ajay Singh, Khushi, Nandini, Angad, Astha

(S/2021/D00381)

IN REMEMBRANCE
Thou shalt also be crown of glory in the hand of the Lord and a royal diaden in the hand of Thy God. ***Isaiah:- 62-3***

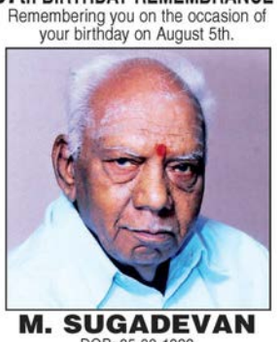
G. EDITH SHANTHI
This day 5 years ago, you left us to be with the Lord.
Thank you Mom for every sacrifice you made to give us happiness
From: **Children & Grands.**

(S/2021/D00382)

SHRADHANJALI

Shri. Ghanshyam Devjiram Rangnani
You are with us Forever..
Inserted By : **Rakhee Rangnani**
Son - Daughter-in-Law
Vikram - Payal Rangnani
Daughter - Son-in-Law
Jiya - Ramchander Kalwani
& Grand Children
Brother: **Ashok Rangnani**

87th BIRTHDAY REMEMBRANCE
Remembering you on the occasion of your birthday on August 5th.



M. SUGADEVAN
DOB: 05-08-1933
There are no one who can replace you in our lives. We miss you a lot.
Inserted by: **Family Members**

(S/2021/D00385)

SHORT TAKES

BREAKTHROUGH ELUDES TALKS WITH CHINA

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

The fifth Corps Commanders level talks between India and China on Sunday seems to have been unable to achieve any breakthrough on further disengagement in Pangong Tso and other friction areas.

Though government is yet to come out with any formal statement on the meeting, indications are that China has shown reluctance to move out of the finger areas in the Pangong Tso. China claims that it was always present in the finger area.

There have been series of meetings of India's top security brass at various levels in national capital to discuss the outcome of the fifth Corps Commanders level talks and the further way out. There are chances that India may now try high level of diplomatic contacts to try to resolve the military stand-off which has now entered the fourth month.

Chinese are occupying finger 5 area in the Pangong Tso and are still continuing to hold the ridges in the finger 4 area. During the initial phase of disengagement, Chinese troops had vacated the banks of Pangong Tso lake in finger 4 area on July 9 and gone back to finger 5. But Chinese troops still have to vacate area between finger 5 and finger 8, which India claims is its territory.

BHUSHAN REFUSES TO TENDER APOLOGY

PARMOD KUMAR | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

Activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan on Tuesday refused to tender apology in an 11-year old contempt case for alleging misconduct against Justice S.H. Kapadia for being part of a forest bench that had decided the Niyamgiri mining lease in favour of Sterlite Industries - a subsidiary of Vedanta.

Bhushan had in 2009 an interview to *Tehelka* magazine said that Justice Kapadia should not have been on the bench as he was holding shares of Sterlite Industries.

Justice Kapadia went on to become Chief Justice of India.

Refusing to apologise in a 2009 case, Bhushan in a statement before a three judge bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra, affirmed his "unreserved" support and faith in the judiciary particularly the Supreme Court. "I have used the word corruption in a wide sense meaning lack of propriety. I did not mean only financial corruption or deriving any pecuniary advantage.", Bhushan said in his statement to the court on Tuesday.

However, he has said, "If what I have said caused hurt to any of them or to their families in any way, I regret the same."

The SC in a brief order uploaded on its website said that the "Explanation/apology submitted by Prashant Bhushan and Tarun Tejpal have not been received so far. In case we do not accept the explanation/ apology, we will hear the matter."

75-YEAR-OLD WOMAN RAPED IN KERALA

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 4

A 75-year old woman was raped and serious injuries were inflicted on her by unidentified assailants in Ernakulam district of Kerala.

The gruesome incident took place in Puthenkurish, about 20 km from Kochi. Three persons including a woman have been taken into custody for questioning. A case has been registered and some of the suspected culprits are on police radar.

According to doctors, the woman is suffering from memory loss. She was subjected to the heinous crime at another person's house. The survivor suffered injuries to her internal organs following which an emergency surgery was carried out at the Kolenchery Medical College Hospital. The police said that the injuries have been caused by sharp edged weapons. Forensic experts are examining the scene of crime. The police said that because of her memory problem, the survivor has given different versions. Statements of the family members, relatives and neighbors have been recorded. The cops have also questioned some people in the area on the basis of these statements.

Ayodhya awaits a new beginning today

Priests feel after the Ram Temple is complete, city will have more opportunities and development

Ayodhya, Aug. 4: The famous Hanuman Garhi temple here is all decked up for the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who will be in the city for the *bhoomi pujan* of Ram temple on Wednesday.

As soon as the prime minister reaches Ayodhya on Wednesday, he will first go to this temple as it is believed that before visiting Lord Ram one should pay their respects to Lord Hanuman.

The priests in the temple are disheartened that they will not be able to meet Modi due to the protocols in place against coronavirus.

"At the temple, all of us had made a lot of preparations to present a *gada* (mace), *mukut* (crown), silver brick, stole and a turban to the prime minister. But, this will not be possible now due to Covid-19 protocol. Our plan to give him the gifts now stands cancelled," said Hanuman Garhi Mahant Raju Das.

"The chief minister visited the temple on Monday. Now the prime minister will pray on Wednesday but all priests will remain at a distance and no one will be allowed near him. Modi is likely to stay here for 5-7 minutes," he said.

He said that all preparations for Modi's visit are almost complete and the *bhoomi pujan* will be historic for the city of Ayodhya.

About this temple, Mahant said, "When Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya after conquering Ravana, he gave this place to Hanuman ji to live, so its called Hanuman Garhi or Hanuman Kot. From here, it is believed that Lord Hanuman used to protect Ramkot."

He said that construction of the Ram temple will start a new era for Ayodhya city which has witnessed many "tense moments" in the past.

"Not only us, all Rambhakts are happy with the new beginning. It is not just due to religious reasons, but the people here are happy to feel that their city will now have more opportunities and development," the Mahant said.

Police barricades, yellow banners, walls with a fresh coat of paint and the sounds of bhajan mark parts of Ayodhya as the city awaits its big day Wednesday, when the first brick will be laid for the Ram temple.

Ayodhya is decked up for the "bhumi pujan" that will be attended at the Ram Janmabhoomi by 175 people who figure in a select guest list of seers and politicians topped by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The ceremony shall start at around 8 am and end at about 2 pm. The main *bhumi pujan* is expected to take place at 12.30 pm and the foundation stone will be laid at 12.40 pm. *- PTI*

A priest perform religious rituals at Hanuman Garhi temple, ahead of a groundbreaking ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. As soon as the Prime Minister reaches Ayodhya on Wednesday, he will first go to Hanuman Garhi temple. *- AP*

The construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya will deeply connect Indian society to its cultural roots to prosper economically and expand culturally as a model to guide humanity

MANMOHAN VAIDYA, SR. RSS FUNCTIONARY

Hindutva is now the "basic coat on the canvas of polity" and political parties subscribing to its various shades may be vying for power in future as socialism and secularism are no longer the pivot of politics

K. N. GOVINDACHARYA, EX-RSS IDEOLOGUE

PRIEST OF RAVAN TEMPLE SAYS HE WILL DISTRIBUTE SWEETS TODAY

Ayodhya, Aug. 4: Nearly 650 km from Ayodhya, a priest of a temple dedicated to demon king Ravan is eagerly awaiting the groundbreaking ceremony of the Ram temple.

Tucked away in Gautam Buddh Nagar's Bisrakh area is a temple dedicated to Ravan, the dark figure in the epic Ramayana who was killed by Lord Ram.

Mahant Ramdas of the Ravan temple said he will distribute sweets after the conclusion of the 'bhoomi poojan' ceremony in the temple town of Ayodhya on August 5.

