

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA
NELLORE | THURSDAY | 6 AUGUST 2020

WEATHER
Max: 95.6°C
Min: 26.8°C
RH: 87%
Rainfall: Nil
Forecast: clear.
Max/Min temp. 32/26°C

COVID-19 CUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+53,701)	(+913)
19,59,822	40,732

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+2,012)	(+13)
TS: 70,958	576
(+10,128)	(+77)
AP: 1,86,461	1,681

CASES AROUND THE WORLD
1,88,33,253
DEATHS
707,136
COUNTRIES AREAS WITH CASES
213

ASTROGUIDE
Sarvari: Dakshinayana
Tithi: Shravana Bahula Tadiya till 12.16 am (Friday)
Star: Satabhisham till 11.19 am
Variyam: 6.19 pm to 8.04 pm
Durmuhurtam: 10.15 am to 11.06 am; 3.20 pm to 4.11 pm
Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm
HJRI CALENDAR
Zuhijja 15,1441 AH
PRAYERS(SHAHI MASJID)
Fajar: 4.38 am
Zohar: 12.16 pm
Asar: 4.43 pm
Maghrib: 6.39 pm
Isha: 7.55 pm
SUNSET TODAY 6.37 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.54 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 8.44 PM
MOONSET TODAY 8.48 AM

COUNTER POINT

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

IN BRIEF
Gold jumps by ₹1,365/10 gms
New Delhi: Gold prices jumped ₹1,365 to ₹56,181 per 10 gram in the national capital on Wednesday following a strong rally in global market, according to HDFC Securities. Silver also depicted a strong trend as it zoomed ₹5,972 to ₹72,726 per kg from ₹66,754 per kg in the previous trade, it said. The precious yellow metal had closed at ₹54,816 per 10 gram in the previous trade. "Spot gold prices for 24 carat in Delhi rose by ₹1,365 with strong rally in international prices," HDFC Securities Senior Analyst Tapan Patel said.

New disease in China, 7 dead
Beijing: 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. Over 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, *Global Times* quoted media reports.



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Centre directs CBI probe in Sushant death



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Lebanese PM seeks aid after blast, toll 100+

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Fearing Covid, Nadal says no to US Open



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PM Modi lays first brick of Ram Rajya

Says Lord Ram is a thread that binds India; temple to be ready by 2024

YOJNA GUSAI | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

At 12:44 pm on Wednesday, or “*Abhijit muhurut*” which many believe is the same auspicious time of the day when Lord Ram was born, Prime Minister Narendra Modi performed the *bhumi puja* and laid a 40-kg silver brick at the *garbha griha* (sanctum sanctorum) of the soon-be-to-constructed “bhavya Ram Mandir” in Ayodhya.

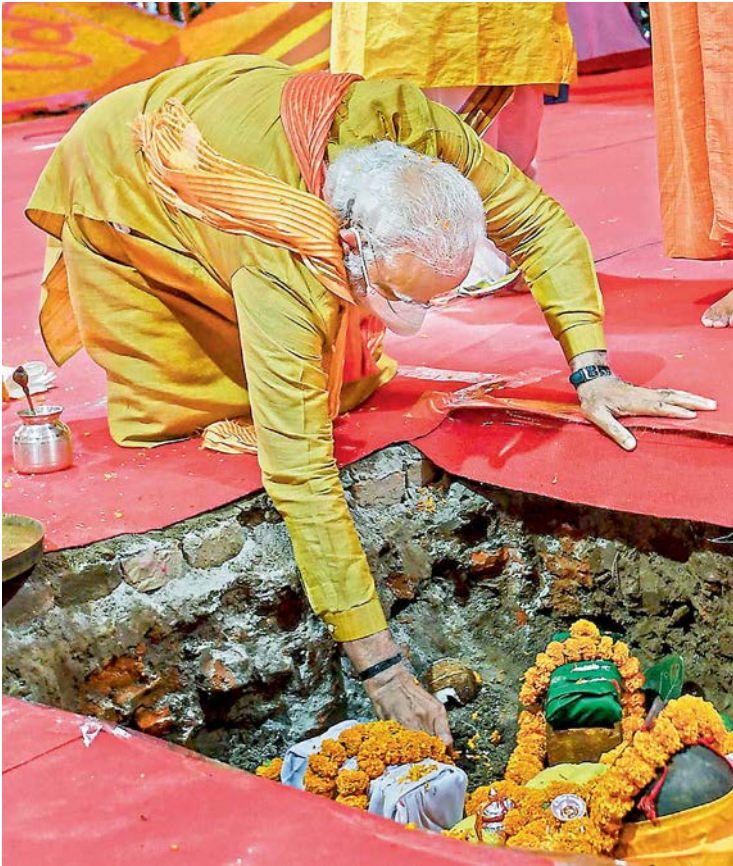
Calling it a “historic and proud day for India,” he said that Lord Ram is a thread that binds India and its unity in diversity. “Ram sabke hain, sab main Ram main,” said the Prime Minister, wearing a golden coloured kurta and *dhotti*, and added that the temple will be a “modern symbol of India’s tradition, its eternal faith, national spirit and collective pledge of crores of people.”

