

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | THURSDAY 6 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 35°C
Min: 27°C
Rainfall: Nil

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 22
Tithi: Thrithiyai
Star: Sathayam/ Puratathi
Rahukalam:
1.30 pm to 3 pm
Yamagandam:
6 am to 7.30 am

PRAYERS

Fajar: 4.39 am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.32 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.52 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES

(+54,252)
19,60,865

DEATHS

(+919)
40,739

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 5,175)

TN:2,73,460 4,461

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES



1,88,37,615

DEATHS



7,07,218

COUNTRIES
AREAS WITH
CASES

213

worldometers.info

MLA cocks a snook at DMK

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

MP CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan discharged

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

COUNTER POINT



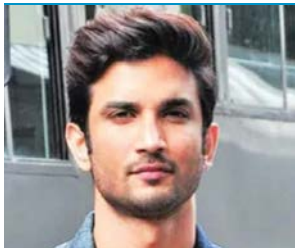
Not Arabian sea, sir... these are the main roads of Mumbai!

Centre orders CBI enquiry into SSR death

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

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

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



Sushant Singh Rajput

on Wednesday said the truth behind the death of

the "gifted and talented artist" should come out.

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

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

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



CITY | 5

Ramadoss sees a conspiracy in NEP



FC | 8

Gold at new high, set to rally more

SPORT | 8

League in UAE will be challenging: Raina



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PM Modi lays first brick of Ram Rajya

■ **Ram Lalla set to move from tent he occupied for decades**

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

YOJNA GUSAI | DC

NEW DELHI, AUG 5

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

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

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

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

Incidentally, the bhoomipujan ceremony



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

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

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

speech by chanting 'Jai Siya Ram.'

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

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

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

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

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

Rahul says Ram is love, justice

DC CORRESPONDENTS

NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

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

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



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

RSS chief says temple will make India self-reliant

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

Recalling the three-decade-old struggle of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its ideological family members for the construction of the temple, he hailed the contribution of veteran BJP leader L.K. Advani, late VHP president Ashok Singhal and Mahant Ramchandra Das Paramhans. There are many people who worked hard and some even sacrificed their lives for the temple, many may not be here physically, Mr Bhagwat said remembering Singhal and spiritual face of the temple movement late Paramhans.

"While there are some like Advani ji who led Rath

Yatra but could not come due to the current situation (Covid-19 pandemic). He must be watching this from his home on TV," he said.

Requesting people to follow the ideals of Lord Ram to regain the past glory of the country, Bhagwat said people should also build an Ayodhya inside them based on values and teachings of its king to make India great.

The much awaited ceremony, after the Supreme Court paved the way by delivering the landmark judgment last year in the long pending contentious Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute, saw Mr Modi performing the ritual amid chanting of Vedas by priests at the grabhagriha and also present were RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, Uttar Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel, state chief minister Yogi Adityanath, and Salil Singhal, the nephew of late VHP leader. — *PTI*

OPPN MEETING FOILED



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

More Covid-19 cases in districts near Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT

CHENNAI, AUG 5

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

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

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

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

After inspecting the

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

Rising to the needs of the patients admitted to the hospital, the government had now appointed feeding nurses to help those who were unable to eat on their own. ■ **P3**

SHORT TAKES

Gold worth ₹34.5L seized

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

Customs officials at the Chennai International Airport seized gold worth ₹34.5 lakh from the passengers who arrived from Dubai on Tuesday. On Tuesday night, two passengers, Kasimani Kolanji(22) and Murugan Chandran(38) of Thanjavur arrived from Dubai by Air India Express Airlines Flight No. IX-1644. They were intercepted by AIU officers at the exit on suspicion of carrying gold. On their search, four polythene pouches, two each containing gold paste were found concealed inside the belt portion of their jeans. On extraction by heat treatment 731 grams of gold of 24 K purity valued at ₹34.5 lakh was recovered and seized under the Customs Act 1962. Further investigation is under progress.

Indian medical students stranded in Russia land in Chennai

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

As many as 100 medical students, who were stranded in Russia due to coronavirus restrictions, arrived in Chennai by private flight on Wednesday.

The students were stranded in Moscow owing to Covid-19 pandemic and the resultant cancellation of flights. Bollywood actor Sonu Sood and the medical institute organised a chartered flight from Moscow to fly the students back to Chennai and reunite them with their loved ones.

As per the Health Ministry guidelines for international arrivals, the students will undergo mandatory quarantine for 14 days at a facility at their own cost, followed by 7 days home quarantine. Around 328 Indians stranded in Gulf countries such as Bahrain and Dubai landed at Chennai in two Air India flights on Tuesday night.

Fever clinics play key role in containing coronavirus

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

The fever clinics, introduced by the Greater Chennai Corporation across 15 zones for early detection of Covid-19 infection, have played a key role in the declining trend of virus transmission in the district during the last several weeks.

According to GCC, as many as 28,219 fever clinics were conducted across the zones in the last three months (from May 8 to August 3). At least 16, 20, 248 people were screened in the clinics.

On Tuesday alone, 540 fever clinics were conducted involving 27,292 people. At least 1,740 symptomatic patients were tested for Covid-19. The fever clinics were

According to GCC officials, the success of the fever clinic is due to the higher turnout of people to each clinic that helped in containing the spread of virus in Chennai

introduced in May after the city started seeing a spike in active cases leading to an increase in death toll.

According to GCC officials, the success of the fever clinic is due to the higher turnout of people to each clinic that helped in containing the spread of virus in the city which has a population of over 87 lakh.

As per the analysis carried out by the GCC administration, at least 20 percent of Covid-19

deaths in the city took place due to the failure on the part of residents in revealing symptoms to health workers who visited their homes as part of surveys.

The officials say that at least 550 locations in the city have been identified to conduct fever clinics every day. Testing in the city too had doubled, increasing from 4,000 to 10,227.

The GCC has so far quarantined over seven lakh residents in the city. As per the GCC data, at least 3 lakh residents have completed 14 days of quarantine. Earlier, the state government came up with the containment zone plan, though the first case in the city was reported on March 9, following Tablighi Jamaat cases became cluster across the state in mid-

March.

The number of zones exponentially expanded since the Koyembedu vegetable market turned a super spreader of virus in the city last week of April. There are as many as 170 containment zones in the city now. As per the plan, the volunteers deployed by GCC carried out a door-to-door survey. The government allocated Rs 40 crore for 4,500 FOCUS volunteers in Chennai to monitor those in quarantine and help them get essentials.

The trend of active cases, as per the data, show that it had peaked from 1007 till 18673 on June 24.

Ever since June, the number of active cases recorded a declining trend from 15814 in mid-July to 11,856 on August 4.



Residents of Kolathur light lamps and take part in a special puja organised by Hindu Munnani to mark Ayodhya Ram temple bhoomi puja on Wednesday.

— DC

Continuous TV coverage, pujas mark Ayodhya event

B. VIJAYALAKSHMI | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

While several Tamil news channels gave a continuous coverage of the Ayodhya Ram temple bhoomi puja for more than four hours on Wednesday and interspersed it with commentaries and reactions from temple architects, mutt and religious heads, Harikatha exponents and Vedic experts, temples in the state organised lighting of lamps and special recitation of Rama *puranam* and pujas.

Tamil news channels pulled it off quite well by covering the event in a direct manner with thoughts shared by religious scholars sans hype and razzmatazz.