"I am very happy that the bhoomi pujan for the temple of Lord Ram is taking place in Ayodhya. After the ceremony, I will distribute *ladoos* and celebrate the happy moment. The bhoomi poojan for the temple of Lord Ram in Ayodhya is indeed a very good development. I am happy as a grand temple will be built there," he said.

Mahant Ramdas said, "If Ravan was not there, then no one would have known about Shri Ram. And in the absence of Lord Ram, no one would have known anything about Ravan".

According to local folklore, Bisrakh is the birthplace of Ravan and, "we call it the Ravan Janambhoomi," the priest said.

Describing Ravan as a knowledgeable person and an expert in many fields, he said, after abducting Sita, he kept her at Ashok Vatika, and did not take her to his palace.

"Apart from this, he posted women to guard Sita. If Lord Ram is called *maryaadaa purshottam* (the person who upheld dignity), then I think Ravan also to some extent can be considered as a person who upheld dignity (of people in various aspects)," he said.

The temple in Bisrakh has idols of Lord Shiva, Parvati and Kuber.

"The temple does not close even during the night. Devotees coming here offer prayers to Lord Shiva, Kuber and even Ravan. Around 20 per cent of devotees who come here worship Ravan," according to Mahant Ramdas.

According to Ramayana, Ravan abducts Lord Ram's wife Sita and takes her to his kingdom of Lanka, where he keeps her in captivity in Ashok Vatika. Later, Lord Ram, with the support of 'vanara' King Sugriv and his army of 'vanars', attacks Lanka, kills Ravan, and rescues Sita. *- PTI*

Sena: Covid will now disappear

Mumbai, Aug. 4: The Covid-19 crisis in the country will disappear with the blessings of Lord Ram, the Shiv Sena said on Tuesday, and pointed out that veterans like L.K. Advani and Murli Manohar Joshi won't be present in Ayodhya for the temple 'bhoomi pujan' ceremony.

An editorial in the party mouthpiece *Saamana* took a dig at the August 5 ceremony being held amid rising cases of coronavirus in the country.

"There is no other golden moment like the one when Prime Minister Modi performs the bhoomi pujan at Ayodhya," the Sena said.

"Coronavirus is there, but will disappear with Lord Ram's blessings," it added.

Advani and Joshi, key leaders associated with the Ram temple construction campaign, will witness the ceremony via video conferencing from Delhi, the editorial noted.

They were advised not to attend the ceremony in view of their age and the outbreak of Covid-19 in Ayodhya, it said.

Uma Bharti, another prominent leader attached to the campaign, will also not be present at the ceremony and will instead watch it "from the banks of the Sarayu river through the eyes of her mind", the Sena said.

There is excitement in the country in view of the bhoomi pujan ceremony, the Sena said.

The *Saamana* editorial said that the responsibility of security arrangements in Ayodhya was with the Home ministry, but it is unfortunate that Home Minister Amit Shah tested coronavirus positive.

"Coronavirus has spread in Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh and the entire country. This crisis, too, will fade away with the blessings of Lord Ram," it said.

The responsibility of security arrangements in Ayodhya was with the Home ministry, but it is unfortunate that Home Minister Amit Shah tested coronavirus positive, it said.

Despite the presence of the Prime Minister, the RSS chief, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and others, the ceremony will be lacklustre without Shah, the Sena said.

It said Shah participated in a public event in Delhi last Saturday and attended the cabinet meeting last Wednesday observing social distancing norms, and has asked those who came in his contact in the past few days to isolate themselves and get tested for coronavirus.

The entire Council of ministers needs to be isolated, if the home minister is saying this, it said.

Shah is close to Modi but nothing will happen to the prime minister and the home minister due the blessings of Lord Ram, it said. *- PTI*

K'TAKA SCHOLAR WHO SUGGESTED DATE GETS THREAT CALLS

Belagavi, Aug. 4: A Sanskrit scholar here, among the astrologers reportedly consulted for fixing auspicious date for the ground-breaking ceremony for Ram temple construction at Ayodhya, has complained of receiving threat calls following which he has been provided security by police.

N. R. Vijayendra Sharma alleged he had been receiving telephone calls regarding fixing the auspicious date.

A police constable had been posted at the 75-year-old's residence here following a complaint he lodged with police in this district headquarters town in north Karnataka.

Police on Tuesday said they were looking into the complaint.

Sharma said earlier this week that Swamy Govind Dev Giriji, a member of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, had approached him regarding fixing muhurat for the ground- breaking ceremony.

Sharma, who was associated with Ramjanma Bhoomi movement for many years, said he had suggested four dates (July 29, July 31, August 1 and August 5) as the most auspicious days for performing Bhumi Pujan since all those days fall in Shravana month according to the Hindu calendar.

On August 5, the auspicious time for the event will be between 8 a.m. and 12 noon, he said. *- PTI*

Advani believes temple will usher in 'Ram Rajya'

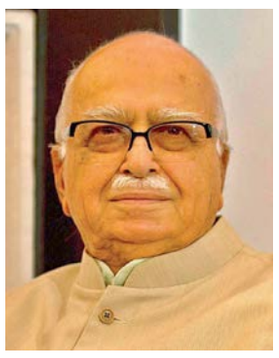
DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG 4

BJP veteran L.K. Advani, who played a pivotal role in the Ramjanambhoomi movement and undertook the Ram Rath Yatra, which also brought the BJP into the national political scene, on the eve of foundation laying ceremony of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, on Tuesday said it will be a historical and emotional day not only for him but for all Indian when Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation.

Mr Advani, 92, who will not be attending the ceremony, even though Shri Ramjanambhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust claims he was invited but advised not to attend due to his age, said the construction of the temple after the decisive verdict of the Supreme Court last year is beginning in "an environment of tranquility" and will "go a long way in strengthening the bond between Indians.

Mr Advani said a grand Ram Mandir was a dream close to his heart and was also a desire and mission of the BJP.

He expressed his gratitude to saints, leaders and people in India and the world over who made "valuable contributions and sacrifices in the Ramjanambhoomi movement.



L. K. Advani

Advani said a grand Ram Mandir was a dream close to his heart and was also a desire and mission of the BJP.

Noting that Lord Ram occupies an esteemed place in India's culture and civilisational heritage and is embodiment of grace, dignity and decorum, the BJP veteran said it is his belief that the temple will inspire Indians to imbibe his virtues.

The former deputy prime minister also said that he believes that Ram Mandir will represent India as a "strong, prosperous, peaceful and harmonious nation with justice for all and exclusion of none so that we can truly usher in Ram Rajya, the epitome of good governance."

Bihar for CBI probe into Sushant's death

NAYEAR AZAD | DC
PATNA, AUG. 4

Bihar government on Tuesday recommended a CBI probe into the death of Sushant Singh Rajput after the deceased actor's father K.K. Singh made a formal request regarding the issue.

"The state government recommended a CBI probe into the death of Sushant Singh Rajput after his father spoke to the DGP", Bihar CM Nitish Kumar said.

The move comes amid ongoing tussle over the jurisdictional issue between Maharashtra and Bihar police. The CM and DGP Gupteshwar Pandey had earlier expressed displeasure over the mistreatment of Patna police who have been sent to Mumbai to probe the case.

IPS officer Vinay Tiwary who had landed in Mumbai on Sunday to supervise the ongoing investigation by the Bihar police was forcibly placed under home quarantine by the BMC authorities. The development was termed as "inappropriate" and "unfortunate" by the CM.

"They are not responding to our repeated messages and phone calls. In a way, they have announced that they will not let us work there. I have not seen this kind of non-cooperation in my entire career", the DGP said.

While backing Nitish Kumar's recommendation to hand over Sushant Singh Rajput's death case to the CBI Bihar DGP also said that the state police would lodge a formal protest with the BMC authorities over placing IPS officer under forcible home quarantine.

