

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | WEDNESDAY | 5 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER

Max: 32.5°C
Min: 26.2°C
RH: 78%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 32/26°C

COVID-19 CUNT

| CASES | DEATHS |
|-----------|--------|
| (+50,980) | (+814) |
| 18,55,238 | 38,972 |

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

HJRI CALENDAR

Zuhijja 14,1441 AH
PRAYERS(SHAHI MASJID)

Fajar: 4.38 am
Zohar: 12.16 pm
Asar: 4.43 pm
Maghrib: 6.39 pm
Isha: 7.55 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.37 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.54 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 8.05 PM
MOONSET TODAY 8.00 AM

COUNTER POINT

You have to vacate the bed for a VVIP!

IN BRIEF

REVOLUTIONARY 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.

He 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 Usha and two sons.

Vangapandu wrote over 300 folk songs that depict the lives of various depressed communities in North Andhra and also tribals. His song ‘*Yem Pillado Yeldamoshtava Veldamoshtava*,’ which was used without his permission in the Ram Charan starrer *Maga Dheera* 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 most popular in both Telugu states. He was born in Pedda Bondapalli, Parvathipuram mandal in 1943.

■ **Page 3: Vangapandu founded Jana Natya Mandali**



NATION | 4

Bihar for CBI probe in Sushant’s death



WORLD | 7

China accuses US of bullying over TikTok

SPORTS | 8

England take on Pak in Test from today



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

Washington, Aug. 4: 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

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.

■ **Full report on Page 7**

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*

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 founded 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 case-load 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.

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 | 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

● **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** has opened channels to rope in short-term sponsors. “Adani or Ambani could be in the mix,” said an official

● **Others** say Gulf-based firms could also be in fray. Local companies can gain massive mileage out of the glitzy league as the tournament is being played in oil-rich UAE.

the BCCI ₹440 crore every year. However, unlike the hostility in Galwan Valley, Vivo’s severance will be conflict-free, it is learnt.

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 night 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.



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 peo-



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 puja*n (will be) an occasion for national unity, fraternity and cultural congregation,”

PRIYANKA GANDHI VADRA, *Congress leader*

ple 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 puja” 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.

Kits for students as schools re-open

MD ILYAS | DC VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

Continuing the spree of welfare schemes, Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy announced the implementation of the Jagananna Vidya Kanuka (JVK) scheme on the occasion of schools re-opening on September 5 which will give students bags, books, note books, shoes, socks and uniform cloth.

In a review meeting of the JVK and Nadu Nedu in Tadepalli on Tuesday,

Jagan directed officials to start JVK from September 5 without fail, enabling students to make good use of the kit.

The government is bracing itself for the second phase of Nadu Nedu with the near-completion of first phase under which 15,000 schools have been revamped. He told officials to ready the 15,000 schools by September 5 to welcome students.

■ **Page 2: Hygiene** is a must in kitchens, says Jagan

Leopard attacks cop, couple at Tirumala

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM | DC TIRUPATI, AUG. 4

A traffic cop and a local couple had a narrow escape when a leopard attacked them on the second ghat road of Tirumala on Tuesday.

Traffic constable, G. Murali, who claimed to have had a narrow escape in the leopard attack, said that he was chased by a leopard when he was travelling to Tirumala from Tirupati on his two-wheeler on Tuesday. He informed his higher officials that he was coming to Tirumala on his two-wheeler when a leopard pounced upon him near the 4th kilometre along the second

ghat road on Tuesday morning. He said that when the wild cat pounced on him and tried to catch his leg, he immediately accelerated his bike and managed to escape.

One of his colleagues and a local resident, who were tailing the traffic cop, also claimed to have sighted the leopard at the same spot. Meanwhile, in the evening, a local couple, coming to Tirumala on their bike, also claimed that a leopard had pounced on them, but they had a miraculous escape.

Forest officials have issued an advisory to locals and pilgrims to move cautiously while travelling along the twin ghat roads on bikes.

SHORT TAKES

BLAST IN ANOTHER PHARMA FIRM, 4TH IN 100 DAYS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 4

In yet another industrial accident in the Vizag region, the fourth in the last 100 days, Vijayasri pharma company at Atchutapuram SEZ erupted in flames after a blast, triggering panic among the employees on Tuesday. Initial reports said there were no casualties in the incident.

Local police said two motorcycles were destroyed on the premises while the workers in the unit ran out for safety following the blast.

The staff members at the SEZ with the help of the fire services department, managed to douse the flames and bring the situation under control.

The exact reason for the mishap is yet to be ascertained while the police are suspecting that excess pressure in a boiler might have been the reason for the accident.

It may be recalled that Vizag city witnessed four major industrial accidents since May 7 this year. The styrene vapour leakage from LG Polymers, hydrogensulphide leakage from Sainor Life Sciences pharma company, fire mishap at Visakha Solvents pharma company and crane collapse at Hindustan Shipyard Limited have claimed 26 lives and caused injuries to over 500.

District collector V. Vinay Chand said that they had formed a team of experts to study the safety measures in the industries to prevent mishaps.

AUG. 8 FAPCCI TRAINING FOR ENTREPRENEURS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

The Federation of Andhra Pradesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FAPCCI) is conducting a two-week online entrepreneurship development programme (EDP) for youth from August 8.

FAPCCI programme executive Sk Sahabuddin said that the EDP is a structured training programme for two hours to promote small enterprises by tapping the talent among young entrepreneurs. The web session will be held between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. for two week from August 8. Interested persons may contact D.L. Hinduja (7670908388) or Sk. Sahabuddin (8309306291) for further details and registration.

HYGIENE IS A MUST IN KITCHENS, SAYS JAGAN

From Page 1

Officials made a powerpoint presentation of the work done during the first phase. Jagan demanded the completion of work on time with no compromise on quality. Work should progress on time and the wall paintings should be pleasing to the eye and every classroom should have colourful furniture. The paintings should be lively, he said. The feedback from parents was good, officials said, adding that the admissions would be more than what was estimated for the upcoming academic year.

Stressing that hygiene should be maintained in the kitchen which is important for the good health of students under Nada Nedu, Jagan examined the Jagananna Vidya Kanuka kit to be given to students on the re-opening day (September 5).

Instructing officials to provide clean drinking water to children in schools and for that purpose mineral water plants should be started. Maintenance is equally important, he said.

A school built in 1938 in Kankipadu panchayati of Krishna district, which was in a dilapidated condition and recommended for dismantling by the Parents' Committee, was taken up under Nada Nedu and now wears a new look which has won all round appreciation, officials said, displaying then and now (Nadu Nedu) pictures.

Pictures of Ramachandrapuram mandal parishad school, Ontimitta mandal, and YSR Kadapa district and Gidijala judge high school were also shown to mark the difference after the revamping.