Tamil orators and experts shared interesting facts about Ayodhya and various Ramayanas available in the world, elucidated century-old legal battle, contemporary relevance of Rama and architectural significance of the upcoming tem-

Tamil orators and experts shared interesting facts about Ayodhya and various Ramayanas available in the world, elucidated century-old legal battle, contemporary relevance of Rama and architectural significance of the upcoming temple amid the live coverage

ple amid the live coverage. Meanwhile, several temples in the state had priests reciting the Ramayana throughout the day. Vaidya Veeraraghava Swamy temple at Tiruvallur had *Raghuvira Gadyam* recited by priests and two special lamps lit in all *sannadhis*, said temple honorary agent C.C. Sampath.

Kannan bhattacharya of the ancient Vaikuntavasa Perumal temple in Koyambedu said, "We had special *Tirumanjanam* done for the Lord to mark

the occasion. Temple sand and holy water were sent to Ayodhya."

In a related development, security was beefed up in several temples across the state. Eri Katha Ramar temple in Madurantakam, considered one of the oldest Rama temples in the state, had police stepping up security since Tuesday night.

Also, the devout shared pictures of Lord Rama with friends and relatives on WhatsApp and FB and urged them to celebrate the special day.

The 46th jeer of Sri Ahobila Math spoke about Lord Rama's valour and compassion in a video message to devotees. Sadhguru, founder, Isha Foundation, tweeted, "Peaceful Resolution of #RamTemple dispute put to rest a wound that had been unnecessarily festering. A lot of minds & hearts are cooler now. May the whole nation celebrate this resolution and resurrection of spirit of nationhood and unity."

COFFEE-BREAK

Your day today | By Dr C.V.B. Subrahmanyam



Aries: Be optimistic about your child's success. Work brings huge financial gains. Speculative gains bring happiness. Expect more passion in your relationship.



Taurus: Expect providential help and a lifetime's work opportunities. Long journeys, including foreign visits, will happen. Expand your business and work harder.



Gemini: Sudden severe financial losses may make you feel unlucky. You may also suffer a genitourinary tract disease. Finances will be good.



Cancer: You may lose a litigation case. You tend to get more interested in fine arts and more involved in family matters. You'll succeed in competitive examinations.



Leo: You'll be more attracted towards the opposite gender, with someone showing interests in you and helps you. Focus on work and pleasures increases.



Virgo: You may have fights over petty issues. Avoid head-on collisions with other family members. Mix business with pleasure in the second half of the week. Allow your partner to help you at your job.

You share your b'day with

Michelle Yeoh, Malaysian actress. She is best known for her movies film *Tomorrow Never Dies*, *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, *Memoirs of a Geisha*, *Reign of Assassins*, *Star Trek: Discovery*, *Crazy Rich Asians* and *The Lady* amongst others.



Libra: Avoid hurry. Stay alert; make the most of opportunities. You can make money in business and other financial fields. Family members are too demanding today. Try to balance both work and personal lives.



Scorpio: Zestful efforts towards estate affairs bring good results, engaging you more than you'd like. Romantic problems get sorted out. Avoid accepting work impulsively.



Sagittarius: Those working from home won't have many interruptions. Romantic and creative activities are highlighted. Hidden feelings of close friends may surface.



Capricorn: It's a good day for romance and socialising. Those married have peaceful relations. You'll find maximum benefit from your time.

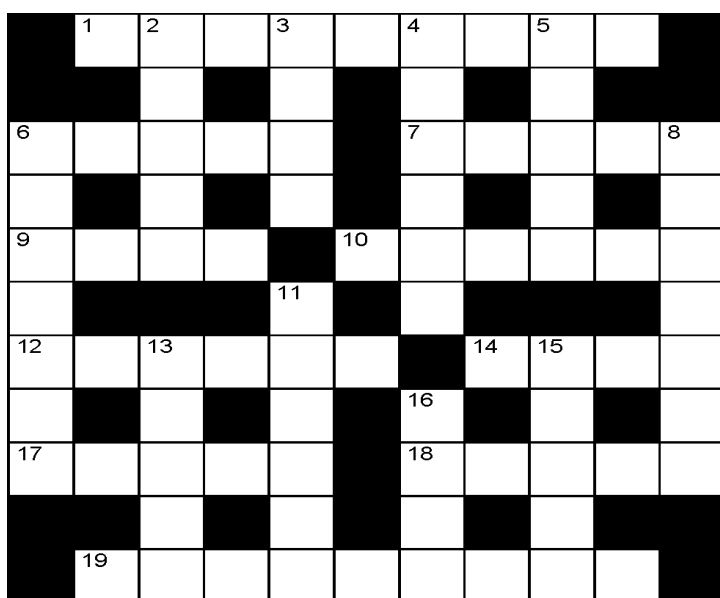


Aquarius: It's a good day for service personnel. Your enemies try to overcome you but fail. Some trusty friends may cheat you. Expect health problems.



Pisces: You find more support, helping you progress. It's a good time financially. Foreigners may help in the form of unexpected offers of financial associates or partnerships. Avoid risky deals. Enjoy your evening with family.

QUICK CROSSWORD



Across

- Cue and ball game (9)
- Defensive effort (5)
- Underwater gear (5)
- Ballot (4)
- Squirm (6)
- Say no (6)
- Tapered tuck (4)
- Exit (5)
- Walked in water (5)
- Candour (9)

Down

- Not appropriate (5)
- Board game (4)
- Soak up (6)
- Lack confidence in (5)
- Reveals (anag) (7)
- Warned (7)
- Aft (6)
- Panache (5)
- Assistants (5)
- Graceful water bird (4)

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

Across: 1. Pretence, 7. Unlit, 3. Stood, 9. Passed, 10. Cede, 12. Coop, 14. Potent, 17. Outdo, 18. Actor, 19. Etcetera.

Down: 1. Pales, 2. Entree, 3. Else, 4. Chose, 5. Suspicion, 6. Adventure, 11. Locate, 13. Octet, 15. Extra, 16. Cove.

Word Mine

Y
I
D
A
M
L
A
R
T

TODAY'S RATINGS: 18 AVERAGE: 20
GOOD: 22 OUTSTANDING

How many words of four or more letters can you make from the letters shown in today's puzzle? In making a word, each letter may be used once only. Each word must contain the letter at the top of the pyramid. There should be at least one nine letter word. Plurals, foreign words and proper names are not allowed.