The alleged mistreatment of the Bihar police team in Mumbai had snowballed into a political controversy. The issue was also raised by political leaders including BJP MLA and the late actor's cousin Neeraj Singh in the assembly on Monday.

However, on Tuesday after the CM announced his decision to recommend a CBI inquiry into the case, leader of the Opposition Tejashwi Yadav claimed that his party RJD was the first to raise the issue forcefully in the assembly and said that "a court-monitored CBI probe would be better".

Pak's map has J&K, Ladakh & parts of Guj

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

Hours after Pakistan unveiled a new political map that laid claim to Indian territory in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh union territories as well as parts of the Indian state of Gujarat, India rejected it and termed it "an exercise in political absurdity", adding that these "ridiculous assertions have neither legal validity nor international credibility".

India said Islamabad's move "confirms the reality of Pakistan's obsession with territorial aggrandisement supported by cross-border terrorism".

The move announced by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday comes on the eve of the first anniversary on August 5 of India revoking Article 370 that had granted special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.

So far Pakistan had stopped short of calling Kashmir as part of its territory officially and had always pushed for a UN-mandated plebiscite.

But strangely, while the demand for a plebiscite will continue on the part of Islamabad, Pakistan has gone ahead and declared that J&K is part of Pakistan along with some portions of Ladakh to the North and Gujarat to the West.

The map announced by Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan comes on the eve of the first anniversary on August 5 of India revoking Article 370.

The new map would now be the "official map" of Pakistan after being approved by the Pakistani federal cabinet.

The move is being seen as an attempt to provoke India.

Recently, India's Himalayan neighbour Nepal had also gone ahead and unveiled a new map that showed that showed portions of territory in India's Uttarakhand State - Limpiyadhura, Kalapani and Lipu Lekh - as part of Nepal. New Delhi had objected to that move as well.

Pakistan's move also comes amid ongoing talks between India and China for military de-escalation in the Ladakh sector, with Beijing laying claim to portions of land there and backing it up with attempts at military coercion.

In a statement, the MEA said, "We have seen a so-called 'political map' of Pakistan that has been released by Prime Minister Imran Khan. This is an exercise in political absurdity, laying untenable claims to territories in the Indian State of Gujarat and our Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and of Ladakh. These ridiculous assertions have neither legal validity nor international credibility. In fact, this new effort only confirms reality of Pakistan's obsession with territorial aggrandisement supported by cross-border terrorism."

According to Pakistani media reports, Imran Khan — while addressing the country along with his Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi — said that the new map would now be the "official map" of Pakistan after being approved by the Pakistani federal cabinet and would be the one used in schools and colleges.

It reportedly stakes claim to Siachen to the North and Sir Creek to the West as well.

Tension runs high in J&K on 1st anniv of scrapping Art. 370

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 4

The local police and Central armed police forces on Tuesday imposed a curfew in Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar whereas strict security restrictions are in force elsewhere in the Valley, a day before the first anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the state.

The security in the remaining parts of J&K including winter capital Jammu has been beefed up further, reports received here said.

As tensions run high, large contingents of policemen have been deployed at the residences of various political leaders belonging to both mainstream and separatist camps to thwart possible attempts by them to organise protests. The police also took several political activists into preventive custody.

Among them is PDP's Rouf Bhat who had announced at a press conference here on Monday that the party will observe August 5 as "black day" and that a demonstration will be held in Srinagar to mark the anniversary of the "unconstitutional measures" taken on this day last year.

The authorities said that Srinagar will remain under curfew also on Wednesday.

Srinagar's DC Shahid Iqbal Choudhary had claimed on Monday that SSP concerned has reported that a series of inputs received by the police suggest that separatists and Pakistan sponsored groups are planning to observe August 5 as a 'black day' and, therefore, there is apprehension of "violent actions and protests" which could "endanger public life and property."

He said that such an activity could also defeat the purpose of imposing lockdown to stem the spread of Coronavirus.

DECCAN Chronicle

5 AUGUST 2020

Repression, mistrust rule Valley 1 yr later

It is exactly one year this day that the Centre ended the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir, and created two Union Territories in place of the former state. This meant that New Delhi thought that the people of the state could not be trusted, and that their dignified existence within a democratic India spelt danger to India. The corollary of this perverse understanding was that people had to be brought to heel. In no other state of the Union have citizens been quelled before and subjected to an existence that rivals the worst practices of single-party or military dictatorships.

To suppress the living norms of the people, in J&K, around 40,000 additional soldiers were brought in to supplement the half a million already present; nearly 7,000 people, including nine-year old children, were placed in detention; even second and third-tier politicians were thrown into jail (other than those of BJP); representative government ended; all phones and the Internet were shut; Section 144 CrPC was imposed across Kashmir Valley for months together; even doctors reporting to hospitals for duty were thrashed at barriers by police and security; educational institutions shut shop; newspapers were forced to carry only government briefings (propaganda), the writing of editorial opinion ceased and was replaced by tracts on gardening, philosophy and morality; journalists had to report to police stations and a coordination mechanism established between the information department and security department; industry and business collapsed; unemployment soared. All this went on for eight months before the Coronavirus-related lockdown. Thus, Kashmir has been locked down for one whole year now.

J&K has been through a secessionist movement, it has seen terrorist violence. Still, in the past 70 years, no government at the Centre has taken the step that the Modi government has. This is fundamentally because they had no doubt that, at its core, the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley was dominated by a firm middle ground in spite of the so-called lures of extremism promoted by a neighboring country. It is this which led Atal Behari Vajpayee, a former PM from the BJP party, to declare that he would interact with the people of the Valley on the basis of "*insaniyat, jambhuriyat*, and *Kashmiriyat*" (humanity, democracy, and the Kashmiri ethos). In contrast, the present regime appears to believe that in the country's only Muslim-majority state, although at the time of Partition it had refused to join Pakistan, the entire populace is untrustworthy.

The terms on which Kashmir's Hindu Maharaja had acceded to India were enshrined as Article 370 of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly itself. It was akin to a treaty that formed part of the building block of the Union of India, but the Modi government dismantled it in legally questionable ways. Today the middle ground in Kashmir is gone. None of the reasons for ending J&K's constitutional status has proved valid. Terrorism is on the rise, the economy is devastated. We are in a dangerously uncertain situation with China now openly colluding with Pakistan on Kashmir, border trouble erupting in Ladakh, and the people of the valley being in a disturbed state.

What's special about NEP?

The hullabaloo over the new National Education Policy (NEP) in Tamil Nadu could be intriguing to many. Particularly when every political party jumps into the fray to discuss educational reform or when Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami says that he cannot allow the proposed teaching of three languages, defying his ally, the BJP.

For a clear understanding, one needs to remember that language and education are intertwined with politics in Tamil Nadu, always. The state's unique two-language policy, stipulating the teaching of English and Tamil alone in schools, was affirmed through an Assembly resolution on January 23, 1968, by the first DMK chief minister C.N. Annadurai and reaffirmed on November 13, 1986, when M.G. Ramachandran was at the helm.

Every education policy has been shaped by politics. Many a custom that prevented subaltern communities from pursuing higher education was removed through orders and moves to deny opportunities for the marginalised people were fought through political action.

That a proposal by C. Rajagopalachari in 1953 to introduce a "hereditary education policy" cost him his premiership and his successor K. Kamaraj earned the sobriquet "Father of Education (*Kalvi Thanthai*)" for opening more schools is an example of people's awareness on education and their expectations from political leaders. Earlier, Rajagopalchari had lost his premiership when he tried to introduce Hindi in secondary schools.

Politicians of the day cannot ignore the perception that learning Hindi in school does not help much. Also people wonder what's so great about the NEP that only aspires to achieve a GER of 50 per cent in 2035 when Tamil Nadu is just short of 0.7 per cent now.