After completing the first phase, the remaining 31,073 schools are to be taken up under Nada Nedu at a cost of Rs 7,700 crore. 14, 584 schools will be taken up in the second phase at an estimated cost of Rs 4,732 crore and the work in this phase should begin from January 14, 2021 and completed by June 2021.

Uniform check



Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy looks at school uniforms, bag, shoes and books at a review meeting on Nadu-Nedu at the CM's camp office on Tuesday. Minister A. Suresh is also seen. — C. NARAYANA RAO

CM wants industries to file safety compliance reports

Industrial Atlas showing location of industries, industrial parks planned

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

The AP government will launch special drives for ensuring safety measures at industries in the state, Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy stated at a review meeting in his camp office. The safety drive will be completed in the coming two to three months. A major component of the safety measures will be that industries will have to file safety compliance reports twice a year.

Officials at the meeting proposed that a New Industrial Safety Policy be brought out. The meeting decided to prepare an Industrial Atlas showing

● **THE CHIEF MINISTER** said that there should be monitoring of industrial parks as well to see if they are following rules. The overseeing mechanism at these parks must be strong.

● He opined that Vizag gas leak could have been averted if inhibitors had been in place. The mishap took place as there was no supervision, he pointed out.

the location of industries and industrial parks in the state, categorising them into different safety categories.

CM Jagan said the Atlas should be like a guide and ready reckoner for industrialists who want to start their units in the state. The industries will have to file a Safety Compliance Report twice in a year. The companies should also list the steps taken towards

safety, besides subjecting themselves to third-party inspections.

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took place as there was no supervision, he pointed out.

CM Jagan said, "In foreign countries, there is penalty if a compliance report is not submitted. We should adopt such policies and those who neglect filing these reports should be sternly dealt with. Any death in the industrial sector must be compensated with an ex-gratia of ₹50 lakh. The proposed Industrial Safety Policy should include such specifications," he underlined.

Industries special chief secretary, K. Valavan, Environment special chief secretary Nirab Prasad and other officials were among those who attended the review meeting.

GOVT IS SPENDING ₹350CR MONTHLY ON COVID: MIN

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC
KURNOOL AUG. 4

Health minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas said that the state government was spending ₹350 crore per month on medical treatment of Covid-19 patients in the state.

"We are spending ₹500 a day on providing a healthy diet to each patient because we regard their care as our paramount responsibility. There is no need for panic over steep rise in Coronavirus cases as they are the result of a large number of medical tests being conducted in the state," he observed.

He along with finance minister Buggana Rajendranath Reddy interacted with Covid-19 positive patients undergoing treatment in Covid hospitals in the district through video conference from Sunayana Auditorium in Kurnool city on Tuesday.

Mr Srinivas enquired about the facilities provided by the state government in Covid hospitals and quarantine centres.

He said 2.31 lakh Covid-19 screening tests were conducted across the district and 19,976 people tested positive for the virus.

"Nine hospitals and 4,143 beds are available for virus patients in the district. Asymptomatic patients are getting treatment in home isolations as per directions of doctors," he explained.

Later, reviewing the situation with officials, he ordered them to give special focus to home isolation of infected people and get patients with chronic ailments admitted at any hospital without delay.

He also directed them to ensure that there would be no delay in 104 and 108 ambulances reaching the needy.

Jagan should accept Naidu's challenge, hold polls: Yanamala

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

Opposition leader in Legislative Council Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Tuesday said Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy should accept the challenge thrown by former chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and hold elections as a referendum on the three capitals. "The CM and his ministers are afraid of facing polls because of growing unpopularity of their government in the state," he observed.

The former finance minister reminded the Jagan government of the ruin brought upon Muhammad Bin Tughluq after he shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad and from Daulatabad to Delhi. The move left the treasury of Tughluq empty and led to the ultimate collapse of the dynasty, said Mr Ramakrishnudu and predicted that the same fate would befall Andhra Pradesh if the people did not stop the YSRC government from shifting the capital.

Mr Ramakrishnudu said that Mr Jagan already

TD FILES CHEATING COMPLAINT AGAINST YSRC MANGALAGIRI MLA ON 3 CAPITALS

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

Telugu Desam leaders have filed a cheating complaint against ruling party MLA from Mangalagiri, Alla Ramakrishna Reddy, over continuation of Amaravati as the capital of Andhra Pradesh state.

TD Tadepalli town president Jangala Sambasiva Rao and other leaders of Tadepalli and Mangalagiri pointed out in their complaint that Ramakrishna Reddy had during 2019 Assembly general elections assured on behalf of YSRC that Amaravati will remain the

only capital of the state. But now, the YSRC, after coming to power, has cheated people by proposing the three capitals. The TD leaders said they had filed a case against Ramakrishna Reddy for cheating the people of his constituency.

Further, they said Ramakrishna Reddy, as part of his campaign, underlined that YSRC president and then opposition leader Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had constructed a house in Tadepalli. This should be taken as proof that the capital would not be shifted from Amaravati, the MLA had stated.

as per the order of the President of India in consultation with the Supreme Court," he claimed.

He asked how the YSRC government could go ahead with shifting of the capital when Amaravati had been selected as per the laws and also developed to a large extent.

Mr Veerajulu wanted the Bhumi Pujan for Lord Rama Temple in Ayodhya to be marked by people of

● **NOTED ALMANAC** expert Hanumanthavajjala Subrahmanya Sarma says the timing of Bhumi Puja at Ayodhya is inauspicious, as Saturn and Mars are not favourably disposed towards Lagna (Libra).

● **HE MAINTAINED** that when any construction is taking place, the main astrological aspects should always be considered.

the state with special pujas and bhajans at their houses. On Wednesday evening, people should light lamps at homes and at all the temples, so that the entire scene looks like a Deepavali being celebrated. He, however, underlined that all Covid-19 protocols must be followed.

BJP Kakinada Lok Sabha constituency presi-

People anxiously wait for HC decision on 3 capitals

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

Thursday, August 6, is turning out to be a major date for people of Andhra Pradesh with the AP High Court scheduled to hear petitions on Governor B i s w a b h u s a n Harichandan's decision on three capitals for the state and TD chief N. Chandrababu Naidu's ultimatum to the state government on the issue ending on the same day.

The Amaravati Capital Conservation Committee has filed a petition in the AP High Court on three capitals and APCRDA Act's repeal by YSRC government. There are 36 other petitions in the HC against the three capitals decision. The High Court on Monday ordered status quo on the gazette issued by the AP Governor on the issue of three capitals for Andhra Pradesh and repeal of APCRDA Act. On the day, the court also directed the Advocate General to file an affidavit about the legality of three capitals before postponing its next hearing to Thursday.