West: 10 9 7 4
8 7 6 5
3 2 1
K 8 7 4

South: 10 9 8
7 6 5
4 3 2 1
J 5 4 3 2

Dealer: South: North-South
1 Pass 2 Pass 3 Pass 4 Pass 5 Pass 6 Pass 7 Pass 8 Pass 9 Pass 10 Pass 11 Pass 12 Pass 13 Pass 14 Pass 15 Pass 16 Pass 17 Pass 18 Pass 19 Pass 20 Pass 21 Pass 22 Pass 23 Pass 24 Pass 25 Pass 26 Pass 27 Pass 28 Pass 29 Pass 30 Pass 31 Pass 32 Pass 33 Pass 34 Pass 35 Pass 36 Pass 37 Pass 38 Pass 39 Pass 40 Pass 41 Pass 42 Pass 43 Pass 44 Pass 45 Pass 46 Pass 47 Pass 48 Pass 49 Pass 50 Pass 51 Pass 52 Pass 53 Pass 54 Pass 55 Pass 56 Pass 57 Pass 58 Pass 59 Pass 60 Pass 61 Pass 62 Pass 63 Pass 64 Pass 65 Pass 66 Pass 67 Pass 68 Pass 69 Pass 70 Pass 71 Pass 72 Pass 73 Pass 74 Pass 75 Pass 76 Pass 77 Pass 78 Pass 79 Pass 80 Pass 81 Pass 82 Pass 83 Pass 84 Pass 85 Pass 86 Pass 87 Pass 88 Pass 89 Pass 90 Pass 91 Pass 92 Pass 93 Pass 94 Pass 95 Pass 96 Pass 97 Pass 98 Pass 99 Pass 100 Pass 101 Pass 102 Pass 103 Pass 104 Pass 105 Pass 106 Pass 107 Pass 108 Pass 109 Pass 110 Pass 111 Pass 112 Pass 113 Pass 114 Pass 115 Pass 116 Pass 117 Pass 118 Pass 119 Pass 120 Pass 121 Pass 122 Pass 123 Pass 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SHORT TAKES

Thirumavalavan bereaved

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

K Bhanumathi, the elder sister of Thol Thirumavalavan, the founder of the Viduthalaï Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK), passed away at the age of 62 in Chennai.

Besides Thirumavalvan, she leaves behind a daughter, two sons and lakhs and lakhs of cadre from the VCK, to whom she was closely attached to.

She was admitted to a private hospital three week ago after testing positive for Covid-19 and recovered well but suddenly passed away on Wednesday following a heart attack, a party statement said, adding that the party would observe a week's mourning.

Ramadoss sees a conspiracy in NEP

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

PMK founder Dr S Ramadoss sees a conspiracy to close down the Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT) in Chennai by merging it with some university as per the stipulations in the new National Education Policy (NEP).

Many attempts had been done in the past to close down the institute that specializes in research on Tamil, its antiquity and its significance, Ramadoss said in a statement on Wednesday.

In 2017 there was a plan to convert the institute into a department of the Central University in Thiruvurur and it was dropped after protests from people, he said.

CICT, which functioned as Centre for Excellence for Classical Tamil as a part of the Central Institute of Indian Languages in Mysore, was shifted to Chennai in 2008 to function as an independent institution, he said.

It should be an independent organization not attached to any university and elevated to the status of a Central University, Ramadoss added.

DMK MLA moves HC

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

DMK MLA L.Idayavarman and 10 others arrested on July 12, 2020, in connection with a firing incident that took place during a clash between his group and that of a real estate businessman over a land dispute at Thirupurur on July 11, 2020, have approached the Madras high court, seeking bail.

Justice N.Sathish Kumar before whom the bail applications filed by Idayavarman and others came up for hearing, directed the Thirupurur police to produce CD files relating to the case and adjourned to August 6, further hearing of the case.

When the case came up for hearing on Wednesday, opposing the bail plea, State Public Prosecutor A.Natarajan submitted that there was long standing land dispute prevailing between the accused Idayavarman and the de-facto complainant G.Kumar. On the day of occurrence, both parties organized a meeting and one group of persons was led by MLA Idayavarman and another group was led by Kumar. After a wordy duel, Idayavarman all of a sudden started firing at the rival gang from his weapons namely a pistol and a SBBL gun. The license for the pistol and SBBL, used for commission of the crime had already been expired on December 31, 2019 but the same has been used by Idayavarman, he added.

Lawyers seek cashless insurance scheme

Chennai: Highlighting the severe hardship being faced by the advocates due to Covid-19 pandemic crisis, the Madras High Court Advocates Association (MHAA) has appealed to Chief Justice A.P.Sahi of the Madras high court, to advice the Tamil Nadu government to introduce a cashless health insurance scheme to the practising advocates in Tamil Nadu.

According to G.Mohana-krishnan, President, MHAA, the representatives of MHAA met Chief Justice A.P.Sahi on Wednesday and gave a representation to this effect. In his response, Chief Justice said he would consider it immediately, Mohanakrishnan added.

Awareness on wheels



Greater Chennai Corporation flags off mobile vans to create coronavirus awareness in Chennai on Wednesday. — DC

Visually impaired candidate cracks civil services exams

SINDHIYA SAMUEL I DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

It was no less than a dream come true for Poorna Sundari, a visually impaired girl when she cleared UPSC Civil Services Examination-2019, the result of which was declared on Tuesday.

She could not see with her eyes but that did not stop her from visualizing a dream and working hard to make it come true. The 25-year-old aspirant from Madurai bagged all India 286th rank and is one among the 60 candidates from Tamil Nadu to clear the exam.

Talking to Deccan Chronicle, Poorna Sundarai sounded enthusiastic, happy over her huge achievement. Poorna Sundari had been preparing for UPSC at the All India Civil services Coaching centre in Adyar, the only Institute run by Tamil Nadu government for the civil service aspirants. She said it was her hard work and perseverance that had brought her where she is today.

It was her father K. Murugesan who inspired her and always had a positive impact on her life. He taught her to 'never give up', says the aspirant who



Poorna Sundari

came up with flying colours in her fourth attempt. Poorna Sundari lost her vision when she was studying in the first standard, but nothing stopped her from pursuing the dream of joining the Indian Administrative Service. Her mother was her pillar of strength and read her lessons to her and helped her to prepare for exams.

She said it all started while doing higher secondary when she understood the role of IAS officers in the betterment of the nation. She started to develop an interest in taking this up for a career and learnt more about the UPSC entrance exams. She graduated from Fatima College in Madurai with an English literature bachelor degree and went on to prepare for the UPSC examination.

CM, Stalin greet civil service winners

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami and leader of the Opposition M K Stalin congratulated all the candidates from the State who had cleared the Civil Services Examination conducted by the Union Public Service Commission in 2019.

Quoting a couplet from Tirukkural that roughly translates into "Even if it is not possible for God, hard work will give its own rewards," Palaniswami acknowledged the efforts put in by the two visually challenged candidates, Poorana Sundari from Madurai and Balanagendran from Chennai, for their hard won success.

She did not clear even prelims on her first attempt and she worked even harder for the exam again, this time she cleared both prelims and mains. She said she lost by 10 marks in the interview, before cracking

His conveyed his wishes to all triumphant candidates from the State and urged them to strive for the uplift of society and work towards taking the government's welfare schemes to the masses.

Stalin, in a separate statement, wished the visually challenged candidates who had made it to the civil services and also the two State toppers, Ganeshkumar Bhaskar from Nagercoil in Kanyakumari district, who is ranked seven in the All-India list, and Aishwarya of Marungur in Cuddalore district – ranked 47.

The successful candidates should utilize the opportunity for the betterment of the community, Stalin said.

the UPSC exams 2019. Now the brave lady is full of determination and wants to be an inspiring officer. Poorna Sundari is highly inspired by U. Sagayam IAS and Udhayachandran IAS.

Covid death rate in S dts low, says health secy

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUNELVELI, AUG 5

Though there is an increase in Corona cases in the southern districts the fatality rate is very low, said Tamil Nadu health secretary J Radhakrishnan.

After inspecting the Covid treatment infrastructure at the government medical college hospitals in Tirunelveli and Thoothukudi districts on Wednesday, the health secretary said that on the direction of Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami, fever clinics and fever camps like in Chennai have been expanded to the southern districts of Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi, Kanyakumari and Virudhunagar, where the cases are comparatively high.