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Subhani

Men in The Castle and J&K's metamorphosis

V. Sudarshan

With Kafkaesque efficiency, our bureaucrats in Delhi have managed not to hold elections in J&K, even to panchayats

A fatuous record it certainly is. And yet, it could be out of a satirical version of Franz Kafka's incomplete and allegorical novel, *The Castle*. In eight days, between January 18 and January 25, 2020, as many as 36 Union ministers visited 60 locations in 12 districts of Jammu and Kashmir and addressed 100 public meetings while inaugurating 210 public projects, probably delivering lengthy monologues to rigged audiences. And yes, grievance boxes have been placed in each and every panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir. Taken together, they represent the core of New Delhi's new relationship with the erstwhile Jammu and Kashmir in the year since Article 370 was abrogated. These are also probably going to be among the talking points of future choreographed visits of foreign diplomats to mark the colossal development strides taken in Jammu and Kashmir.

The real story, however, is quite the opposite. The only politicians who have a free but security-enveloped run of Jammu and Kashmir are the Central ministers, politicians from New Delhi, some of whose official portfolios are much longer than their names but mean little in the new Jammu and Kashmir. Not the local politicians, even the more mildly offensive in the eyes of New Delhi like Saifuddin Soz, who just the other day impotently peered through concertina wiring to wiggle his finger to demonstrate the complete freedom of his movement. And yes, New Delhi, hereinafter to be referred to as "The Castle", now controls Jammu and Kashmir in exactly the same way as Pakistan controls Occupied Kashmir, from Islamabad, through nameless bureaucrats, seemingly eliminating the need for elected representatives. Kafka's novel is set in unending winter and most scenes are dark, *The Castle* bureaucracy unreachable and the protagonist, eerily, is a mysterious character identified simply as "K", an outsider seeking acceptance. With Kafkaesque efficiency, our bureaucrats in The Castle have managed not to hold elections, even to panchayats. This of course underscores the absurd importance of having grievance boxes in every panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir. To prompt a wink-wink reaction from Washington, the Chinese might be well advised take a few pages of this silver-lined playbook's refinement of democracy and upholding of human rights, to apply to the Uighurs, for instance.

Needless to say, the achievements of the year gone by are unparalleled. In terms of counter-terrorism operations, The Castle appears on top of that beast; in the seven months they have culled as many terrorist recruits as they did in almost all of the previous year. And yet, despite this everyday demonstration of efficiency, The Castle has been unable to address the alienation and disaffection of the village that lies below, buried deep in the icy drifts in the aftermath of the crude and surgical killing of Article 370. To the nearly 700 companies of paramilitary forces, comprising CRPF, SSB, ITBP and over a hundred companies of the better-primed Rashtriya Rifles, the supply of cannon fodder seems limitless, visible in the new recruits to militancy, some of vintages as recent as three or four days.

Internally, in terms of political space, there is a vacuum and nothing else, and the tentative voices of erstwhile mainstream politicians from Kashmir, who stand discredited and acknowledge as much, are heavy with humiliation and distress, indicating an aversion to take up any meaningful political activity in this setting, like characters in search of an absurd author who can squeeze electoral sympathy out of their plight. The separatist voices have shrunk to less than disarrayed whispers. In this scenario, government-ordained politicians can posit no role, not even as comic relief. In this terrible space lurks the risk of radical ideologies, and possibly worse. On August 5 there will be plenty of evidence of continued motivation from across the border when the Nishan-e-Pakistan is conferred on Syed Ali Shah Geelani to the drumbeat of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to PoK, in the form of webinars, Twitter-storms, social media events. And, yes, at least one university named after the separatist, why not?

Kafka died leaving his last novel hanging midsentence, unfinished. Several endings thus become plausible. The parallels are uncanny elsewhere as well outside the artificial microcosm of Kashmir, where the larger plots have begun writing themselves, somewhat to our chagrin. From the East to the West our recent neighbourhood initiative, which began with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's impromptu inviting of all the leaders to his swearing-in in May 2014, seems to have arrived at a critical and enigmatic phase. The drawbridge is going up, a moat of self-imposed absurdity completes the separation. In Bangladesh, which we helped liberate, our envoy continues to find difficulty getting an audience with Sheikh Hasina amid protests against our Prime Minister for pushing both the NRC and the CAA, both inimical to Bangladesh, and capable of driving Bangladesh firmly into the Chinese embrace. It is a squabble a day scene with Nepal now. As we get turfed out of Afghanistan and diplomatically booted out of Iran, there is more likely than not a congruence of both tactical and strategic intent involving a range of countries, especially in the Muslim world, more aligned with the Chinese and Pakistanis, than with New Delhi. Just because most of the Gulf and Arab nations have not spoken up about the depredations around these contentious issues does not mean they do not have a clear view or are not watching with concern the goings-on. Any reprieve that we may have got through Covid-19 on the CAA, and even on Kashmir, is temporary and illusory. The EU remains phlegmatic and focused on its key goals where the lack of various freedoms in Kashmir are concerned. It is not going to change its mind or vote. Joe Biden, should he come up trumps, has already been conferred the Hilal-e-Pakistan for his yeoman service for promoting friendship with Pakistan. One year after August 5, 2019, the intransigent military arrival of the Chinese in our part of Ladakh, however helplessly the folks in The Castle spin it with Rafales and so on, is the clearest indication that the world as we wished to know it is no longer the same. At the centre of the faultlines of that new world is a word beginning with K. Which ending do you think waits to write itself for our K?

The writer is the author of Adrift: A True Story of Survival at Sea *and* Anatomy of an Abduction. *He writes, among other things, on diplomacy, security, strategic affairs and foreign policy.*

LETTERS

FOLLOW KARNATAKA

It has been reported that corporate hospitals are not handing over dead bodies of Covid-19 patients till the payment of bills. I understand that the Karnataka government has passed an order that bodies should be handed over immediately after taking an affidavit from relatives. The TS government can issue such an order.

A.R.R. Datta
Hyderabad

What a that the Covid dead are denied even this last farewell (*Funeral of Covid patients proves to be challenging*. There is already a severe emotional impact on the bereaved families and they are forced to run from pillar to post for cremation. People have become inhuman and intolerant .The government should make rules to make the cremation easier at the place of choice of the dead patients' families. Anybody who obstructs or delays this should be punished.

K.S.M. Sarma
Ragannaguda, RR dist

LANGUAGE POLICY

The three-language formula is burdensome to students. It is a waste of their time if they have to learn a third language *(TN rejects 3-language policy proposed in NEP, Aug. 4)*. Ninety per cent of the time should be given to learning English and the rest for the state language. Once they complete their studies, students need English everywhere, even to go abroad. The NEP should consider focussing on the English language in the education system.

J. Vijay Kumar
Secunderabad

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

PM says ban on Naxalites not possible

NEW DELHI, August 3

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today reaffirmed in the Rajya Sabha that the Government was determined to deal 'sternly' with the problems posed by the Naxalites in West Bengal.

Indicating the stronger measures would be taken to remedy the situation which was inherited Mrs. Gandhi said the Government was ""gravely concerned' and the 'specific attacks on educational institutions. I am not mitigating it.

Vijay Sai Reddy

Rafales to boost India's bargain strength with China, Pakistan

Rafale jets touching Indian soil are most welcome. The literal meaning of "Rafale" in French is a "gust of wind" and "burst of fire".

As the meaning suggests, the winds are blowing in favour of India and fire is bursting towards the infiltrators. Five Rafale fighter jets (the first batch in the deal of 36) landing in Ambala is a welcome step when there is imminent threat to our sovereignty from our neighbours.

In 2001, the Government of India placed an order for Rafale jets which are multi-role combat aircraft for the Indian Air Force. Due to the Narendra Modi government's untiring efforts, the jets became part of our air force after 19 long years.