Nine shilas (bricks), including the main *koornashila*, were placed at the *grabha griha* out of the 100 picked for the *bhumi puja* ceremony out of the 2.75 lakh shilas sent by devotees during the Ram Janambhumi movement.

The construction of the Ram Mandir will be completed ahead of the next general elections in 2024.

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat, who was also invited for the ceremony, asserted that the wait of centuries has ended and added that it is a joyous occasion as it is a culmination of a pledge taken almost three decades ago and because Mr Modi was performing the ceremony.

The construction of the Ram Mandir on the land where the Babri Masjid stood til 1992 is a hugely emotive and polarising issue. The “bhumi puja”



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

ONE MUST never forget that when humanity believed in him, it developed, when it strayed it walked on the destructive path... through mutual affection and brotherhood we need to build the temple

NARENDRA MODI, PM

ceremony on Wednesday coincided with the first anniversary of abrogation of the contentious Article 370 by the Modi government, another core issue of the Sangh Parivar.

Rahul identifies Ram with love, compassion, 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 Purushottam 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. — PTI

Desam’s 48-hour ultimatum on 3C turns damp squib

MD ILYAS | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 5

The 48-hour ultimatum given by opposition TD to the YSRC government to dissolving the Assembly and seek fresh elections on three capitals ended on Wednesday turned out to be a damp squib as Chandrababu Naidu did not announce any future course of action as he threatened. A lot of hype was created by opposition party leaders, cadres, followers and supporters about resignation of all TD legislators including Naidu in support of Amaravati for the past two days.

Addressing a press meet through online after the deadline on Wednesday evening, Mr Naidu demanded that YSRC government announce that Amaravati would remain state capital.

He said that if the government did not accept his demand, they would resign from the membership of Assembly. He slammed Mr Jagan for not ‘accepting’ the TD’s chal-

lenge to seek a fresh mandate on his proposed three capitals.

Mr Naidu appealed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to intervene and solve the Amaravati capital issue in the same way he resolved the vexatious Ayodhya imbroglio. “The ruling YSRC leaders ran away from our challenge like cowards. This Chief Minister says he comes from a family that stands by its word and never breaks promises. Now, his actions show his government has no credibility. The CM has no authority to change state capital as per his whims and fancies,” Mr Naidu declared.

The government should respect the MoU signed with 29,000 Amaravati farmers, who gave away 33,000 acres of their ancestral lands for constructing capital for 5 crore people.

On the occasion, Mr Naidu showed several videos of the CM, his ministers and MLAs making clear promises to voters that they would not change the capital during electioneering

SPB, minister test positive for Covid

BALU PULIPAKA and PATHRI RAJASEKHAR | DC
HYDERABAD, NELLORE, AUG. 5

Famous playback singer S.P. Balasubramanyam and AP minister Balineni Srinivasa Reddy on Wednesday announced that they had tested positive for Covid-19.

Balasubramanyam said he had got himself admitted to a hospital. In a brief video posted on his Facebook page, the singer said he was fine and chose not to be at home to keep the rest of his family safe.

He said he got himself admitted to get some rest and not get disturbed. “Thanks for the concern.

Lots of people called I could not attend to so many calls. I have come here mostly to take rest, so there won’t be disturbance and take the medication,” he said.