By conducting intensive fever camps in the coastal areas, the number of fresh cases has been brought under control, he added. Mr Radhakrishnan said that despite the increasing caseloads, case fatality rate in the southern districts is much lower than the death rate of 1.62% in the entire state. Thoothukudi district with 8,035 cases, highest among the southern most districts, however has a death rate at 0.7%, which is 1% each in the neighbouring Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts and 1.4% in Tenkasi district.

Ku Ka Selvam cocks a snook at DMK

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

DMK MLA representing Thousand Lights constituency, Ku Ka Selvam, cocked a snook at his party by visiting 'Kamalalayam', the BJP state headquarters in Chennai, to a grand reception on Wednesday even while claiming that he continued to be in the DMK.

Though DMK president M. K. Stalin cracked the whip, removing Selvam from the posts of headquarters office secretary

"I do not care if the DMK throws me out of the party. I will continue to work for the people as an MLA," he told the media at Kamalalayam

and headquarters executive committee and seeking an explanation as to why he should not be dismissed from the party, the MLA was hobnobbing openly with the BJP state

leaders.

"I do not care if the DMK throws me out of the party. I will continue to work for the people as an MLA," he told the media at Kamalalayam.

He said he had been part of Dravidian parties in the last 50 years but had to leave the DMK because the party was under family rule and everyone was expected to toe the line of Udhayanidhi Stalin, the Youth Wing secretary.

"No one above the age of 50 has any respect in the DMK," he said and invited others from the party to

follow him to the BJP.

Perhaps the DMK is caught in a Catch-22 situation. If the party expelled him, he would continue as an unattached MLA till the end of the term but function against the interests of the party and if he was allowed to be a primary member he would be a DMK MLA on paper and work against the party.

The next course of action may depend on what explanation Selvam gives the party. But till then, he will continue to be a thorn in the flesh of the DMK.

Min Jayakumar gives it back to S Ve Sekar

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

Fisheries minister D. Jayakumar asked comedian S Ve Sekar to return the salary he drew as an AIADMK MLA from Mylapore and stop receiving the pension, reacting to the criticism of the party by the former member.

Sekar had put out video criticizing the AIADMK,

saying that the party had no policy of its own and that it was just repeating what the DMK said. Sekar was referring to the AIADMK taking a stand against the imposition of a three-language system in schools under the new National Education Policy.

He had even said that the AIADMK can remove the name of C. N. Annadurai

(Anna) from the party's nomenclature and rename it after 'Amma.' Also the image of Anna could be taken off the party flag, Sekar, who is now with the BJP, said in the video.

"Did he not canvass for votes with the same flag in Mylapore?" Jayakumar asked, replying to a question from the media, and said Sekar was just seeking publicity.

Rain woes continue in Nilgiris

B. RAVICHANDRAN I DC
OOTY, AUG. 5

The southwest fury is continuing in the central and western Nilgiris for the fourth consecutive day as uprooted trees and electric poles added woes to the worsening rain scenario in the hills.

The rainfall across the central and western Nilgiris was very heavy on Tuesday night as Avalanche, near here, a major catchment area, recorded 390 mm of rains on Wednesday morning. The rainfall (in mm) recorded in other places across the Nilgiris is as follows: - Upper Bhavani - 306, Pandalur -161, Naduvattam -147, Emarald -145, Glenmorgan -137, Cherangode-136, Gudalur-128, Devala-126, Balacola-111, Upper Gudalur-102, Kundah-70 and Ooty-39.

The gusty winds that were accompanying the pouring rains uprooted trees in many places in



Ooty, Gudalur and Pandalur sector. This led to traffic snarls in quite a few places keeping the disaster management teams on their toes to clear the mess. The situation was challenging for the Tangedco field staff as they were sweating out in inclement weather conditions to restore power connections in many areas in Kundah, Ooty, Gudalur and Pandalur taluks after winds and rains uprooted electric poles, plunging many areas in Ooty and Gudalur into darkness.

While the hill vegetable crops in low lying areas have been damaged by the heavy rains and water stagnation, the good flow in the major catchment areas is helpful for the reservoirs around to brim up. The rains and over-cast sky have made the conditions nippy in the Nilgiris.

The Collector of Nilgiris, Ms. J. Innocent Divya has appealed to the hill residents to remain indoors as the continuing rains were leading to frequent uprooting of trees and electric poles on Wednesday.

Canal breaks down, Podanur flooded

DC CORRESPONDENT
COIMBATORE, AUG. 5

The residents of Podanur had a harrowing time after 13 streets inside Sai Nagar and Fathima Avenue remained flooded on Wednesday after the Rajvaikal canal carrying water to Vellalore pond bund broke down.

Following heavy downpour in Nilgiris and in the catchment areas on the foothills of Western Ghats, the district administration issued a flood alert on Tuesday while the Pillur dam reached close

to its brim with the water level crossing 97 feet against its full level of 100 feet.

Attributing the increase in water level to heavy rainfall in the hills and catchment areas including upper Bhavani, the Pillur dam receives 22,000 cusecs of water while 18,000 cusecs of water are being released through 4 shutters considering the safety of the dam.

In the early hours of Wednesday water started to overflow at Zam Zam Nagar and entered 13 streets inside Sai Nagar

and Fathima Avenue flooding more than 300 houses. Water also entered houses in the lower areas and damaged electrical items. The corporation staff rushed to the spot and diverted the water.

Meanwhile, bund of the Rajavaikal broke down on the north side and entered Sai Nagar leaving the entire area flooded. Electricity was shut down to avoid untoward incidents. The residents have demanded the officials to complete the de-silting of the entire canal.

No to e-passes



Members of Tamil Nadu tourist vehicles operators association protest in front of the state guest house in Chennai to scrap e-pass system on Wednesday. — DC

Today is new beginning of new India: Bhagwat

Bhumi puja in Ayodhya has spread joy, will establish self-confidence for making India self-reliant, says RSS chief

Ayodhya, Aug. 5: Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Wednesday said that today is the beginning of a new India.

Speaking on the occasion soon after the "bhumi puja" ceremony of Ram temple in Ayodhya, Mr Bhagwat said, "Our country believes in 'Vasudev Kutubhkam' i.e. World is One Family. We believe in taking everyone along. Today is a new beginning of a new India."

Recalling the three-decade-old struggle of RSS and its ideological family members for the construction of the temple, he hailed the contribution of veteran BJP leader L.K. Advani, late VHP president Ashok Singhal and Mahant Ramchandra Das Paramhans.

"So many people had sacrificed, they couldn't be here physically. There are some who couldn't come here, Advaniji must be at his home watching this. There are some who should have come but could not be invited because of the situation (Covid-19)," he added.

There are many people who worked hard and some even sacrificed their lives for the temple, many may not be here physically, Mr Bhagwat said remembering Singhal and spiritual face of the temple movement late Paramhans.