When Mr Modi visited France in 2015, the government eased the complicated rules and arrested the red-tapism generally prevalent in the defence sector. Finally, we got our first batch of jets at a crucial time when the country is facing aggression and tough times.

I appreciate the agreement signed in September 2016 between India and France namely the inter-governmental agreement (IGA) for the acquisition of 36 fighter jets, a deal worth ₹60,000 crores.

Out of the 36 Rafale aircraft, 30 will be fighter jets and six will be trainers. The jets could be purchased only because PM Narendra Modi took the right decision to get these aircraft through an inter-governmental agreement with France, after the long-pending procurement process.

I do not want to go into the details of the political criticism of this deal. To me a price cap cannot be put on defending our country's sovereignty and the independence of our people.

To my party, there can be no compromise on saving our frontiers and our citizens from flagrant violation of our independence. This is the time to rally behind Mr Modi and his efforts to keep India safe and to send a bold and united message to our neighbours that India is not a country to be trifled with and we will protect our country and its frontiers at any cost.

The French-made Rafales are India's first major acquisition of fighter planes in 23 years, since the Sukhoi jets were imported from Russia. It is a proud moment for all Indians.

Modernising our air force will enhance our bargaining power with our neighbours and send across a strong signal that we are bargaining from a position of strength and will not hesitate to show our might if our borders are violated.

There will not be any Balakot kind of strikes or intrusions since we have sent a strong message with these jets. The moment these steel birds landed on Indian soil, Pakistan was rattled as was evident from its set of complaints reported in the Pakistani media.

Had India had this capability during the aerial encounter with Pakistan last year, many Pakistani F-16s would have been destroyed.

The ability to strike air-to-air targets from up to 150 km away and safely hit land targets 300 km within enemy territory, make India's Rafales some of the deadliest fighter jets flying in the world.

The arrival of the Rafales could not have been more timely. With Chinese slow to de-escalate at the borders, our airforce cannot make a more emphatic statement. As per IAF experts, Rafale holds major superiority over J20 in terms of engine, combat capabilities, higher weapon load, battle experience and lethal missile power. "Rafale is far superior to the J-20, the Chengdu fighter of China. Even though it's believed to be a 5th generation fighter it is probably at best a 3.5 generation aircraft. It's got a third-generation engine as we have in the Sukhoi," said Air Marshal R Nambiar (retd), who flight-tested the Rafale fighter jets for India.

It is a well-known fact that the Rafale jets we have received are more powerful than China's J-20s, Pakistan's JF-17's or Pakistan's F16. The touchdown of Rafale combat aircraft in India is the beginning of a new era in our military history.

The Rafale is a twin jet fighter aircraft able to operate as air-to-air fighters and air-to-ground fighters. They can carry advanced weaponry like air to air MCA missiles, long-range meteor missiles, air to ground Hammer missiles, laser guided bombs, non guided classic bombs and scalp long range missiles can penetrate deep inside enemy territory. Rafale can climb up to 60,000 feet per minute during a combat whereas a J-20 can climb up to 59,842.52 feet per minute and a JF-17 has a climbing speed of 59,000 feet per minute. With regard to experience in warfare, Rafale was used widely in war missions in Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. The J-20 and JF-17 have had no such experience.

The state-of-the-art 4.5 Generation Rafale jet can reach almost double the speed of sound, with a top speed of 1.8 Mach. With its multi-role capabilities, including electronic warfare, air defence, ground support and in-depth strikes Rafale can also carry more fuel and weapons than the J20. The jets come with one of the most advanced Meteor air-to-air missiles.

Two F16s need to combine together to counter-challenge a single Rafale in the air. Indian aircraft need not cross the LoC and surgical strikes can be done from deep within Indian soil only. The aircraft can take out the enemy aircraft from a range of more than 100 kms. The aircraft supplied to India are more sophisticated than the ones Egypt or France are using now.

This kind of sophisticated infrastructure is essential for Indian forces in these challenging times. Not only they strengthen the military power of India but also change India's position in the South Asia.

It is a well-known fact that a powerful country cannot be taken lightly by its neighbours. In this critical time, with the world facing a life-threatening health crisis, it is indeed sad that certain countries actually feel the need to launch full-fledged warfare where precious Indian lives were lost. India cannot allow this to happen.

Hence, I welcome the Rafales wholeheartedly. I hope the remaining "birds of steel" will land as soon as possible.

The writer is a YSRCP MP, its parliamentary party leader and national general secretary

SHORT TAKES

IRS OFFICER PRADEEP TOPS UPSC EXAM

New Delhi, Aug. 4: IRS officer Pradeep Singh tops the list of 829 candidates who have qualified for the prestigious civil services, including the IAS, the IPS and the IFS, the Union Public Service Commission announced on Tuesday.

The top three rank holders - Singh, Jatin Kishore and Pratibha Verma — are serving officers. Singh is a resident of Haryana, while Kishore hails from Delhi and Verma from Uttar Pradesh.

"It is like a dream come true. It is a pleasant surprise for me. I always wanted to be an IAS officer. I would like to work for the deprived sections of society," Singh said on phone from his home in Sonipat.

Singh, 29, a 2019-batch Indian Revenue Service (customs and central excise) officer, is undergoing probation at the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics in Faridabad.

He said his main emphasis would be on improving education and farm sectors as he has become part of the most sought-after IAS. "I have opted for my home state Haryana as the preferred cadre state for the IAS. I am happy that I will now get the chance to work for my state, said Singh, who had taken leave to prepare for the examination.

Second-rank holder Kishore is a 2018-batch officer of Indian Economic Service and currently posted as Assistant Director in the Ministry of Rural Development here. It was my second attempt in the civil services examination. I am happy to have got second rank, he said. Kishore, 26, said education and environment would be his focused areas. He is a native of Delhi.

Verma, an officer of Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax), said she wanted to become an IAS officer since her childhood. "I was inspired by the way IAS officers act as the first responder at the time of any crisis. They are always on the frontline at the time of difficult situation. That is why I decided to prepare again for the exam, she said.

Kerala not to opt for sero survey for now

Experts say their focus, priority is on identifying the cases

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 4

Kerala does not seem to be keen on going for extensive antibody testing among the population including in areas where large Covid-19 clusters have emerged.

Experts leading the fight against the virus said that at present their focus and priority is on identifying the cases. With Kerala having negative factors on its side like high population of elderly, 20 per cent population with diabetes, 33 per cent with hypertension, the state cannot afford to slacken its disease control activities.

Moreover, they said that the number of cases in which the source of infection is not known is just between 1 and 2 per cent.

"Maybe at a later stage the state can think of sero surveillance study to find out whether herd immunity has set in or not. Instead of antibody testing what we now require urgently is scaling up antigen and RT PCR testing to identify the cases," a doctor who is part of the Covid management team of the government said on the condition of the anonymity.

At least 50 to 60 per cent people should develop antibody to have herd immunity set in.

Though the government had distributed 10,000 antibody testing kits to each district for a survey, the exercise was stopped mid-way. However, medical organisations have a different take on the issue.

"It is high time antibody testing started in Kerala. Not only antibody test the state should also do epidemiological survey of antibody tests," said IMA state secretary Dr Gopikrishnan.

He said Kerala should take a cue from Dharavi and Delhi where extensive testing was carried out. The existing testing rate in Kerala is not satisfactory. Even the sentinel survey being carried out among vulnerable groups like health care professionals and law enforcing agencies is not enough. The results are taking a bit too long.

Kerala had reported the first case of Covid-19 on January 30, which was also the first positive patient in the country. During the first two stages, Kerala managed the situation quite remarkably attracting global attention and acclaim. Till May 4, there were only 419 cases and three deaths. However, within three months the cases have gone up to 26,873 and 84 deaths.