Saying he was being taken good care of and was in good hands, Balasubramanyam said “I am in good health. Nobody has to worry about this one so please don’t bother to call me to find out how I am.”

He said he had been having a little discomfort including some congestion in the chest, “which for singer is nonsense. And fever on and off.”

■ **Page 3: Singer has mild case of Covid: Docs**

STATE COVID TALLY RISES BY 10,128, TOLL HITS 1,681 AFTER 77 MORE DIE

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 5

Andhra Pradesh has once again witnessed the highest single day spike by registering 10,128 new Covid-19 cases, raising the overall tally to 10,128, apart from 77 deaths in the last 24 hours, scaling up the death toll to 1,681.

The state health department issued Covid-19 bulletin here on Wednesday

reporting that out of 60,576 new samples tested, 10,128 individuals were found infected. With this, the state has so far carried out tests on 22,35,646 people.

Of them, 1,86,461 tested positive while 1,04,354 patients were discharged. 80,426 patients are under treatment in the state.

■ **Page 3: West Godavari cases still remain high**

TS reserves 80% jobs for locals

S.A. ISHAQUI | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 5

The Telangana Cabinet on Wednesday reserved a maximum of 80 per cent of jobs to local semi-skilled workers and 60 per cent in the skilled category in new industries coming up in the state. This was part of a policy to serve a majority of job opportunities to locals in the industries set up in the state.

These proposals were contained in the draft policy tabled by IT and industries minister K.T. Rama Rao, which was discussed and approved at a Cabinet meeting chaired by the

Chief Minister. The industries department was following a recent directive from the Chief Minister to encourage jobs for locals people as many new industries were coming up in the state after the introduction of the TS-iPASS industrial policy. The Cabinet felt that the IT industry in Hyderabad should not be located at one point but be spread all over the city. The Cabinet approved a GriD policy — Growth in Dispersion — to give sops to IT firms set up base in areas other than Hyderabad West Zone of Hyderabad.

BURIAL | SECRETS

Relatives pay up to dispose bodies due to stigma over rituals

Ambulance drivers fleece Covid patients

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN | DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 5

A section of people in several parts of AP, including private ambulance drivers, are demanding huge amounts of money for transporting as also disposing off dead bodies of Coronavirus patients.

In a recent case at Vulavapadu in Prakasam district, a software engineer, K. Singaiah, hailing from Challapalem of Santahanuthalapadu mandal, died in a road accident at Pernamitta. His body was shifted to Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Medical Sci-

ence at Ongole for conducting post-mortem. As all deaths related to medico-legal cases are now being subject to Covid-19 test before post-mortem, doctors conducted the test on Singaiah’s body and found it to be Covid-19 positive.

His family members found severe resistance in performing his last rites at the village. At this stage, a private ambulance driver demanded ₹25,000 to transport the body and perform the last rites. The deal was settled for ₹17,000. The driver took the body to a forest in Chagallu, doused it with petrol, put some used tyres over the body and

burnt it. However, the body did not burn fully. Local villagers alerted the police claiming it to be a case of murder. However, upon inquiry, the body was found to be that of the software engineer.

In another case at Anantapur, government hospital staff and middlemen allegedly demanded ₹60,000 to perform last rites of a person who succumbed to Covid. Several such instances of people collecting huge amounts to dispose Covid-infected bodies are going unnoticed in various parts of the state.

Earlier, it was state health authorities who per-

formed the last rites while strictly complying with Covid-19 protocol.

However, given the steep rise in deaths, authorities are handing over dead bodies to family members and advising them to follow requisite procedures while performing the last rites. Private ambulance drivers are entering the scene at this stage, as the bodies have to be transported to their native places.

They have formed syndicates and demanding a fixed price for transport and burial or cremation of Covid-19 infected bodies. As these drivers also obstruct outside vehicles or ambu-

lances from entering hospitals, family members have no option but bargain for a lesser price to transport dead bodies to their native places and also perform last rites at some other place in case there is resistance from local villagers.

A government forensic doctor said, “Health officials and local police must fix a fair price, so that hapless family members are not exploited”.

A solution could be state government expeditiously setting up electric/gas-based crematoria in districts for ensuring proper disposal of Covid-19 infected bodies.