Telugu Desam, pro-Amaravati leaders and Amaravati Capital Region farmers are hopeful about getting a positive response from the High Court on Thursday in favour of Amaravati being the capital.

CPI state secretary K. Ramakrishna, Amaravati

● **THE RULING** party leaders assert that people are fully supporting them in all the three regions of the state. Hence, there is no need for them to go for a fresh election by dissolving the Assembly, as people have given power to YSRC for five years.

● **They said they will respond to Mr Naidu's ultimatum after the end of his 48 hours' deadline.**

JAC leaders Sunkara Padmasri, Gadde Anuradha, R.V. Swamy and others welcomed the status quo of HC. They point out that courts have pulled up the YSRC government for 65 times on various issues. But Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has refused to learn any lessons from them.

The leaders say they had pinned hopes on the AP Governor about doing justice to Amaravati by rejecting the bill or by sending it to the President of India. But their hopes had been shattered with the Governor giving his consent for the three capitals. The leaders say they are now hoping that the court would do justice on the issue.

On the other hand, endowments minister Vellampalli Srinivas Rao and other ruling party leaders have termed TD chief Chandrababu Naidu's 48-hour deadline as political

drama. They recall that TRS chief K. Chandrasekhar Rao had during Telangana movement submitted resignation as Union minister in support of separate Telangana and got public support. Likewise, they challenged Mr Naidu and TD MLAs to submit their resignations and seek a fresh election on the Amaravati issue if they were confident about public support to Amaravati.

The ruling party leaders assert that people are fully supporting them in all the three regions of the state. Hence, there is no need for them to go for a fresh election by dissolving the Assembly, as people have given power to YSRC for five years. They said they will respond to Mr Naidu's ultimatum after the end of his 48 hours' deadline.

Sources say Telugu Desam is planning to launch an indefinite hunger strike in support of Amaravati and against the decision of three capitals. It is also thinking about its legislators submitting their resignations on the issue.

Leaders of all political parties, organisations and various sections of the society, apart from officials, are anxiously waiting for High Court's outcome on Amaravati petitions on Wednesday, as also the result of Mr Naidu's ultimatum on the same day.

FRESH RUMOURS ON GANTA JOINING YSRC

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG 4

Rumours are once again making rounds about TD MLA and former minister, Ganta Srinivasa Rao, joining the ruling party very soon.

The rumours gained strength after tourism and culture minister, Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao (Avanti), reacted to them by issuing a statement that Ganta is eager to join YSRC only to shield himself from the banks which were out to seize his property, including his house and probably send him to jail if fraud was proved.

"Ganta cannot live without power. He always wants to stay in power, irrespective of party politics," Avanti said. All his followers are involved in land grabbing for which two SITs have been appointed by two governments," he said and added that Ganta's background was briefed to Rajya Sabha member and north Andhra party in charge, V. Vijaysai Reddy time and again.

Senior leaders of the TD and close associates of Ganta denied all these rumours stating that they were created at the behest of YSRC leaders.

"If Ganta's joining on August 16 is true, why would Avanti issue a statement? Both leaders are playing games to mislead party workers and people. Both have tasted power and want to hold on to it at any cost," said a senior TD leader.

Another leader said if it were true then there would be two groups in YSRC in north coastal Andhra, one led by Ganta and the other by Avanti.

Ruling party leader kills tribal woman

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

In a shocking and cruel act, leader of the ruling party murdered a woman by mowing her down with his tractor in Sivapuram Thanda, Narakikallu mandal, Guntur district.

According to the police, YSRC leader, Bonamukkala Srinivas Reddy, gave a ₹3.80 lakh loan to Ramavath Mantri bai's (55) husband, Manthriya Naik, by hypothecation of their 2.75 acres land but they failed to repay the money. An angry Reddy killed her by driving his tractor over her. The incident took place on Monday and it came to light on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference at Guntur on Tuesday, Guntur rural SP, Vishal Gunni, said that the Narasaraopet DSP, M. Veera Reddy, immediately arrested the accused based on the complaint of Mantriya Naik and further investigation is being conducted.

Naik hypothecated 2.75 acres of land for ₹3.80 lakhs of hand loan from Srinivasa Reddy two years ago but failed to repay the amount. Reddy went to the farmland of Naik and pressurised the couple to clear the loan but Mantriya Naik

expressed his inability to clear the debt and requested to set a value to their hypothecated land to clear the loan. Srinivasa Reddy said that the loan is equal to land value so they did not get anything in return.

The couple obstructed Srinivas Reddy who was riding a tractor and requested him to listen to their difficulties, but, angry over the obstruction, he drove the tractor over the couple, killing the woman. The locals shifted her to the government hospital at Narasaraopet but the doctors declared her brought dead. Reddy escaped from the spot and the police seized the tractor, registering a case.

Mr Gunni said that the police arrested the accused at his elder brother, Venkateswara Reddy's residence in Ramireddypeta in Narasaraopet town on Tuesday. The police registered a case under section 131/200, 302 IPC, 3(2)(v), SC/ST (POA) act.

Appealing to democratic-minded people to come forward in condemning the atrocities against the weaker sections, Andhra Pradesh Congress committee president Dr S. Sallajanath demanded an ex gratia amount of ₹50 lakh for the victim.

GOV CONSULTED EXPERTS BEFORE GIVING NOD

From Page 1

As the council had not taken any decision on the two Bills, the state government considered both Bills 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 for both bills, making them acts on the same day.

However, this was challenged in the High Court.

BJP wants special pujans held at all Ram temples in state today

AYODHYA | TEMPLE

VADREVV SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, AUG. 4

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) state president Somu Veerajulu has called upon people of Andhra Pradesh to celebrate "Ayodhya Deepavali" on Wednesday evening by lighting lamps at their homes and at all temples in the state to coincide with Bhumi Pujan for Lord Rama Temple at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh on the day.

He told reporters here that construction of Lord Ram Temple in Ayodhya will symbolise Indian culture. The entire world will know why every village in the country has a

Ramalaya. He said as part of BJP's resolve to construct Ram Temple in Ayodhya, several changes had taken place in the country. Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the Prime Minister and conducted Pokhran tests. He also won the Kargil War with Pakistan. Now, the present Prime Minister Narendra Modi has abolished Article 370. All these good signs have appeared after the issue of Lord Rama Temple came onto the scene in the country, he maintained.

Mr Veerajulu wanted the Bhumi Pujan for Lord Rama Temple in Ayodhya to be marked by people of

the state with special pujas and bhajans at their houses. On Wednesday evening, people should light lamps at homes and at all the temples, so that the entire scene looks like a Deepavali being celebrated. He, however, underlined that all Covid-19 protocols must be followed.