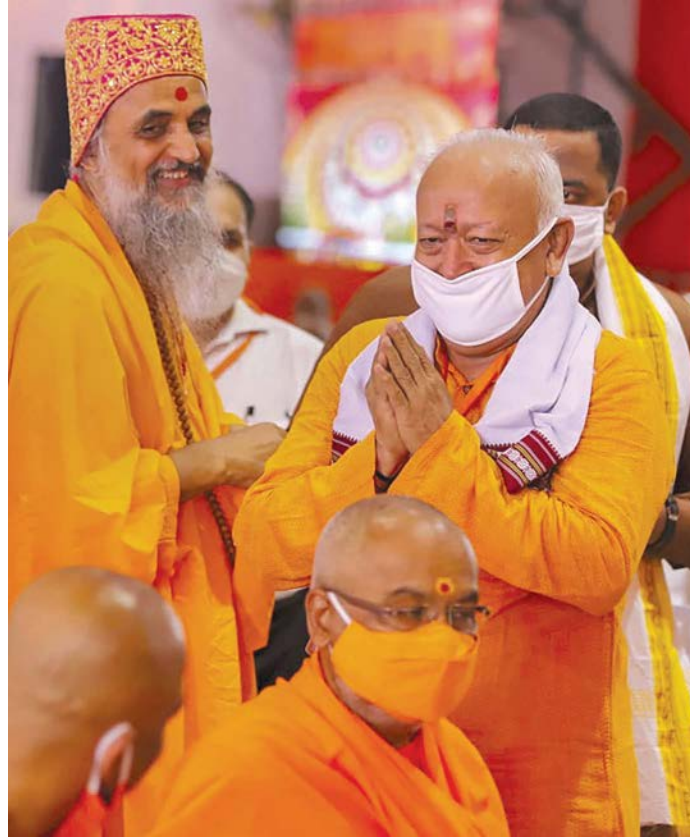
Mr Bhagwat, the guest of honour for the ground breaking ceremony, termed it is a moment of joy asserting "there is a wave of happiness in the country".

"There is a pleasure of fulfilment of a dream for years. But the greatest joy is establishment of the self confidence and self-sufficiency needed for making India self-reliant is realised today," said the RSS chief, who sat along with Modi at the havan ceremony. With the bhumi puja, the Sangh's three-decade-old pledge of con-



Artists (clockwise from left) dressed as Lord Ram, Lakshman and Hanuman celebrate the Bhoomi Puja in Ayodhya's Ram Mandir in Bengaluru on Wednesday. RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat during the foundation laying ceremony in Ayodhya on Wednesday, devotees light earthen lamps at Ramchandra Ji Temple in Jaipur on Wednesday.

— PTI



structing the Ram temple in Ayodhya is being realised, he said.

"When we had taken the pledge, our then Sangh chief Balasahab Deoras had told us we would have to work hard continuously for 20-30 years and we did," Mr Bhagwat said, adding today the society is realising the joy of fulfilment of its pledge.

Emphasising that the foundation stone of the temple laid on Wednesday signifies the spirit to take everyone along, he said it is being done by the able leadership of the country to make India a global leader.

Requesting people to follow the ideals of Lord Ram to regain the past glory of the country, Mr Bhagwat said people should also build an Ayodhya inside them based on values and teachings of its king to make

India great. Projecting Ram as an universal king, the RSS chief said he belongs to it and all belongs to him.

Mr Bhagwat was one of the selected invitees at the 'bhumi puja' ceremony of the Ram temple at the site where a large number of Hindus believe Lord Ram was born.

Construction of the Ram temple has been a core issue of the RSS, and it has been providing all necessary support to its ideological family members BJP and VHP to realise this long awaited mission of the saffron organisations.

Besides Mr Bhagwat, top office bearers of Sangh — its general secretary Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi, its joint general secretaries Krishna Gopal and Dattateya Hosabale were also present at the ceremony. — Agencies

Credit for temple goes to Modi: Yogi

Ayodhya, Aug. 5: Uttar Pradesh Chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's foresight and wisdom paved the way for peaceful resolution of the Ram temple issue and fulfilling the dream.

The power of Indian democracy and judiciary under the leadership of PM Modi has shown the world how solutions to problems can be found

through democratic and constitutional means, he said at the groundbreaking ceremony for the temple here.

"Prime Minister's foresight and wisdom paved the way for peaceful resolution of Ram temple issue," he said.

Mr Yogi said people have struggled for 500 years for the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Prime Minister Modi earlier performed the

Prime Minister's foresight and wisdom paved the way for peaceful resolution of Ram temple issue

— Yogi Adityanath, UP chief minister

'bhoomi puja' of a Supreme Court-mandated Ram temple in Ayodhya,

bringing to fruition the BJP's 'mandir' movement that defined its politics for three decades and took it to the heights of power.

On November 9, 2019, the Supreme Court settled the fractious issue going back more than a century and backed the construction of a Ram temple by a trust at the disputed site. It also ruled that an alternative five-acre plot must be found for a mosque in the Hindu holy town. — PTI

PM reaches out to Nepal, Sri Lanka & Indonesia

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

Prime Minister Narendra Modi reached out on Wednesday to South-east Asian countries like Indonesia and also parts of India's immediate neighbourhood like Nepal and Sri Lanka where the cultural influence of the ancient epic Ramayana is still felt, adding significantly that when a nation is strong, it is able to ensure peace. At a time of Sino-Indian military tensions, PM Modi also mentioned China in his speech as a country where references to Lord Rama have been found. He also pitched for a continued strong cultural outreach by India to the world.

In his address on Wednesday at the temple town of Ayodhya, PM Modi mentioned five south-east Asian nations — Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia where the cultural influence of the Ramayana and Lord Rama are still felt. In India's immediate neighbourhood, he mentioned Nepal and Sri Lanka in this regard. PM Modi also said references to Lord Rama were found even in China as well as Iran, which is in India's extended neighbourhood.

Social distancing norms followed at Ram Mandir

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

With a limited number of guests attending the Ram Temple bhumi puja ceremony led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the social distancing norms were strictly followed at the venue as guests sat a respectable distance from each other in different enclosures and every one wore a mask.

Due to coronavirus pandemic, the number of guests was restricted to 175 at the venue as several who had participated in building the momentum for Ram Temple were

omitted from the list of invitees. Roads were sanitised and empty, both for security and pandemic reasons though people stood on their terraces to have a glimpse of PM Modi while he was on his way to the venue.

"There are many people who worked hard and sacrificed their lives for the temple, but they could not be here physically...While there are some like Advani ji who led rath yatra but could not come due to the current situation (of Covid-19 pandemic). He must be watching this from his home on TV," said RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat.

At the helipad, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Governor Anandiben Patel and state officials stood at demarcated places as they received the PM. At the venue, the priests maintained distance from each other as they guided the PM to perform the Bhoomi Puja. On the dias too after the Bhoomi Puja, where only five special invitees sat, there was sufficient gap between them. It is learnt that only corona free priests and policemen were allowed. All invitees at the venue were screened several times.

RAM RAJYA

Chhattisgarh govt to flaunt Ram connection

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOPAL, AUG. 5

A sleepy village in Chhattisgarh, believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram's mother Kaushalya, may emerge as a major pilgrim centre like Ayodhya.

Chief minister Bhupesh Baghel has announced a grandiose plan to develop Chandkhuri, around 30 km from Raipur, by upgrading the existing Mata Kaushalya shrine into a grand temple.

"Ram's Nanihal (maternal place) Chandkhuri will be developed like a city in mythological tales. The existing Mata Kaushalya shrine in the village will be made a grand temple without disturbing its original form," a Twitter post by Mr Baghel said. The eighth century Mata Kaushalya temple is the only shrine of the kind in the country.