Significantly, Kerala has succeeded in keeping the mortality rate at 0.3 which is one of the lowest in the country (national average 2.41). Cases started increasing with the arrival of Keralities especially from hotspots like Gulf countries, US, Russia and Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi.

During this period, 7 lakh people arrived in Kerala including 2 lakh from abroad and 4 lakh from other states. Among those who returned to Kerala, over 3,000 tested positive for Covid-19.

Though the government put in place mechanisms for testing at the airports, quarantine and surveillance, the local transmission could not be controlled effectively.

"We wanted to restrict local people from getting infected from those coming from abroad or other states. Our expectation was that if we can keep contact positivity less than 30 per cent then we could manage. But it started increasing by the day. It is between 60 and 70 per cent now," Dr B. Ekbal, chairman of Kerala's High Level Expert Committee on Covid Control, told a webinar recently.

In its attempt to check the increasing number of cases, the government on Monday took a decision that has triggered a major controversy. The government took away activities like contact tracing, declaration of containment zones, surveillance of people under quarantine from health workers and gave it to the police personnel.

The state unit of IMA, Kerala Government Medical Officers Association and various other health organisations demanded that the government reconsider the decision.

Entire Kashmir now 'red zone'

Jammu, Aug. 4: The Jammu and Kashmir government has classified the districts into red, orange and green zones depending on the severity of Covid-19 spread in the areas and declared the entire Kashmir region, except Bandipora, as a "red zone".

The categorisation has been done to implement restrictions after August 5, when the current phase of lockdown in the union territory ends, according to an order issued by the chairperson of the State Executive Committee.

The order declared all districts of Kashmir, except Bandipora, and Ramban district of Jammu as red zones. Kathua, Samba, Bandipora, Reasi, Udhampur, Poonch, Rajouri and Jammu districts are in orange zone and Doda and Kishtwar are in green zone.

The Lakhanpur containment zone on the national highway will be a red/containment zone with a 500-metre buffer, the order stated.

● **CLASSIFICATION OF** districts has been done after a detailed review of the Covid-19 situation with top officials.

It said the classification of districts has been done after a detailed review of the Covid-19 situation with top officials, and it will be reviewed periodically.

The review included the recent spike in new cases in view of the movement of people to J&K and between districts.

On Tuesday, Jammu and Kashmir recorded 390 Covid-19 cases, taking the total number of infections to 22,396.

Ten fatalities in the last 24 hours pushed the death toll from the disease to 417, officials said.

They said all the 10 deaths were reported from Kashmir Valley.

— PTI

ANTI-CAA STIR RESUMES AFTER 5 MONTHS

MANOJ ANAND | DC
GUWAHATI, AUG. 4

After the gap of nearly five months, the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests have started resurfacing with All Assam Students Union holding a protest march in eastern Assam's Dibrugarh in which hundreds of students took part.

The protest which came close on the heels of Union home ministry seeking three additional months to frame the CAA rules, started with a rally from Chowkidinghee and passed through all the major roads of the town before proceeding towards the residence of Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal in Lakhi Nagar area of Dibrugarh beside the Mancotta road.

All the motorcycles stopped just beside the Chief Minister's residence and the Aasu activists raised slogans against the Citizenship Act.

As in the beginning of March, anti-CAA rallies were put on hold across the state due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the protest caught everyone by surprise and security personnel scrambled and threw a protective ring around the Chief Minister's residence in Dibrugarh.

"Our protest against the Citizenship Amendment Act has resumed. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic we had put our agitation on hold since the beginning of March. Now, it will be back in full force. As we have said before, Assam will not shoulder the burden of a single Bangladeshi entering the state after 1971, be it Hindu or Muslim," Aasu Dibrugarh district general secretary Sankor Jyoti Baruah said.

Architect of modern Indian theatre, Alkazi, passes away

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 4

Theatre doyen and legendary teacher Ebrahim Alkazi died on Tuesday afternoon after suffering a heart attack, his son said. He was 94.

Alkazi, who was the longest serving director of the National School of Drama, produced plays such as Girish Karnad's *Tughlaq* and Dharamvir Bharati's *Andha Yug*. He mentored generations of actors, including Naseeruddin Shah and Om Puri.

"Dad died at 2.45 pm after a massive heart attack. He was admitted to the Escorts hospital the day before yesterday," his son Feisal Alkazi said.

Reacting to the death, Bollywood actor Nawazuddin Siddiqui wrote on Twitter, "The true architect of the Modern Indian Theatre. The Doyen who possessed the extreme knowledge in all the aspects of Art. The magician who nurtured many greats of theatre. May your brightest spark from the heaven keep us enlightening."

While at NSD, Alkazi trained actors like Naseeruddin Shah, Om Puri, Rohini Hattangadi, Surekha Sikri and Pankaj Kapoor, all of whom made it in Bollywood.

Alkazi is best remembered for the important advance he made in scenographic design thanks to his extensive research before he produced a play. He is also remembered for his love of art, being a collector and for founding the Art Heritage Gallery in Delhi.

He was awarded the Padma Shri (1966), the Padma Bhushan (1991), and Padma Vibhushan in 2010.

TWO INDIANS KIDNAPPED IN 2018 FROM AFGHANISTAN RELEASED

DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

Two Indian nationals have been released from captivity in Afghanistan and returned home to India on Tuesday, the Indian government has said.

The two Indian nationals released on July 31 were among a group of seven Indian engineers of a company working in Afghanistan's northern Baghlan province who were abducted in May, 2018, reportedly by the Taliban who apparently mistook them for government employees.

Of those seven Indian nationals, six are now free, New Delhi said, while thanking the Afghan government for its "constant and unwavering support in securing the release of the Indians".

One Indian national had been freed in March last year while according to media reports, three others had been freed in October last year.

In a statement the MEA said, "Two Indian nationals, who were released from captivity in Afghanistan on July 31, returned to India on Tuesday."

LIVE RICH
FINANCIAL Chronicle
HYDERABAD | WEDNESDAY | 5 AUGUST 2020

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	37,687.91	2.03
Nifty 50	11,095.25	1.87
S&P 500*	3,296.97	0.07
Dollar (₹)	75.04	-0.03
Pound Sterling (₹)	97.99	0.22
Euro (₹)	88.43	-0.13
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,830▲97	0.17
Brent crude ($/bbl)*	44.40	0.25
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.833	-0.004
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.515	-0.048

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Adani, Suraksha, Sunteck submit EOI for HDIL

Adani Properties, Suraksha Asset Reconstruction and Sunteck Realty are among six players which have shown initial interest to acquire debt-laden HDIL through the insolvency resolution process, according to a regulatory filing. International Asset Reconstruction Company, N S Software and Harsha Vardhan Reddy have also submitted the EOI, but they were found ineligible.

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Reserve Bank clears appointment

Insider Jagdishan to head HDFC Bk

FALAKNAAZ SYED
MUMBAI, AUG. 4

Sashidhar Jagdishan

Private lender HDFC Bank on Tuesday announced that Sashidhar Jagdishan would be its new managing director and chief executive officer for a period of three years from his date of taking charge i.e. October 27. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has cleared the appointment, the bank informed the bourses.

Jagdishan replaces Aditya Puri, the high profile banker who led the bank since inception and retires on October 26.

Jagdishan is currently the group head of finance, human resources, legal & secretarial, administration, infrastructure, corporate communications, corporate social responsibility and the strategic change agent of the bank.

Investors cheered the move, sending HDFC Bank's shares up as much as 6 per cent after the news broke out, pushing the broader stock markets higher. The stock closed the day 4 per cent up. HDFC Bank is now the third most valued listed entity in India with a market cap of Rs 6.1 lakh crore after RIL and TCS.