BJP Kakinada Lok Sabha constituency presi-

dent Ch. Ramkumar said people are getting ready to perform special pujans in all the villages. People are voluntarily coming forward to participate in these pujans to mark their support for construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Meanwhile, noted almanac expert Hanumanthavajjala Subrahmanya

Sarma says the timing of Bhumi Pujan at Ayodhya is inauspicious, as Saturn and Mars are not favourably disposed towards Lagna (Libra).

He maintained that when any construction is taking place, the main astrological aspects should always be considered. But the Muhurat of Ayodhya has not cleared Kalasa Chakra, Kurma Chakra, Sthala Chakra, Gruha Karnika Chakra, Kumbha Chakra and Gruharambha Vatsa Chakra. The timing is thus inauspicious, contends Subrahmanya Sarma.

He said construction of Rama Temple has been a long-pending issue. Hence,

it is important that the most auspicious moment is fixed for its construction. He advised the Union government as well as Uttar Pradesh government to change the time, if possible.

The almanac expert reminded that when in 2014, the then AP Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu performed Bhumi Pujan for AP's capital at Amaravati, he had cautioned Mr Naidu about the Muhurat being inauspicious. Now, not only has the capital been not completed, Amaravati farmers too are facing hardships, Subrahmanya Sarma underlined.

SHORT TAKES

COVID INFECTED
WOMAN DELIVERS
HEALTHY BABY

AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM
| DC
TIRUPATI, AUG. 4

A Covid-19 infected pregnant woman gave birth to a healthy boy in a 108 ambulance while being shifted to a government hospital in Tirupati. The delivery took place when the ambulance was on the highway near Satyavedu in Chittoor district on Tuesday.

The 23-year-old woman is a native of B.C. Colony in Satyavedu. She was confirmed as Coronavirus positive on Monday and was admitted at the Community Health Centre (CHC) in Satyavedu. She went into labour the same night. “Unfortunately, our gynaecologist and two nurses, who attended on her, had also tested positive for Covid-19 on Tuesday. Hence, we referred the pregnant woman to Ruia Hospital,” Dr Ch. Ramesh, medical officer of Satyavedu CHC told *Deccan Chronicle*.

While on way to the hospital, the pregnant woman went into labour. Ambulance attendant T. Subbalakshmi asked the driver to stop the vehicle and made arrangements for delivery of the baby inside the vehicle.

MAN GETS DEATH
FOR RAPE,
MURDER OF MINOR

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

The accused in the rape and murder of a seven-year-old at Gollapudi in the Bhavanipuram police station limits in Vijayawada on November 19 last year was sentenced to death on Tuesday by the Vth additional district cum special judge for trial of offences under POCSO Act.

The accused, Barlapudi Pentiah, was arrested within 24 hours of the crime was committed. The impetus given to investigation of crimes against women and children by Disha initiatives in the state such as setting up of Disha police stations, forensic labs and special courts helped speed up conviction of the accused.

The scientific investigation by Vijayawada city police supported by DNA analysis created a strong and fool-proof case for prosecution. The investigation was completed and the chargesheet filed swiftly in line with Disha initiatives. The trial was also conducted swiftly and completed by March, however, case was reserved for judgment when lockdown was announced.

This is the 18th conviction in a rape case under the POCSO Act achieved by the state police since Disha Bill was passed in the AP Assembly in December, 2019.

IFS OFFICER
SECURES 250TH
RANK IN CIVILS

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, AUG. 4

Trainee IFS officer Chaitanya has secured 250th rank in Civil Services exams the results of which were announced on Tuesday. He has been posted as special officer to tackle Covid-19 pandemic in Hindupur and other parts of the district.

Several organisations felicitated Mr Chaitanya. Tippu Muslim Nagara president Farooq said the official worked hard to control Covid in Hindupur.

VANGAPANDU
FOUNDED JANA
NATYA MANDALI

FROM PAGE 1

Influenced by the Naxalite movement, Vangapandu 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 Samaik-hyandhra Poratam, he participated in activities across the present state of Andhra Pradesh. Recently, Vangapandu also wrote and sung a song on Covid-19. He was awarded by the state government with the Kalaprapoorna felicitation.

The Communist Party of India, Marxist (CPM) expressed condolences on Vangapandu Prasada Rao's death. Vangapandu's photograph was garlanded in the CPM office and rich tributes paid. Srinivas said Vangapandu enlightened the people with his songs and dances and was a humanitari-

AP registers 9,747 new
Covid cases, 67 deaths

State has carried out 40,732 tests per million population

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 4

Andhra Pradesh has registered 9,747 new Covid-19 cases taking the total number of cases to 1,76,333. 67 deaths took the death toll to 1,604 in the last 24 hours.

The state health department issued the Covid-19 bulletin here on Tuesday reporting that out of 64,147 samples tested, 9,747 people have been tested Covid-19 positive. Out of 21,75,070 samples tested so far in the state, 95,625 infected patients have been discharged after recovery while 79,104 patients are undergoing treatment in various hospitals.

Among new infections, East Godavari continues to lead with 1,371 cases followed by 1,325 in Anantapur, 1,016 in Kurnool, 940 in Guntur, 863 in Visakhapatnam, 765 in Kadapa, 612 in West Godavari, 591 in Vizianagaram, 557 in Nellore, 537 in Srikakulam, 526 in Chittoor, 420 in Krishna and 224 in Prakasam.

With regard to active cases, East Godavari has been worst hit with 10,558 cases, followed by 9,870 in Visakhapatnam, 8,909 in Kurnool, 7,727 in Anantapur, 7,113 in Guntur, 5,655 in West Godavari, 5,650 in Chittoor, 5,460 in Kadapa, 5,319 in Nellore, 3,705 in Vizianagaram, 3,613 in Srikakulam, 2,766 in Prakasam and 2,759 in Krishna.

The recovery rate of coronavirus-infected patients in the course of treatment appears to be good in East Godavari as 13,939 patients have been discharged, followed by 11,568 in Kurnool, 10,944 in Anantapur, 10,545 in Guntur, 8,640 in West Godavari, 7,097 in Chittoor, 5,293 in Krishna, 5,058 in Visakhapatnam, 4,844 in Srikakulam, 4,651 in Kadapa, 3,997 in



An artist paints masks awareness images on Bandar road in Vijayawada on Tuesday.

— C. NARAYANA RAO

TWO PRAKASAM LEGISLATORS TEST COVID POSITIVE

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, AUG. 4

Two legislators from Prakasam district tested positive for the coronavirus on Monday and the information surfaced on Tuesday.

One of them represents a constituency from the western parts of

Prakasam district. He had been to Tirumala along with his family on August 1 and had darshan on August 2. His wife is also infected and both of them are undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Ongole.