SHORT TAKES

STONE LAID FOR INDIA'S BIGGEST FLOATING PLANT

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 5

NTPC Simhadri on Wednesday performed "bhoomi puja" for India's biggest floating solar project as part of its endeavor towards a sustainable future fueled by renewable energy sources. The foundation stone marked the start of civil works of the Central Monitoring and Control Station near the Raw Water Reservoir for the 25 MW floating solar project. The contract for this power plant has been awarded to BHEL.

The project is estimated to cost ₹110 crore. This is another addition to the rapidly growing renewable energy portfolio of the organization.

First of its floating solar project which generates 2 MW power has been installed on Mudasarlova reservoir.

ROOP KUMAR RIDICULES TD DEMAND TO RESIGN

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, AUG. 5

YSR Congress senior leader P. Roop Kumar Yadav dared TD legislators to quit and seek re-election if they believed that public sentiment was against the three capitals proposal.

Speaking to media persons here on Wednesday, he reminded that TRS legislators had put down their papers at least two times and were re-elected again to showcase the mood among the people in favour of a separate Telangana.

He lambasted TD district unit president and MLC Beeda Ravichandra for demanding Dr Anilkumar Yadav to resign while demanding to know why he did not resign from his MLC post in favour of Amaravati as capital like B. Tech Ravi in Kadapa.

Yadav said that TD had lost all 10 Assembly and two parliament seats in the 2019 general elections under the leadership of Beeda Ravichandra.

Stating that Anilkumar had defeated a formidable candidate like P. Narayana, Roop Kumar said Ravichandra was no match for Dr Anilkumar.

JAGAN IGNORING SEEMA WATER NEEDS: TD

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, AUG. 5

TD state executive secretary Govardhan Reddy and district general secretary Hari Prasad said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy did not care if the Telangana government was desperately generating power through Srisaillam project water.

Addressing a press conference here on Wednesday, they said that the Telangana government was not counting on the Krishna Board's order to stop power generation in Srisaillam, which would affect drinking and irrigation water requirements in Rayalaseema as well as Nellore and Prakasam districts.

They said that Jagan Mohan Reddy was behaving as if there was no injustice to Rayalaseema. They demanded opening of Pothireddypadu head regulator gates and ensuring water supply to Rayalaseema. They wanted to know about the understanding between the Chief Ministers of the two States.

The two leaders also demanded filling up Somasila reservoir with 75 tmcft and Kandaluru reservoir with 45 tmcft of water. Former director of AP State Fisheries Corporation Yatagiri Ramprasad was also present.

VISITORS' ENTRY AT ENDOWMENTS OFFICE BANNED

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 5

The entry of visitors has been banned at the office of the commissioner of endowments located in Gollapudi here in view of prevailing Covid pandemic. Endowments commissioner P. Arjun Rao said here on Wednesday that due to the pandemic most of the staff members were allowed to work from home and those working in the office were told not to meet visitors.

Mr Aruna Rao said that if there were issues requiring his urgent attention or that of special chief secretary (Revenue, Endowments) J.S.V. Prasad, people should send an email to endow-commr@gov.in. They can also drop petitions in the drop box or hand over at the counter.

Govt under pressure to start classes at schools, colleges

Don't dare and open schools, teachers' unions warn government

V.K.L. GAYATRI | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 5

The state government is under pressure about starting of classes at schools and colleges from September 5, despite there being the risk of Covid-19 increasing at the time. While Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has announced that educational institutions will reopen from the Teachers' Day on September 5, various unions of teachers are apprehensive about the move.

"As of now, 160 countries in the world have not commenced any academic ses-

sions due to outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. Why is this government insistent on starting classes? On behalf of Andhra Pradesh Teachers Federation (APTF), we would like to suggest that education be stalled till a vaccine is discovered," APTF general secretary P. Panduranga Varaprasad told *Deccan Chronicle*.