People gather on rooftops to have a view of the foundation-stone laying ceremony in Ayodhya on Tuesday.

— PTI

Early Diwali in Ayodhya

Ayodhya: Deepawali came early in the temple town of Ayodhya, as people from different sections of the society lit earthen lamps to celebrate the bhoomi puja for Ram temple, which was held on Wednesday morning.

The road leading from Hanumangarhi to Naya Ghat wore an illuminated look in the evening, with several earthen lamps lit outside shops, houses, guest houses and dharamshalas. — PTI

1992: RSS, Bajrang Dal briefed us, the kar sevaks

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

I covered BJP veteran L.K. Advani's Ram Rath Yatra as it passed through Delhi way back in 1990. I was surprised by the number of people who came out on the roads, scattering rose petals on the Yatra. Delhi seemed a long way off when I finally made my way to Ayodhya two years later.

Armed with a letter of introduction from a Delhi unit of the BJP, I wormed my way into kar sevak ranks at the holy town in 1992. During my first three-day maiden visit to Ayodhya, I was put through intense grilling to establish my credentials as a kar sevak. After I was accepted as a "genuine" kar sevak, I saw the face that lay behind a facade of religious drama and masked by political hoopla it was terrifying to see the extent to which the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, BJP, Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal combine had gone to ensure there was no infiltration.

I lived in Guru Gobind Singh camp with kar sevaks from Delhi and Haryana. I was briefed by pracharakas of the RSS and "indoctrinated" by the Bajrang Dal. I met sages and mendicants. Some of them seemed genuinely good people, and some charlatans. I also met many men who would listen to no reason, suffer no attempts to veer them away from fanaticism. There were some people who told me that they did not expect the temple to come up at the disputed site, but all that was going on in Ayodhya was necessary to rejuvenate the nationalist spirit. Many others, including UP policemen, were certain that the temple would come up at any cost.

After my first night's stay, one early morning (a few days before the December 6 demolition), hundreds of people gathered near my tent. They were carrying boulders and shovels and shouting "Jai Shri Ram". I too joined the mob, which was led by then BJP MP B.L. Sharma 'Prem'. Soon, the mob started breaking down three gravestones. I also carried the debris to a nearby pond, along with other kar sevaks.

One day, I was shown a broken windscreen and shattered glass panes — a car-load of "infiltrators" had been reportedly inter-

cepted by kar sevaks — beaten up and handed over to the UP police.

It was after the publication of my reports that the disputed structure was brought down on December 6, 1992. In his defence, then Union home minister S B Chavan told the Parliament that had he read these news reports, the disputed structure could have been saved.

After the stone-laying ceremony of Ram temple on Wednesday, all eyes will be on the special court in Lucknow which is to pronounce its verdict in the criminal case filed against those responsible for the demolition of the disputed structure.

It was after a gap of about 25 years that the special court recorded my testimony as a prosecution witness in this matter. Shockingly, the CBI, which is the prosecuting agency in this case, has not filed original copies of my newspaper reports as a documentary evidence in the matter.

My day-long testimony in the court was recorded on the basis of a statement recorded by a senior CBI officer soon after the demolition of the disputed structure.

clashed with police in some parts of West Bengal on Wednesday over celebrating the ground-breaking ceremony of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, amid a total lockdown in the state, officials said.

Clashes were reported from Kharagpur in West Midnapore district, Narayanpur in North 24 Parganas, and Alipurdwar town in north Bengal, among others. A procession by BJP workers to mark the day was stopped by police in Kharagpur, leading to a scuffle.

"When they were stopped from going ahead with the march, a scuffle broke out between police and BJP activists. Several BJP workers have been arrested," a senior police officer said.

Some policemen were also injured in the incident, he said. In Alipurdwar town, BJP workers were stopped from organising a "bhoomi poojan" due to the total lockdown, leading to a tense situation.

BJP workers also tried to organise a yagna in Narayanpur area but were stopped by some locals. Police said they had to use "force" to disperse the crowd.

"The BJP was trying to disturb the peace in the area but locals stopped them," local Trinamool Congress leader Tapas Chatterjee said.

State BJP president Dilip Ghosh, who organised a "bhoomi poojan" at his New Town residence, said the crackdown by police reflects the "anti-Hindu mindset" of the state government. — PTI

Golden chapter in history of India, says Shah

New Delhi, Aug. 5: Terming the foundation laying of Ram temple in Ayodhya as a "historic and proud day" for India, home minister Amit Shah on Wednesday said it heralds the beginning of a new era. He said by starting the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has written a golden chapter in the history of great Indian civilisation, and asserted that the government remains committed to the preservation of Indian culture and its values.

"Today is a historic and proud day for India. The consecration of the grand Ram temple by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Lord Ram's birthplace has written a golden chapter in the history of great Indian culture and civilisation and heralded the beginning of a new era," Shah, who is recuperating at a private hospital in Gurgaon after contracting Covid-19, said.

He said the construction of the temple is the result of centuries long sacrifice, struggle and penance of the innumerable devotees of Lord Ram. "On this day, I salute all those ascetics who fought for this priceless heritage of them who struggled for years to preserve this precious heritage of Sanatan civilization. Jai Shree Ram," he tweeted in Hindi. — PTI

BJP workers clash with police in Bengal

Kolkata, Aug. 5: BJP workers clashed with police in some parts of West Bengal on Wednesday over celebrating the ground-breaking ceremony of a Ram temple in Ayodhya, amid a total lockdown in the state, officials said.

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State BJP president Dilip Ghosh, who organised a "bhoomi poojan" at his New Town residence, said the crackdown by police reflects the "anti-Hindu mindset" of the state government. — PTI

Ram not the 'property' of BJP: Tharoor

New Delhi, Aug. 5: With the Congress under attack from various quarters over what was seen by many as a subtle shift in its position on the Ram temple issue, senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Wednesday rejected allegations that the grand old party was being "BJP-Lite" and asserted that Lord Ram is not the "property" of the saffron party.

Mr Tharoor put out a series of tweets to spell out his party's stand on the Ram temple issue.

In his tweets, Tharoor also addressed those Muslims who say that they feel let down by the Congress and cited verses from the holy Quran, asking "who exactly betrayed you?" "Not those who stand for an inclusive India, who have neither attacked you nor preached hatred against you," he said, addressing the section of Muslims riled by the Congress' stand. Tharoor's remarks assume significance as they came after Indian Union Muslim League passed a resolution expressing displeasure over Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's statement on the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya. — PTI



Sadhus celebrate in Ayodhya on Tuesday.

— PTI

'Balasahab's dream fulfilled'

Mumbai: The Shiv Sena said the "bhoomi puja" for Ram temple construction "fulfils" the dream of its founder Bal Thackeray, while the party's ruling ally in Maharashtra NCP termed the development as a "matter of joy". The Sena, an ex-BJP ally which has been a strong supporter of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, congratulated the people over the long-awaited foundation stone laying ceremony for the grand temple. — PTI

IN BRIEF

Tropic storm Isaias whips up, 6 killed

Windsor (US): At least six people were killed as Tropical Storm Isaias spawned tornadoes and dumped rain Tuesday along the US East Coast after making landfall as a hurricane in North Carolina, where it caused floods and fires that displaced dozens of people. Two people died when Isaias spun off a tornado that struck a North Carolina mobile home park. Another person died in Pennsylvania when their vehicle was overtaken by water and swept downstream. Two others were killed by falling trees toppled by the storm in Maryland and New York City, and a sixth person died in Delaware when a tree branch fell on them, authorities said.