His grandson was also infected a few weeks back and he was recovered after

treatment in the same private hospital at Ongole.

The other legislator represents a coastal constituency in Prakasam district.

He is undergoing treatment at a corporate hospital in Hyderabad.

His family members are also being tested, sources said.

Nellore, 3,697 in Prakasam, 2,457 in West Godavari, 2,461 from other states and 434 from other countries.

With regard to deaths, Guntur has registered 12, followed by nine in Krishna, eight in Kurnool, seven each in Chittoor, East Godavari and Nellore, six each in Anantapur and

Srikakulam, two in Visakhapatnam, one each in Prakasam, Vizianagaram and West Godavari. Kurnool has the highest number of deaths so far with 218, followed by 188 in East Godavari, 187 in Krishna, 163 in Guntur, 131 in Visakhapatnam, 130 in Anantapur, 127 in Chittoor, 111 in West Godavari, 92 in

Srikakulam, 78 in Prakasam, 66 in Vizianagaram, 64 in Nellore and 49 in Kadapa. AP has carried out 40,732 tests per million population and registered a Covid-19 positive rate of 8.11, while Maharashtra has continued to register the highest positive rate at 19.56 and Telangana is at 13.89.

Kakinada Govt Hospital
is now Covid-19 centre

VADREU SRINIVAS | DC
KAKINADA, AUG. 4

All out-patient (OP) and inpatient services except those related to gynaecology, paediatrics and cancer have been cancelled at the Government General Hospital, Kakinada, as it has been designated state Covid-19 hospital.

GGH superintendent Dr M. Raghavendra Rao said that in view of increasing Covid-19 positive cases, the state government had taken the decision to dedicate all the wards in the hospital, except gynaecology, paediatrics and cancer, to the treatment of Coronavirus patients.

Non-covid patients are advised to visit Aarogyasri accredited hospitals in the district. But, this did not go down well with various sections of the people, who felt that the government made it

● GGH superintendent Dr M. Raghavendra Rao said that in view of increasing Covid-19 positive cases, the state government had taken the decision to dedicate all the wards in the hospital, except gynaecology, paediatrics and cancer, to the treatment of Coronavirus patients.

● Decrying the decision, social activist Dusralapudi Ramana Raju suggested that the government open an OP in Rangaraya Medical College.

difficult for the poor to have access to free medical treatment. Kakinada city BJP president Chitmeedi Srinivas said that the government should have found another hospital for the purpose instead of the GGH, Kakinada. “There are several government and private hospitals in Kakinada to meet the needs of Covid patients. GGH, Kakinada, serves the people of both Godavari districts. More than 2,000 poor patients

visit the GGH every day for treatment of various ailments. Now, poor people will suffer a lot,” he said.

Decrying the decision, social activist Dusralapudi Ramana Raju suggested that the government open an OP in Rangaraya Medical College. BJP Srikakulam in charge P. Ravikiran said that district sports grounds and such other facilities should be used for providing treatment to Covid-19 patients.

VELIGONDA 1ST
TUNNEL WORKS
BY OCTOBER

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, AUG. 4

The state government has taken steps to expedite the first tunnel works of the Veligonda project to complete them by October this year.

Prakasam district collector Pola Bhaskar has disclosed while inspecting Gottipadi – Kakarla link canal works at Sairam Nagar in Ardhaveedu mandal on Tuesday. Special Commissioner of Rehabilitation, T. Babu Rao was also present with the collector.

The collector said that they had given instructions to the engineers to stick to the schedule assigned.

People told to rush to hosp
if blood oxygen level drops

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
NELLORE, AUG. 4

With the number of deaths because of breathlessness on the rise in the recent past, district authorities are appealing to the people to get admitted to Covid hospitals if they are suffering from two or three symptoms such as fever, breathlessness and low oxygen levels.

Speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, joint collector (Development) N. Prabhakar Reddy said the new slogan is “two out of three” to save people from sudden death due to drop in blood oxygen levels.

He said people need not wait for Covid test for admission in hospital if their oxygen levels are less than 94 per

cent. Those who sense anything wrong with their health may contact 104 for ambulance to rush to hospital.

The joint collector has appealed to the people to keep pulse oximeters at home to check oxygen levels in the blood at regular intervals. Those living in Nellore city may rush to designated Covid hospitals such as Government General Hospital or Narayana General Hospital for treatment, he suggested.

Those suffering from diabetes, kidney ailments or undergoing dialysis and people above 60 years of age should react immediately if they find any changes in

D. SIVA RAMI REDDY | DC
KURNOOL, AUG. 4

The gang rape of a tribal woman by three youths at Jamminagar tанда near Velugodu in Atmakur constituency sent shock waves among the police, even as the rape victim tested Covid-19 positive.

A woman constable who accompanied the rape victim was also quarantined. Two accused youths were produced before the court on Tuesday, said Atmakur DSP J. Venkata Rao.

The Velugodu sub inspector, who was under a cloud for not registering the case as a gang rape after receiving the complaint, was relieved of his duties and sent to VR, the DSP said. The Velugodu police station staff who moved with the rape victim who is now Covid-19 positive are fearful of having contracted the virus.

7 held for murder
of 13-year-old boy

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, AUG. 4

Three days after registering a case in connection with the murder of a teenager in Ramapuram village near Madanapalli, the rural police, on Tuesday, arrested seven accused.

It may be recalled that a 13-year-old boy, who stole and sold a mobile phone, succumbed to injuries after he was severely thrashed by his cousin and his accomplices at Ramapuram village near Madanapalli last week.

Rural CI Srinivasulu said, after the 13-year-old Bharat confessed that he stole the mobile phone of

house owner Chand Basha, Bharat's cousin Ashok Kumar and his friends took him to the shop where the boy allegedly sold the mobile phone. On July 30, Bharat was severely thrashed by Ashok Kumar and his accomplices. The next morning, the boy died while undergoing treatment at a local hospital.

The Madanapalli rural police arrested seven people including the cousin of the deceased Ashok Kumar, 27. The other accused arrested by police were identified as Chand Basha, 55, Venkata Praveen, 32, Mohan Krishna, 35, Rajesh, 25 and Ravi Raja, 21.

Venue for swab
collection shifted

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, AUG. 4

Given the heavy turnout at the Government General Hospital, Nellore for Covid-19 tests every day, the authorities shifted the venue to collect swab samples to ZP High School in Podalukur Road with immediate effect.

Joint Collector (Development) N. Prabhakar Reddy

announced on Tuesday. He said that the arrangements have been made to collect swab samples in a peaceful atmosphere at the ZP School.

He said that data entry operators have been posted to create the ID in the ICMR website before collecting the swab samples. Mr Prabhakar Reddy has appealed to the public to avoid going to GGH for Covid-19 tests henceforth.