Representatives of teachers say if anything happens, the entire world will point fingers at Andhra Pradesh. They maintain that it will be very difficult for them to ensure social distancing between students. "Controlling stu-

● Representatives of teachers say if anything happens, the entire world will point fingers at AP. They maintain that it will be very difficult for them to ensure social distancing

dents with regard to social distancing will be a big task. As teachers, we should focus on educating students. But in the present scenario, if the schools reopen, we will have to concentrate on maintaining distance between students. This will, in fact, be impossible in government-run schools, where majori-

ty of students study," points out Sitha Mahalakshmi, the head-mistress of a high school in the state.

APTF, the major union of teachers, has already informed the government that it is not the correct time to start schools on September 5. It will mean arrival of hundreds of students in each school from Class 1 to Class 10. With Covid-19 spreading rapidly, even parents are worried about sending their children to schools. The teachers' federations have suggested to the government that it review its decision on reopening the

schools. As per one of its pre-election assurances, the YSR Congress government has spent over ₹3,500 crore on improving civic facilities at government schools under the Nadu Nedu programme. Certain teachers allege that the government is very keen to reopen schools from September 5 to showcase this.

"The deadly Coronavirus is spreading rapidly. It is not a question of teachers being safe, it is about the welfare of thousands of students and their parents," a senior teacher remarked.

Muslims express solidarity for temple construction



Showing support to Wednesday's foundation stone laying for Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, former TTD Trust Board chairman and Tirupati MLA Bhumana Karunakar Reddy performs special puja at his house in Tirupati on Wednesday. Ironically, a few local Muslims participated in the ceremony, expressing their solidarity for the construction of the temple.

— AVINASH P. SUBRAMANYAM

Registrar general withdraws her comments against govt

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 5

The AP High Court has directed its registrar general, B.S. Bhanumathi, to file an affidavit on withdrawal of her comments made against the state government on several issues and posted the next hearing in the case to Friday.

Ms Bhanumathi deposed before a two-judge division bench, comprising justice M. Satyanarayana Murthy and justice K. Lalitha, here on Wednesday. She informed the court that she was withdrawing her comments stating that the state government was not accepting a series of judgements issued against it on various issues by the High Court. She also informed the court that she was withdrawing her comments made on retired judge and AP higher education regulatory and monitoring commission chairman, justice Vanga Eeswaralaiah, and also para 13 in the counter affidavit filed pertaining to contempt of court proceedings against assembly speaker, Tammineni Sitaram.

In response to it, the court issued an order directing Bhanumathi to

● Bhanumathi's counsel informed the court that they were withdrawing para 13 in their counter affidavit

file a counter affidavit. It may be mentioned that BC, SC, ST and minority student federation member, J. Lakshminarasiah, filed a petition in the High Court complaining that it failed to implement guidelines issued by the centre to curb the spread of Covid-19 and appealed to the court to declare the High Court premises as a red zone. Bhanumathi filed a preliminary counter affidavit raising objection over admissibility of such a petition for hearing in the court.

Advocate general, A. Sriram, raised objections to comments filed in Bhanumathi's counter affidavit and said it was improper on her part to mention that once the Supreme Court collegium had recommended the name of a judge to be appointed chief justice of the High Court, the incumbent chief justice of the High Court or acting chief justice of the High Court was not supposed to take any major decisions while delivering judgments in cases.

Bringing to the court's notice that the Supreme

Court collegium had recommended the name of a judge to the post of chief justice of the High Court and later recommended the name of another judge for the same post, Sriram added that the High Court had delivered judgements on several key issues during the period between the recommendations. He asked the court whether such judgements were wrong given the remarks made by Bhanumathi.

The state government appointed the chairman of APHERMC in consultation with High Court chief justice following norms, said Sriram, and made it clear that the state government had every right to approach the Supreme Court on judgements delivered by the High Court.

Referring to Bhanumathi's statement in the affidavit that contempt of court proceedings were pending against the assembly speaker, Sriram informed the court that no such proceedings were taken up so far.

Later, Bhanumathi's counsel, N. Aswani Kumar, informed the court that they were withdrawing para 13 in their counter affidavit for which the court directed him to file a counter affidavit.

SPECIAL PUJAS PERFORMED FOR LORD RAM IN AP

DC CORRESPONDENTS
KURNOOL/KADAPA, AUG. 5

Special pujas were performed at various places in Kurnool district for a smooth and early completion of the Ram Temple.