Brazil firemen rush to stop Wetland fire

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

Cruise in Norway docks amid virus

Copenhagen: A cruise ship with 123 passengers on board and a crew of 85 docked on Wednesday in the Norwegian harbour of Bodø but no one could disembark after a former passenger from Denmark tested positive for the coronavirus upon returning home. "We take the situation very seriously," Mayor Ida Pinnerød told Norwegian broadcaster NRK, adding that authorities were in contact with the Norwegian Institute of Public Health on whether the remaining passengers should be tested. The crew will be tested. In a statement, ship owner SeaDream Yacht Club said "we sincerely hope that there is no Covid-19 on board, and we are not aware of any other guests or crew who are infected or have any symptoms, but we are taking all necessary precautions."

Major fire breaks out in Ajman, UAE

Ajman: A massive fire broke out in a fruits and vegetables market in Ajman, UAE. The fire broke out in the emirate's new industrial area. Several fire engines were seen rushing to the spot to put out the blaze. The Ajman civil defence had urged motorists to take alternative routes. "Ajman firefighters have cordoned off the site and used water and foam in extinguishing the blazes which have broken out in many shops therein," sources told the local media outlets. "Four civil defence centres are involved in fighting the big inferno," they said. No one was reported to be injured in the mishap. The cause of the fire was not ascertained.

SEVEN DEAD, 60 INFECTED BY NEW VIRUS IN CHINA

Beijing, Aug. 5: A new infectious disease caused by a tick-borne virus has killed seven people and infected 60 others in China, official media here reported on Wednesday, warning about the possibility of its human-to-human transmission. More than 37 people in East China's Jiangsu Province contracted with the SFTS Virus in the first half of the year.

Later, 23 people were found to have been infected in East China's Anhui province, state-run Global Times quoted media reports. A woman from Nanjing, capital of Jiangsu, who suffered from the virus showed onset of symptoms such as fever, coughing. Doctors found a decline of leukocyte, blood platelet inside of her body. After a month of treatment, she was discharged from the hospital.

At least seven people have died in Anhui and East China's Zhejiang province due to the virus, the report said. SFTS Virus is not a new virus. China has isolated pathogen of the virus in 2011, and it belongs to the Bunyavirus category

Beirut blast toll over 100, PM seeks help

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

Global leaders reach out to help Lebanon

LEBANON'S MAIN GRAIN SUPPLY TO LAST A MONTH

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

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

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

France said it is sending two planes with dozens of emergency workers, a mobile medical unit and 15 tons of aid. French President Emmanuel Macron's office says the aid should allow for the treatment of some 500 victims.

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

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

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



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

Trump: Generals suspect an attack

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

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

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

stood ready to assist Lebanon.

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

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

The cause of the blast was not immediately offered condolences and medical support to Lebanon after a huge blast at Beirut port devastated entire neighbourhoods of the city. Tehran "is ready to offer medical and medicinal aid and help treat the injured and other assistance", Rouhani wrote in a message to his Lebanese counterpart, according to the government website. Qatar began flying field hospitals and medical aid to Beirut on Wednesday to ease pressure on Lebanon's strained medical system after the previous day's devastating explosions. — *Agencies*

Mar Mikhail, Beirut's 'beating heart' snuffed out by blast

Beirut, Aug. 5: Heritage buildings, trendy bars and hip art galleries, all gutted: the vibrant Mar Mikhail district, once one of Beirut's gems, is now a wasteland of broken glass and destroyed cars.

A short walk from Lebanon's main port, where a huge blast on Tuesday flattened buildings and killed more than 100 people, the bustling nightlife hotspot was among the hardest-hit

areas.

Today it is unrecognisable even to those who grew up there.

"Mar Mikhail was Beirut's beating heart," said Lina Daoud, a 45-year-old volunteer distributing food and water.

"Now, I feel like I'm entering an unfamiliar place," she said. "I never thought there would come a day... when I would see Mar Mikhail like this." Inside a damaged house

more than a century old, Michel Asaad gathered shards of glass in a bucket.

In a room that looked like it was hit by a tornado, a toppled statue of the Virgin Mary had been resurrected — but was missing its head.

"I've lived in this house my entire life," said Asaad, 53. "I could have died here." — "Worse than the war"

Asaad pointed to other

architectural gems that gave the street its traditional character, popular with Lebanese and foreigners alike.

The oldest among them have totally collapsed, while those that sustained less damage now have craters in their walls or are missing roofs.

Beirut's governor has said the blast made nearly 3,00,000 people homeless.

Asaad said he was "only one of the hundreds, if not

thousands, of people" affected in the neighbourhood. Mar Mikhail's concrete pavement was carpeted with broken glass that cracked underfoot as residents streamed in to check on their properties on Wednesday morning.

Mangled vehicles with air bags poking out of broken windows lined the sidewalk, their owners waiting for them to be lifted.

Dozens of people drag-

ging heavy suitcases made their way up a steep road, joining the exodus from a district rendered almost uninhabitable.

Rescue workers carried an elderly woman out of her house on a wooden chair from her living room.

Another frail and elderly woman pushed past crowds, four heavy tote bags dangling from her thin arms as debris fell overhead. — *AFP*

Video suggests explosions in N. Korean city

Seoul, Aug. 5: A video shows plumes of black smoke rising from a North Korean city near the border with China amid reports that deadly explosions occurred there earlier this week.

There has been no official word from North Korea or China about what happened in the North Korean city of Hyesan on Monday. But South Korean media and outside monitoring groups reported that gas explosions in a residential area left dozens of people dead or injured.

The video acquired by the AP shows orange flames and black smoke shooting into the sky from Hyesan as loud explosion-like sounds are heard. A few people can be seen watching the scene from the Chinese side of the border. The video was provided by Wang Bo, a travel agent who said he shot it from a park in the Chinese border town of Changbai.

"I just saw explosions and there were a lot of onlookers who were looking in that direction. We don't know the reason why there were explosions," Wang said. Wang, who said he has previously visited Hyesan, said the explosions happened not far from the city's orphanage and tourism office. — *AP*



Video provided by Wang Bo via AP Video, plumes of smoke and fire can be seen rising from Hyesan, a North Korean city. — *AP*

der town of Changbai.

"I just saw explosions and there were a lot of onlookers who were looking in that direction. We don't know the reason why there were explosions," Wang said. Wang, who said he has previously visited Hyesan, said the explosions happened not far from the city's orphanage and tourism office. — *AP*

US to send high-level team to Taiwan

Taipei, Aug 5: The United States announced on Wednesday its highest-level visit to Taiwan since it switched diplomatic recognition to China in 1979, a move Beijing blasted as a threat to "peace and stability".

The visit, headed by health chief Alex Azar, comes as relations between the world's two biggest powers plunge to historic lows.

"This marks... the first Cabinet member to visit in six years, and the highest

level visit by a US Cabinet official since 1979," said Washington's de facto embassy, the American Institute in Taiwan, with no date yet given for the visit.

Washington remains the leading arms supplier to the island but has historically been cautious in holding official contacts with it.