Officer booked for
sexual harassment

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, AUG. 4

The police booked a case against the agriculture joint director Habib Bhasha under the Nirbhaya Act following a complaint by women employees from the office of the joint director of agriculture.

The CCS DSP E. Srinivasulu and his team went to the joint director's office on Monday as part of an investigation based on a complaint by

the women employees. The victims had complained with the SP and complaint was forwarded to town police, and CCS DSP E. Srinivasulu was deputed to probe the case.

Police said that the case was registered against the joint director Habib Bhasha. The police team recorded statements from the victims in the office.

Sources said the official fled following the case and police teams were in search of the official to investigate the case.

Gang-rape victim tests
Covid-19 positive

● A woman constable who accompanied the rape victim was also quarantined. Two accused youths were produced before the court on Tuesday

● Three youths in their late twenties raped a 48-year-old Lambada woman in front of her husband at Jamminagar tанда in Velugodu mandal on July 31 in the early hours but it came to light on Monday

Mr Rao said that the police booked a case against the accused on the same day under IPC Section 324 and 354A, based on the complaint. But on Monday, after conducting enquiry and based on some evidence, they added gang rape, IPC Section 506 and Section 376D in this matter, stated

the DSP.

Three youths in their late twenties raped a 48-year-old Lambada woman in front of her husband at Jamminagar tанда in Velugodu mandal on July 31 in the early hours but it came to light on Monday after the police took the accused into custody.

According to Mr Rao, a 53-year-old tribal man from Jamminagar tанда was working on a road bridge which was under construction as a watchman for the past few months. He along with his wife were living nearby.

Some youths who have been selling illicit liquor in the surrounding villages suspected the watchman of informing the police and attacked the man in the early hours of July 31. The youth tied the man to a pole and raped his wife. They then fled the scene.

COLLECTOR PRAISED FOR
KEEPING PATIENTS' SPIRIT UP

Anantapur: The ministry of health on Tuesday appreciated the initiative taken by collector Gandham Chandrudu to build confidence and positive attitude among Coronavirus patients to face the virus. His active role in creating treatment facilities and quarantine centres in the face of rising Covid cases also came in for praise.

The collector visits Covid wards and interacts with the patients. The health department through Twitter made a mention of Mr Chandrudu's initiative in involving patients in Covid hospitals.

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| SCHOOL OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE: VIJAYAWADA <small>(An Institute of National Importance under the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Govt. of India) S.No. 44, IT Road, Vijayawada - 520 008, Andhra Pradesh, India</small> Advt.No.SP/AV/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 | |

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 puja* 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 puja* 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 Rambhaktas 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 puja" 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 puja* 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

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 Murlu Manohar Joshi won't be present in Ayodhya for the temple 'bhoomi puja' 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 puja 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 puja ceremony, the Sena said. - PTI

● 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 Puja 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'

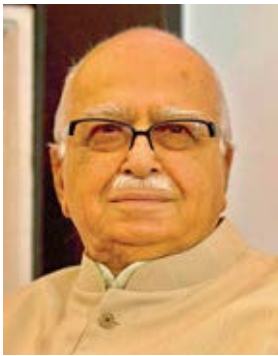
DC CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG 4

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 respond-

ing 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 offically 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

● 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.

declared that J&K is part of Pakistan along with some portions of Ladakh to the North and Gujarat to the West.

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

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.

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.

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, Rajagopalchhari 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

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 impudently 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

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

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, Twitterstorms, social media events. And, yes, at least one university named after the separatist, why not?

Kafka died leaving his last novel hanging mid-sentence, 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

GOOD SHOW

At a time when private doctors are overcharging Coronavirus-infected patients to provide health-care in parts of AP, it is highly encouraging and uplifting that retired doctors are offering their services to fight the pandemic (*Retd. docs to serve Covid-19 patients, Aug. 4*). Certainly, it is an opportune time to pool all resources to defeat the pandemic.

Dr C. Ghanshyam
Visakhapatnam

A BLACK MARK

Instead of treating Coronavirus patients as a challenge and as their moral duty, the doctors’ refusal is deplorable and unfortunate (*Refusing treatment to Covid-19 patients is violation of law, DC, Aug. 4*). They should behave in a humane manner.

Jagannadham Chowdary
Srikakulam

SERVICE RECORD

For two years’ apprentice service, two notional increments were given to apprentice teachers by then Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy. They were credited from the end of two-year period by then Chief Minister K. Rosaiah. Now, apprentice teachers have to update manual service registers into electronic form. A deadline has been given, but before that I request Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to see to it that the error is corrected.

Veeraganta Bhaskar Rao
Bobbili

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

WORK RESUMES TO REBUILD CHURCH DESTROYED ON 9/11

New York, Aug. 4: After a three year halt due to financial problems, work resumed on Monday on a Greek Orthodox church being built to replace one destroyed in the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001.

Archbishop Elpidophoros, the leader of the Greek Orthodox church in America, stood on a balcony on the unfinished church and used holy water and sprigs of basil to bless the construction of the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at the World Trade Centre.

"We have heard the voice of the Lord and we are rebuilding our church," he said.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo, who was there to see work resume, said the continuing reconstruction is more proof of New Yorkers' persistence to rise from the ashes of the terror attacks. "This St. Nicholas is going to be more splendid and more inviting than the St. Nicholas that was here before," he said. —AP

RAJAPAKSA BROS HOPE TO WIN MAJORITY IN POLLS

Colombo, Aug. 4: Sri Lankans head to the polls today with the ruling Rajapaksa brothers looking for a super-majority in parliament to change the constitution and unravel democratic safeguards. Political observers say the ruthless crushing of Tamil separatist rebels to end a decades-old conflict in 2009 — want to end presidential term limits, bring the judiciary and police under their direct control, and extend their dynastic power to a new generation.

The Rajapaksa political dynasty, a long-time force in Sri Lanka, dramatically stormed back to power in November when former defence secretary Gotabaya, 71, was elected president. Gotabaya — a former army officer dubbed "The Terminator" by his own family — won comfortably running on a law-and-order ticket while capitalising on government infighting. —AFP

ISAIAS LASHES US EAST COAST WITH WINDS, RAINS

Myrtle Beach, Aug. 4: Hurricane Isaias slammed into North Carolina bringing life-threatening storm surges and leaving more than 3,50,000 homes without power, as the US eastern seaboard battened down for flash floods and destructive winds.

Packing sustained winds of 85 miles per hour (around 140 kilometers per hour), the Category 1 hurricane made landfall in the southern part of the state on Monday just before midnight (0400 GMT), the National Hurricane Center said.

Seawater flowed into streets on the border between the Carolinas, leaving locals to wade through the flooded areas as rain and strong winds whipped the palm trees.