Praying for a smooth ground-breaking ceremony for the temple in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama, BJP and VHP leaders and activists performed pujas at several temples in Kurnool, Adoni and Nandyal towns.

BJP State Vice-President Kapil Eswaraiah told *Deccan Chronicle* that special anointing ceremonies were held on behalf of the Hindu Front to complete the construction of the Ram Temple at the Abhaya Anjaneyar Temple in Kurnool.

Yaga pujas were conducted at Srisaillam, under the leadership of Srisailla Jagadguru Shri Chenna Siddha Rama Panditaradhy and special anointing ceremonies were conducted for Rama.

BJP leader Byreddy Rajasekhar Reddy said that the Ram temple at Ayodhya would usher in new vistas and dharma would be the guiding principle.

Schools collect high fee against govt orders

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 5

Managements of private schools in the port city are continuing to collect high fee despite the July 31 order of School Education Control and Supervisory Commission not to do so.

Though the government has not released the academic schedule for 2020-21, fees are being collected on grounds of conducting online classes.

Visakhapatnam district educational officer B. Lingeswara Reddy, speaking to *Deccan Chronicle*, said: "We have warned a large number of private school managements against collecting higher amounts in the name of special fee and online fee. As per government orders, they can collect only tuition fee, that too only in instalments".

Majority of private schools in Visakhapatnam have already collected the fee

and also completed one month of online classes.

As per government's guidelines, online classes can be conducted for Classes 1 to 8 twice a day for a maximum time of 35-40 minutes each.

For Classes 9 and 10, there can be four sessions per day up to a maximum time of 40 minutes each. On matters of fee, government has directed officers of the Education Department to conduct meetings between parents, teachers and management representatives in their respective areas.

However, complaints of charging high fee abound. There are also complaints that some of the managements have not paid salaries to their teachers. For these two purposes, the government has set up helpline numbers 9493861412 and 9493861417 for lodging complaints on all working days from 10 am to 5 pm, DEO Lingeswara Reddy stated.

Red Cross sets up plasma cell

DC CORRESPONDENT
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 5

Indian Red Cross Society opened a plasma donor cell at Guntur on Wednesday. Guntur collector I. Samuel Anand Kumar inaugurated the cell and YSR Congress MLA Kilari Rosaiah, who had recovered from Coronavirus recently, donated his plasma on the occasion.

Collector Anand Kumar said that the plasma therapy would help chronic Covid patients recover quickly. He appealed to those who recovered from the virus to donate plasma.

He said that they formed an ethics and clinical expert committee headed

by Guntur Medical College principal S. Babulal to identify those who are fit to donate plasma. The committee can also permit private blood banks to collect plasma. He warned that collecting plasma without permission was illegal.

The collector said that interested people should register their names with Indian Red Cross Society to donate plasma. Those between 18 and 50 years of age can donate their blood if they don't have any health problems, within 60 days of recovering from Covid.

MLA Rosaiah, after donating his plasma, said that Covid conquerors could turn saviours of chronic Covid patients.

IIM-V to launch round-2 of WSP

DC CORRESPONDENT
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 5

After the success of the first edition of the Women Startup Program (WSP), aimed at helping aspiring women entrepreneurs transform their ideas into business ventures, the Indian Institute of Management

Visakhapatnam (IIM-V), through its specialised entity, IIM Visakhapatnam Foundation for Incubation, Entrepreneurial Learning and Development, is all set to launch second edition, in collaboration with IIMB Innovations (IIMBI), a constituent of the famed Nadathur S. Raghavan Center for Entrepreneurial Learning (NSRCEL) of IIM Bangalore, the globally acknowledged leader in management education.

The WSB is an access to the incubation facilities and knowledge resources, mentoring and handholding, networking opportunities with industry and investors, and platforms to showcase technologies, products, and services to solution seekers are all

theirs for the asking.

IIM-V, in partnership with IIMBI, is inviting applications for the Women Startup Program-2020.

Women entrepreneurs working in any sector are eligible to apply. The applicant should be a resident of India and above 18 years of age. She should be the founder or the co-founder of an idea or a venture.

The program commences with a five-week training through Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC), offered on the SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-learning for Young Aspiring Minds) platform of the ministry of education, government of India.