"A meeting of the board of directors of the bank will be convened in due course inter alia to approve the appointment of Mr. Sashidhar Jagdishan as the Managing Director & CEO of the bank, in place of Mr. Aditya Puri, who is due to retire as Managing Director of the bank on October 26, 2020," said HDFC Bank in a statement.

"He (Jagdishan) has played a critical role in supporting the growth trajectory of the bank. He has led the finance function and played a pivotal role in aligning the organisation in achieving the strategic objectives over the years." the statement said.

Raamdeo Agrawal, chairman, Motilal Oswal Financial Services said, "Sashidhar has tremendous opportunity to build on the lead the bank has taken in last two decades and remain an example and envy of every single banker in India."

Shyamala Gopinath, chairperson, HDFC Bank, said, "Sashi brings to the table a rare combination of IQ and EQ. Given his understanding of the business, coupled with a strong people connect, we're confident that he'll take the bank to the next level."

"He understands the bank's ethos, culture which has made it what it is. Given our inherent strengths and now Sashi's leadership, I believe that the best of the bank is yet to come," said Aditya Puri, MD, HDFC Bank.

Speaking about his appointment Jagdishan said, "I fully recognise that Mr. Puri's are huge shoes to fill....I'll leave no stone unturned to carry forward the rich legacy."

Widely known as Sashi, Jagdishan has an overall experience of 30 years, 24 of which he spent in HDFC Bank. He joined the bank in 1996 as a manager in the finance function. He became business head-finance in 1999 and was appointed as chief financial officer in 2008 and played a critical role in supporting the bank's growth trajectory.

Jagdishan holds a master's degree in 'economics of money, banking & finance' from the University of Sheffield, UK.

Prior to HDFC Bank, he had a 3 year stint with Deutsche Bank, Mumbai.

₹500-cr net worth must to sell petrol and diesel

New Delhi, Aug. 4: The government on Tues-day said any entity with a net worth of at least Rs 500 crore is eligible for obtaining the liberalised licence to sell petrol and diesel to retail and bulk consumers.

Clarifying on the November 2019 liberalised fuel licensing regime, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said any entity with a net worth of Rs 250 crore can get a licence to retail petrol and diesel to either bulk or retail consumers. For those seeking authorisation for both retail and bulk should have a minimum net worth of Rs 500 crore at the time of application.

Last year, the Centre had relaxed norms for retailing auto fuels, allowing non-oil companies to venture into the business, a move that could help private and foreign firms to enter the world's fastest-growing market.

Prior to that, a company had to invest Rs 2,000 crore in either hydrocarbon exploration and production, refining, pipelines or liquefied natural gas terminals to obtain a fuel retailing licence.

The ministry said applications may be submitted directly to the ministry. "For retail authorisation, the entity is required to set up at least 100 retail outlets," it said. *— PTI*

Mkt rebounds on short covering

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, AUG. 4

The equity market rebounded by around 2 per cent after a 4 per cent fall in the last four sessions, on short covering, supported by abundant liquidity.

The Sensex gained 748.31 points, or 2.03 per cent, closing at 37,687.91 while the Nifty-50 closed 203.65 points, or 1.94 per cent, at 11,095.25

"The key highlight of the day's trade was huge gains in Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank and good investor participation in the broader market, with smart money finding its way into select midcaps across sectors," said a broker.

Reliance Industries gained 7.10 per cent after a sharp fall in previous sessions while another index heavyweight HDFC Bank gained 3.94 per cent after the bank informed stock exchanges about RBI's approval of Sashidhar Jagdishan, an insider, as MD & CEO of the bank for a period of three years.

Gains in Nifty were largely contributed by RIL and HDFC Bank, together contributing almost 160 points out of the 204-point gain on the index.

The BSE Mid-cap index gained 1.02 per cent and the BSE Small-cap Index gained 1.23 per cent.

The Nifty Bank index gained 1.97 per cent as other private bank shares also recovered from the previous day's losses.

Shrikant Chouhan, executive VP, technical research, Kotak Securities said, "Reliance Industries stock contributed more than 50 per cent to the overall rise in the Nifty and the balance was supported by financial stocks. The Nifty opened higher on the back of exceptional strength in the US market. We believe the up-move is nothing more than a pull-back to the recent decline."

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth Rs 703.74 crore while the domestic institutions were net sellers by Rs 665.69 crore.

Coal mining: Neighbours need govt nod

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

In a move that will check easy investments from China and Pakistan, the government has clarified that entities of a country sharing land border with India will have to invest in coal mining activities under the government route.

"It is further clarified that any FDI in commercial coal mining is subject to Applicable Laws including the Press Note 3 of 2020 issued by the Central Government," the government said in a communiqué.

According to this Press Note, "an entity of a country, which shares a land border with India or where the beneficial owner of an investment into India is situated in or is a citizen of any such country, can invest only under the government route". The Press Note was issued in April as the government wanted to curb opportunistic acquisitions and takeovers of domestic companies by investors from neighbouring countries in the backdrop of the pandemic.

Further, a citizen of Pakistan or an entity incorporated in Pakistan can invest only under the government route in sectors/activities other than defence, space, atomic energy and sectors/activities prohibited for foreign investment," the statement said. The government has also issued a corrigendum to the tender document in this regard.

The auction process of coal mines for commercial purposes was launched in June and is still underway. In order to attract overseas investments, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy, 2017 was also amended to permit 100 per cent FDI under the automatic route in coal mining activities, including associated processing infrastructure, for sale of coal, subject to the provisions of Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015 and the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.

However, the government wants to scrutinise the investments arising out of neighbouring countries, including Pakistan and China, in coal mining activities as well.

SHORT TAKES

Red card for coughing on field

Zurich: A football player who deliberately coughs close to another player or match official can be issued a red card.

The International Football Association Board, the game's lawmaker, updated its guidelines while the pandemic perseveres.

A referee can only red card a player when they are certain the cough is intentional. A yellow card is also optional.

The new rule falls under "using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures."

IFAB said in a statement: "As with all offenses, the referee has to make a judgment about the true nature of the offense.

"If it were clearly accidental, then the referee would not take action nor if the 'cough' took place with a large distance between the players.

"However, where it is close enough to be clearly offensive, then the referee can take action," the statemen from IFAB added. — *AP*

World Cup winner Iker calls it a day

Madrd: Spain's World Cup-winning goalkeeper Iker Casillas announced his retirement on Tuesday, after being sidelined for more than a year with a heart problem.

Casillas, 39, also won the European Championship twice with his country in a trophy-laden career which included more than 700 games for Real Madrid.

"Today is both one of the most important and most difficult days of my sporting life, the time to say goodbye has arrived," he said on *Twitter*.

Casillas joined Portuguese side Porto in 2015 after a tearful departure from Madrid but suffered a heart attack in May last year.

He played 167 times for the national team, winning trophies in 2008, 2010, 2012 in a golden age for Spanish football.

He lifted five Spanish league titles and the Champions League on three occasions during his time at the Santiago Bernabeu. — *AP*

Brazil football sides ignore rules

Sao Paulo: Both teams in the Sao Paulo state league final this week are accused of wilfully ignoring health recommendations to stop the Coronavirus.

Defending Sao Paulo state champion Corinthians refused on Monday to be tested again, while archrival Palmeiras was criticised for releasing players and staffers to go home after matches. The first leg of the state final is on Wednesday, and the second on Saturday. The Covid-19 protocols of the Sao Paulo football body are the same ones being applied to the Brazilian championship. — *AP*

LINES DRAWN FOR IPL

Tests, quarantine, bio-bubble part of plan

New Delhi, Aug. 4: Indian players and support staff will have to return negative for Covid-19 at least five times before they start training in the UAE and subsequently will be tested every fifth day during the IPL, according to a draft prepared by the BCCI.

A BCCI official said that all Indian players and support staff will have to undergo two Covid-19 RT-PCR tests, 24 hours apart, a week before joining the 14-day quarantine period with their respective teams in India.