Three hours after reaching the coast, Isaias was downgraded to a Tropical Storm, the National Hurricane Center (NHC) said on Tuesday. It is forecast to track northeast, with gusts reaching hurricane force on the mid-Atlantic coast Tuesday, which the NHC said could down trees and cause more blackouts. —AFP

GOLDEN GLOBES VOTERS HIT WITH ANTITRUST SUIT

Los Angeles Aug. 4: The exclusive group of film journalists that awards the Golden Globes was accused on Monday of sabotaging non-members while gorging on lavish perks and unparalleled access to Hollywood stars.

An antitrust lawsuit filed against the Hollywood Foreign Press Association said the organisation illegally monopolized entertainment reporting in Los Angeles while creating near-impossible barriers to entry for new members. "All year long, HFPA members enjoy all-expenses-paid trips to film festivals around the world where the studios treat them lavishly and accommodate their every desire," said the suit brought by Norwegian journalist Kjersti Flaas.

"Qualified applicants for admission to the HFPA are virtually always rejected because the majority of its 87 members are unwilling to share or dilute the enormous economic benefits they receive as members," it adds. —AFP

2 massive explosions rock Beirut

Beirut, Aug. 4: A massive explosion shook Lebanon's capital Beirut on Tuesday wounding a number people and causing widespread damage.

The afternoon blast shook several parts of the capital and thick smoke billowed from the city centre. Residents reported windows being blown out and a false ceilings dropping.

The explosion appeared to be centred around Beirut's port and caused wide scale destruction and shattered windows miles away.

An Associated Press photographer near Beirut's port witnessed people wounded on the ground and widespread destruction in central Beirut. Some local TV stations reported the blast was at Beirut's port inside an area where firecrackers were stored. —AP



A large cloud rises into the air after two explosions rocked the Lebanese capital Beirut on Tuesday. The blasts, which rattled buildings and broke window glass, were felt in several parts of the city. — AFP

Trump rails as Nevada opts for mail-in ballots

US Prez has claimed mail ballots would lead to voter fraud

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.

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. —PTI

US doing well against virus, India has huge problem: Don

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

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. The bill requires at least 140 polling places throughout the state in November, including 100 in Clark County, which had 179 in the November 2018 election. —AP

PIO researcher killed in US

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.

According to the police, Sarmistha Sen, who was based in Plano city in the state of Texas, was randomly attacked and killed while jogging on August 1

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

"I think we're doing very well. I think that we have done as well as any nation. If you really look, if you take a look at what's going on, especially now with all these flare ups and nations that they were talking about," Trump told reporters at a news conference here on Monday.

As such, compared to larger countries, the US is doing much better in the fight against the Coron-

avirus, he said. "Don't forget, we're much bigger than — other than India and China. China is having a massive flare up right now. India has a tremendous problem. Other countries have problems," he said in response to a question.

"And I noticed that in the news, in the evening news, I never read about that. In any news, I don't read about the other countries. You're starting to see that other countries are having very big flare ups, countries that thought they were over it, like we thought we might be over in Florida." —PTI

Trump avoids praising Lewis

Washington, Aug. 4: US President Donald Trump said he doesn't know how history will remember civil rights activist John Lewis, but that "he chose not to come to my inauguration," in an interview with US media.

A longtime Democratic congressman, Lewis died on July 17, then received rare honors in Washington and was praised by key figures of both major parties for his life-long fight for equality.

"How do you think history will remember John

Lewis?" Jonathan Swan of the Axios media outlet asked Trump in the interview aired on Monday.

"I don't know, I really don't know," the president answered.

"I don't know John Lewis, he chose not to come to my inauguration," Lewis clashed with Trump on multiple occasions — as well as boycotting his swearing-in ceremony, Lewis cited Russian interference in the 2016 election to question his legitimacy and warned US democracy was under threat. —AFP

NUCLEAR | HISTORY

There are about 1,36,700 survivors of the atom bomb attacks in Japan Hibakusha make last plea to scrap N-bombs

Tokyo, Aug. 4: As Japan marks 75 years since the devastating attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the last generation of nuclear bomb survivors are working to ensure their message lives on after them.

The "hibakusha" — literally "person affected by the bomb" — have for decades been a powerful voice calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons. There are an estimated

1,36,700 left, many of whom were infants or unborn children at the time of the attacks.

The average age of a survivor now is a little over 83, according to Japan's health ministry, lending an urgency as they share their testimonies and call for a ban on nuclear weapons.

"What we hibakusha are saying is we can't repeat (a nuclear attack)," 88-year-old Terumi Tanaka,

who survived the Nagasaki bombing, said ahead of the anniversaries.

"To this end, we have to let people know what we experienced, for them to hear the facts," Tanaka was 13 when the bomb hit his hometown.

The attack on Nagasaki killed 74,000 people and came three days after a first bomb devastated the city of Hiroshima, killing 140,000.

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-meter (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

Chad slows down internet to combat 'hate speech'

N'djamena, Aug. 4: Chad says it has cut back the speed of the internet to crimp the spread of messages "inciting hate" on social media.

Government spokesman Mahamat Zene Cherif said late Monday that a "temporary measure" to slow the internet was introduced on July 22 because of "the dissemination of messages inciting hate and division." The measure will be lifted soon, said Cherif, who is also communications minister.

But telecoms officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the restrictions had been triggered by a video showing a Chadian military officer in a dispute with two young mechanics.

The images, which are dated July 14, show him opening fire on one of

China accuses US of bullying over TikTok

Beijing, Aug. 4: China accused the United States on Tuesday of "outright bullying" over popular video app TikTok, after President Donald Trump ramped up pressure for its US operations to be sold to an American company.

"This goes against the principles of the market economy and the (World Trade Organisation's) principles of openness, transparency and non-discrimination," said foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin.

A day earlier, President Trump gave TikTok six weeks to sell its US operations, in the latest escalation to an ongoing political and trade battle between Washington and Beijing.

The app has been under formal investigation on US national security grounds, because it collects large amounts of personal data on users and is legally bound to share it with authorities in Beijing if they demand it. But Wang told a regular

● THE APP has been under formal investigation on US national security grounds, because it collects large amounts of personal data on users and is legally bound to share it with authorities in Beijing if they demand it.

press briefing on Tuesday: "The US, without providing any evidence, has been using an abused concept of national security... unjustifiably suppressing certain non-US companies." He said the national security grounds for the US's clampdown on Chinese firms "does not hold water", adding that the companies conduct their business activities in accordance with international rules and US laws.

"But the US is cracking down on them on trumped-up charges. This is all political manipulation," said Wang, who warned the US not to "open Pandora's box". —AFP

US finds possible Covid treatment

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

Pathogenic Coronaviruses are a major threat to global public health, as shown by the SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, and the newly emerged SARS-CoV-2.