Beijing views Taiwan as its own territory — vowing to one day seize it — and bristles at any moves

● **RELATIONS HAVE** warmed dramatically under President Donald Trump, who has used embracing democratic Taiwan more closely as a way to hit back at authoritarian Beijing as he clashes with China on a host of issues, including trade and Coronavirus.

by other countries to recognise or communicate with Taipei. "China firmly opposes

official exchanges between the US and Taiwan," Wang Wenbin, a spokesman for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said as he called for the visit to be cancelled.

"We urge the US to abide by the one-China principle... to avoid seriously endangering Sino-US relations, as well as peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait." Taiwan said Azar would meet President Tsai Ing-wen. "(The) timely visit is

another testament to the strong Taiwan-US partnership based on our longstanding friendship and shared values," Tsai wrote on Twitter.

Relations have warmed dramatically under President Donald Trump, who has used embracing democratic Taiwan more closely as a way to hit back at authoritarian Beijing as he clashes with China on a host of issues, including trade and Coronavirus. — *AFP*

High voter turnout in Covid-19 delayed elections in Sri Lanka

Colombo, Aug.5: Sri Lankans turned out in large numbers to vote in parliamentary elections on Wednesday despite the Coronavirus pandemic, as the ruling Rajapaksa brothers sought a fresh mandate to cement their grip on power.

The parliamentary election had been postponed twice due to the virus epidemic, but finally got under way at 7 am (0130 GMT) with strict hygiene measures in place to prevent the spread of the disease.

The siblings are seeking a two-thirds majority to roll back constitutional changes introduced by the previous administration that limit the president's powers.

Analysts expect them to easily secure a majority in the 225-seat parliament. First results are expected by Thursday evening, with the final tally due late Friday. People began lining up outside polling stations even before they opened across the island, where 16.23 million of the 21 million residents are eligible to vote.

Turnout was up to 30 percent in most parts of the South Asian country in the first three hours, election officials said. "There were about 20 people ahead of me in the queue, but it took nearly an hour to vote," a woman in Kaduwela suburb in the capital Colombo said, referring to health measures at her booth. — *AFP*

which were published in February 2019 and reproduced parts of the letter.

Markle is seeking damages from ANL for alleged misuse of private information, copyright infringement and breach of the UK Data Protection Act. Publishers ANL wholly deny the allegations, including the claim that the letter was edited in any way that changed its meaning, and have pledged to strongly contest the case. — *PTI*

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TRUMP BACKS MAIL VOTING IN FLORIDA

Washington, Aug. 5: In an abrupt reversal, President Donald Trump now is encouraging voters in the critical swing state of Florida to vote by mail after months of criticising the practice, and only days after threatening to sue Nevada over a new vote-by-mail law.

His encouragement follows a surge in Democratic requests to vote for mail in Florida, a state that Trump almost certainly must win to secure a second term. Democrats currently have about 1.9 million Floridians signed up to vote by mail this November, almost 6,00,000 more than the Republicans' 1.3 million, according to the Florida Secretary of State.

"Whether you call it Vote by Mail or Absentee Voting, in Florida the election system is Safe and Secure, Tried and True. Florida's Voting system has been cleaned up (we defeated Democrats attempts at change), so in Florida I encourage all to request a Ballot & Vote by Mail!" Trump tweeted Tuesday. — *AP*

ROYAL VICTORY

Legal team for ANL, which denies allegations had resisted the application

Meghan wins plea to protect her friends

London, Aug. 5: Meghan Markle, the Duchess of Sussex, on Wednesday won an attempt to keep five of her friends anonymous in her ongoing High Court legal action in London over breach of privacy against The Mail on Sunday newspaper owners *Associated Newspaper Limited (ANL)*.

Lawyers for Markle, who turned 39 on Tuesday, had argued for the friends who gave an interview to People's magazine to

remain anonymous in reports of the proceedings. The legal team for ANL, which denies all allegations, had resisted the application.

"I have concluded that for the time being at least the court should grant the claimant the orders she seeks, the effect of which will be to confer protection on the sources' identities, said Justice Mark Warby in a ruling at the Royal Courts of Justice.



Meghan Markle

"That is confidential information, the protection of which at this stage is necessary in the interests

of the administration of justice. This is an interim decision," he noted.

The People's article referenced in court involved the former actress' friends speaking out against her alleged bullying and they have so far only been identified in confidential court documents, according to *The Daily Telegraph*.

Markle, the wife of Prince Harry, says her friends gave the interview without her knowledge,

and denies a claim made by ANL that she "caused or permitted" the article to be published in People's.

The UK court battle revolves around the reproduction of sections of a "private and confidential" handwritten note Markle sent to her estranged father, 75-year-old Thomas Markle, in August 2018.

The focus is on five articles in total two in the Mail on Sunday and three on MailOnline's

which were published in February 2019 and reproduced parts of the letter.

Markle is seeking damages from ANL for alleged misuse of private information, copyright infringement and breach of the UK Data Protection Act.

Publishers ANL wholly deny the allegations, including the claim that the letter was edited in any way that changed its meaning, and have pledged to strongly contest the case. — *PTI*

DECCAN Chronicle

6 AUGUST 2020

Ditching secular legacy won't protect Congress

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

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

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

IPL must drop China firms

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

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

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

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Subhani



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



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ple, between state and religion.

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

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

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

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

The writer is a Delhi-based commentator and analyst

LETTERS

NEW ERA BEGINS

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

M. Jeyaram Sholavandan

PAPER TIGERS

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

Kooduthuraiyan Coimbatore

Aakar Patel



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Aakar Patel is a senior journalist and columnist

SHORT TAKES

Babar shines in first Test vs Eng

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP

Brief scores: Pakistan 121/2 in 41.1 overs (Shan Masood 45, Babar Azam 52, C. Woakes 1/14) vs England.

Stirling, Balbirnie star in Irish win

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

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

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Editor: ADITYA SINHA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOP OPERA

IPL franchises want procedures tweaked



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

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

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

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

unwind by playing golf and attending team and family dinners.

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

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

— PTI

LEAGUE IN UAE WILL BE CHALLENGING: RAINA

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

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

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

— PTI

No champ Nadal show at US Open

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AFP

NAGAL IN MAIN DRAW FOR GRAND SLAM

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI



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

FINANCIAL Chronicle

quick BITES

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

* As of 9:30 PM IST

Ajay Tyagi gets 18 months' extension at Sebi

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



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

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

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

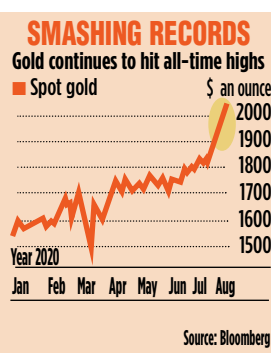
In the international market gold made a new high of \$2,043 per ounce after crossing the crucial level. This took gold prices to record high on the Multi Commodity Exchange to Rs 55,280 per 10 gm. In the Delhi bullion market, 24 carat gold was seen trading above Rs 57,000 per 10 gm.

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

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

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

"We believe that a \$1



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Ban to cover more apps from Xiaomi, Baidu

SANKALP PHARTIYAL & ADITYA KALRA
NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

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

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

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

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

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

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

— Reuters

Hotel occupancies stay below 20% in June qtr

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, AUG. 5

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Airtel partners Amazon to grow cloud biz

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

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

nies and governments via different partnerships.

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

Services told a virtual news conference.

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

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