If any individual tests positive, he will go into a 14-day quarantine. After the quarantine, he will be required to undergo two more Covid-19 RT-PCR tests within a space of 24 hours and if they come negative, that person will be cleared to fly to UAE for the IPL.

"Following their arrival in the UAE, the players and support staff will have to return at least three negative tests during a week's quarantine and if they are negative, they can enter the bio-bubble and start training.

"There could be minor changes to this protocol depending on the feedback from the teams but there will not be any compromise on players and team officials' safety," the official said.

During the first week in the UAE, the players and team officials will not be allowed to meet each other in the hotel and they can only do so after they test negative thrice, following which they will be cleared to enter the bio-bubble and start training.

"All overseas players and support staff also need to undergo two Covid-19 RT-PCR tests before flying to UAE and can only fly if the tests are negative. If not, then the same 14-day quarantine period and two negative tests to be able to fly to the UAE," said the official.

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 tested every fifth day during the event.

Over and above the BCCI testing protocol, the teams can do more tests on their own and additional tests may also be conducted under the rules put in place by the UAE government. — *PTI*

- **Indian players and support staff will have to undergo two Covid-19 RT-PCR tests, 24 hours apart, a week before joining the 14-day quarantine period with their respective teams in India.**
- **The players and support staff will be tested on Day 1, Day 3 and Day 6 of their quarantine in the UAE.**
- **Teams have been told to not fly out bef-ore August 20. Families will not be allowed to meet anyone outside bio-bubble.**

Ali confident of Babar show

Manchester, Aug. 4: Pakistan captain Azhar Ali is confident Babar Azam will show he is one of the world's leading batsmen in the Test series against England.

The 25-year-old Babar has a fine career Test average of 45.12 from 26 matches heading into the first of a three-match campaign against England at Old Trafford on Wednesday.

But his figures during the past two years suggest he is approaching the prime of his career.

Babar's five Test hundreds have all come since the start of 2018, during which time he has scored 1,375 runs in 15 matches at a hugely impressive average of 65.47.

Babar is top of the global Twenty20 batting rankings, third in the one-day standings and sixth in the Test list.

Azhar, asked if the England series would see Babar join Australia's Steve Smith and India's Virat Kohli in the top bracket of Test batsmen, told British media: "I think he is right up there already.

"People are thinking and talking about it. He is just hungry for runs and I think if he keeps doing that he will be up there for quite a long time.

"His performances have improved massively in Test matches over the last year or so. Firstly, he was performing really well in white-ball cricket and people thought he was only a white-ball player but he took on that challenge and played with a lot of freedom and flair," he added.

Paksitan captain Azhar Ali looks on during a nets session at the Old Trafford in Manchester, England, on Tuesday. — *AP*

Azhar, anxious not to pile too much pressure on to Babar, said he wanted the batsman to relax and play his natural game.

"He is a very important player for us but I would like him to be free from any pressure and just enjoy his game," said the skipper.

Pakistan could also do with runs from Azhar, who knows English conditions well from his time with Somerset, and Asad Shafiq.

The two batsmen have scored just two hundreds each in 18 Tests since the veteran pair of Misbah-ul-Haq, now Pakistan's coach, and Younis Khan retired in 2017.

ENG DELAY DECISION ON STOKES FOR OPENER

Meanwhile, England are set to delay a decision on the bowling fitness of star allrounder Ben Stokes before naming their final XI to play Pakistan in the first Test at Old Trafford.

Stokes' quad injury meant he was unable to bowl in England's victory over the West Indies at the Manchester ground last week, which sealed a 2-1 series victory.

He was selected as a specialist batsman for that match, with England dropping Zak Crawley from their top order to make room for an extra bowler.

Stokes bowled in the Manchester nets on Monday but rain cut short his planned stint on Tuesday.

"We still need to know a bit more about where Ben is at," Root said at his pre-match press conference.

"Because of the weather he wasn't able to bowl outside so we'll probably wait on that tonight and make a decision in the morning (Wednesday).

"Ben being able to do everything he can do is huge for this team and it shows how pivotal he is, but if he's not fit there are a number of ways we can go," the England captain added. — *Agencies*

He (Azam) is right up there already. He is a very important player for us but I would like him to be free from any pressure and just enjoy his game.

— AZHAR ALI
Pakistan captain on star batsman Babar Azam

Live on TV
FIRST TEST
England vs Pakistan from 3.30 pm on Sony Six

WINDIES TOUR OF AUSTRALIA POSTPONED

Melbourne, Aug. 4: Cricket Australia on Tuesday said it has put on hold a three-game T20I series against the West Indies which was scheduled to be held in October.

Matches of the the T20 series were slated to be held in Townsville, Cairns and the Gold Coast on October 4, 6 and 9 respectively.

It was supposed to be a warm-up series ahead of the T20 World Cup but with the showpiece event being postponed last month due to the global health crisis, the two cricket boards decided to postpone it.

"Together with @windiescricket, we have agreed to postpone the Twenty20 series originally scheduled for Queensland in October," Cricket Australia said in a tweet.

"Serving as warm-ups for the ICC T20 World Cup, the series will now coincide with the rescheduled T20 World Cup in Australia, in either 2021 or 2022."

Top players from both the countries will now take part in the rescheduled 13th IPL, which will be held in the UAE from September 19 to November 10. — *PTI*

- **Cricket Australia put on hold a three-game T20I series against the West Indies which was scheduled to be held in October.**

Rooftop tennis? Roger that!

Tennis legend Roger Federer takes a selfie with budding Italian tennis players Vittoria (13) and Carola (11). A video of two girls playing tennis on a rooftop in Italy had gone viral during the early lockdown phase in April. Three months later, while the girls were being interviewed on the terrace, Federer made an entry, surprising them. The 20-time Grand Slam champion exchanged rallies with the delighted girls on the rooftop, took them out for lunch and also got them enrolled for a week-long training at the Rafael Nadal Academy in Mallorca, Spain.

WOMEN'S | TENNIS

Pliskova makes winning return

Palermo (Italy), Aug. 4: Tour-level tennis resumed after a five-month enforced break on Monday, and players at the Palermo Ladies Open had to handle their own towels and not shake hands of opponents.

The strict rules because of the Coronavirus included no showers on site, and no autographs or photos with fans. Players in the singles main draw come from 16 European countries and Argentina..

A limited number of fans were allowed into the 1,500-seat stadium court.

They watched sixth-seeded Donna Vekic of Croatia beat Arantxa Rus of the Netherlands 6-1, 6-2 in windy conditions in the first official match — for men or women — since early March.

Vekic sealed a place in the second round on her second match point.

Vekic will next face Italian teenager Elisabetta Cocciaretto, who beat Polona Hercog of Slovenia 7-6 (1), 6-3 for her first victory over a player ranked in the top 50.

Vekic is hoping to compete in the U.S. Open, where she reached the quarterfinals last year, and the French Open as well as Rome.

"Things are changing every week so I think we just have to take it week by week and try to adapt as best as we can, and hope to play as much as we can," Vekic said.

Laura Siegemund of Germany also eased through in straight sets, beating Irina-Camelia Begu of Romania 6-3, 6-4.

It was harder for Sara Errani, the only previous champion in in the draw. The 2012 winner took nearly three hours to secure a 7-5, 1-6, 6-4 success over Sorana Cirstea.

The Italian next faces Kristna Pliskova who upest third-seeded Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-4.

Another Italian, Jasmine Paolini rallied from a set and a break down to beat Daria Kasatkina of Russia 5-7, 6-4, 6-4. — *AP*

- **After a five-month hitaus, the women's tour-level tennis resumed at the Palermo Ladies Open with strict protocols in places post the Pandemic.**
- **The players had to handle their own set of towels, not allowed to shower and are no shake hands with their opponents amidst other rules in the tournament.**

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