The study, published in the journal Science Translational Medicine, has found that small molecule protease inhibitors show potency against human Coronaviruses.

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

"Vaccine developments and treatments are the biggest targets in Covid-19 research, and treatment is really key," said Kyeong-Ok Chang, a professor at Kansas State

● THE STUDY, published in the journal Science Translational Medicine, has found that small molecule protease inhibitors show potency against human Coronaviruses.

University in the US. "This paper describes protease inhibitors targeting Coronavirus 3CLpro, which is a well-known therapeutic target," Chang said. 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, the researchers said.

These findings suggest that this series of compounds should be investigated further as a potential therapeutic for human Coronavirus infection, they said. —AFP

U.S. 'CLOUD' SUPREMACY HAS EUROPE WORRIED OVER DATA

Paris, Aug. 4: Europe is sitting on a wealth of data that is the 21st equivalent of a precious metal mine during the gold rush. But instead of exploiting it themselves Europeans may be allowing American tech giants to gain control of all the excavation equipment, some experts say, pointing to a flurry of

European companies announcing deals with US tech players for cloud services.

Renault, Orange, Deutsche Bank, and Lufthansa recently plumped for Google Cloud. Volkswagen signed up with Amazon Web Services. The French health ministry chose Microsoft to house its research data. —AFP

them at point-blank range, before being attacked with a knife.

A statement by the public prosecutor said one of the mechanics "died of his wounds" while the officer was hospitalised and "will be prosecuted after he has recovered."

The video is still circulating on Facebook and WhatsApp, and some users have touched on the ethnic background of the soldier, pointing out that he is from the same community as President Idriss Deby Itno, who seized power in 1990. —AFP



A security guard pays respects in front of the cenotaph for the atomic bombing victims near Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum in Hiroshima, western Japan. — AP

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 statement from IFAB added.

— AP

World Cup winner Iker calls it a day

Madrid: 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 soccer body are the same ones being applied to the Brazilian championship starting next weekend.

Corinthians said in a statement that its refusal was in line with the health protocols of Sao Paulo state's soccer body. It added its players and staffers have been in isolation at the club training ground for 14 days, since the restart of the tournament after a four-month break.

— AP

LYING GYMNAST COACH SET FOR PRISON TERM

New York: A former Michigan State University head gymnastics coach is scheduled to be sentenced on Tuesday for lying to police during an investigation into ex-Olympic and university doctor Larry Nassar. Kathie Klages, 65, was found guilty by a jury in February of a felony and a misdemeanor for denying she knew of Nassar's abuse prior to 2016 when survivors started to come forward publicly. The misdemeanor carries up to a two-year prison sentence or a fine of up to \$5,000. The felony carries up to a 4-year prison sentence or a fine of up to \$5,000.

Klages testified at trial that she did not remember being told about abuse. If the case had not involved Nassar, her lawyer has said, Klages would never have been found guilty.

— AP

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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 beginning November 19.

"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 in to the 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 53-day event.

Over and above the BCCI testing protocol, the teams can do more tests on their own and additional tests



Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma (left) and his Chennai Super Kings counterpart M. S. Dhoni pose with the IPL trophy in this file photo.

● **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 before August 20. Families will not be allowed to meet anyone outside bio-bubble.**

may also be conducted under the rules put in place by the UAE government.

The teams have been told to not fly out before August 20 so that they can carry out the necessary testing protocols and the quarantine drill if needed.

The BCCI has left it to the teams to decide on the travel of partners and families of the players but they too will have to follow strict bio-secure protocols if they wish to accompany the cricketers and support staff.

The families will not be permitted to meet anyone outside the bio-bubble and will have to practice social

distancing while interacting with other families and the players, that too with a facemask on.

"The families will also not be allowed to enter the PMOA (players and match officials area) and field of play at any time during the training and matches."

"And anyone who breaches the bio-secure protocols, will have to be in self-isolation for seven days and return two negative tests on day 6 and 7 to be allowed to re-enter the bio-bubble," the official added.

The IPL will allow unlimited COVID-19 replacements considering the delicate health situation.

— PTI

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.



Pakistan 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

Not sorry to miss league, says Starc

Melbourne, Aug. 4: Left-arm Australian pacer Mitchell Starc doesn't regret giving the IPL a miss this year, saying he is comfortable training for the upcoming summer season.

Starc had pulled out of the lucrative T20 event to focus on the T20 World Cup in Australia which was postponed last month due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I know hindsight is a wonderful thing and now the IPL is on at a different time but no, I wouldn't change it," the 30-year-old, who played for Royal Challengers Bangalore for two years, was quoted as saying by *Cricchet.com.au*.

"I'm happy to spend that time when the blokes are at the IPL in September I'll be getting ready for a summer. The IPL will be around next year and if I feel the urge or people

I'm happy to spend that time when the blokes are at the IPL in September I'll be getting ready for a summer. As of this year I'm very comfortable with the decisions I've made.

— MITCHELL STARC
Australian cricketer on giving the league a miss this year

want me around I'll definitely consider it, but as of this year I'm very comfortable with the decisions I've made," he added.

Starc was bought by Kolkata Knight Riders in the 2018 IPL auction but was ruled out of the season due to an injury and was eventually released in November.

— PTI

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

● **Cricknet 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 Herczeg of Slovenia 7-6 (1), 6-3 for her first victory over a player ranked in the top 50.

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

— AP

● **After a five-month hitaous, 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.**

It was harder for Sara Errani, the only previous champion 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 Kristina Pliskova who upest third-seeded Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-4.

A third Italian is also through to the second round after Jasmine Paolini rallied from a set and a break down to beat Daria Kasatkina of Russia 5-7, 6-4, 6-4.



Kristna Pliskova serves to third-seeded Maria Sakkari during their singles match at the Palermo Ladies Open in Palermo, Italy, on Tuesday. Pliskova won 6-4, 6-4.

LIED TO CAS TO REDUCE BAN, ADMITS PUERTA

Buenos Aires, Aug. 4: Retired tennis player Mariano Puerta has admitted he lied to the Court of Arbitration for Sport to reduce his suspension after a second positive doping test. Four months after the high point of his career — the final of the 2005 French Open — the Argentine tested positive for etilefrine, a banned cardiorespiratory stimulant. He had also been caught in 2003 for the use of a banned anabolic steroid.

Puerta was initially suspended for eight years, but the penalty was reduced to two years thanks to a defense strategy that he said "was a lie."

"But I did not take any sporting advantage. I don't want to be seen as a deceiver," Puerta said in an interview published by *La Nacion* newspaper on Monday.

Puerta's defense said he drank water from a glass used by his then wife Sol Estevanez.

— AP