Earlier, IIM Visakhapatnam had incubated and mentored 25 women entrepreneurs under the previous edition of WSP.

For more info one can visit <https://iimvic.iimv.ac.in/programs/wsp-2020>.

For application one can go to: <https://bit.ly/2E5eFYw> or www.iimv.ac.in

GROWTH | MONITORING

Aims to create a knowledge bank for strategic planning

State signs MoU with ISB to drive growth

HARLEEN MINOCHA | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 5

The Andhra Pradesh government's AP Economic Development Board on Wednesday entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Indian School of Business, Hyderabad, to work with economic departments with the broader objective of economic recovery and growth monitoring post Covid-19, and laying spe-

cial focus on economic development and job creation.

The areas of collaboration include high frequency high resolution indicators for monitoring economic recovery, a project on Visakhapatnam as an engine of growth, focus on food processing sector in Rayalaseema, improving e-governance and data analytics, unshackling informal sector growth and reshaping skilling pro-

grammes.

Under the MoU a think tank will be nurtured by setting up the GoAP-ISB Policy Lab, modelled on the lines of that in the UK Cabinet. The public policy laboratory will drive evidence-based policy decisions.

It aims to create a knowledge bank for strategic planning, policy analysis, data analytics and action-research. Authorities say that it

would enable greater synergistic functioning of departments and work towards the objective of economic monitoring, recovery, and development.

Andhra Pradesh minister for industries Mekapati Goutham Reddy said, "We intend to generate data using randomized control trials (RCTs) and gather evidence to measure the impact of our policies and drive our policy decisions based on strong research

evidence. This is truly cutting edge in the field of economics and public policy."

He said the MoU would help the state in economic recovery, attract investments and create jobs. J.V.N. Subramanyam, chief executive officer, Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board, and Prof. Rajendra Srivastava, Dean, ISB, exchanged the MoU in the presence of the minister in a virtual event.

SHORT TAKES

Infant found in bushes

Vizianagaram: Residents of Rellivalasa village, Pusapatirega mandal woke up to a shock when they heard the cries of a new-born baby from the bushes close to the village pond on Wednesday morning. An elderly man who went to the pond for a wash found the baby and immediately alerted the villagers. Some women accompanied the men who rushed to the spot to clear the bushes and retrieve the baby. One of the women, who herself gave birth to a baby recently, took the baby in her arms and fed her. Child rights commission member, Kesali Appa Rao, reached the spot and informed the police and members of the childline. The baby was given first aid in a local hospital and from there shifted to the Gosha Hospital for better treatment.

3 kids drown in tank

Vizianagaram: Three children drowned in Narava village tank in Gantyada mandal of Vizianagaram district on Wednesday. The deceased have been identified as G. Manoj, 9, R. Sekhar, 10, and R. Vasu, 8. Police said Manoj had come to visit his relatives in Narava. On Wednesday, after the relatives had gone to work on their farm, Manoj and the two kids of his relatives went to the local water tank for playing. Unfortunately, one after another, they got trapped in the quicksand of the tank and drowned. Police retrieved their bodies and sent them to government hospital in Vizianagaram for post-mortem.

SINGER HAS MILD CASE OF COVID: DOCS

From page 1

“Otherwise I didn’t have any problem. But I didn’t want to take it easy so I went to the hospital to get checked,” singer S.P. Balasubramanyam said.

The doctors, he said, informed he had a very very mild case of Coronavirus infection, adding: “In two days I will get discharged and I will be home.”

Srinivasa Reddy, AP’s energy and forests minister, allayed fears over his health on Wednesday. He said that he was under home quarantine at his residence in Hyderabad following mild fever during the last five days. He said he got admitted in a hospital in Hyderabad as per the advice of doctors after he tested positive for Coronavirus on Tuesday.

In a message to his followers and YSRC leaders, the minister said he was healthy and would return home shortly. Doctors treating the minister said that he was doing fine and there are no complications.

Sources close to the minister said that Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy spoke to Srinivasa Reddy and also checked about his condition from doctors attending to him.

SRIVARI KALYANAM GOES ONLINE

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUPATI, AUG. 5

In a first of its kind, on popular demand of devotees, the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams has decided to organise the Nitya Srivari Kalyanotsavam, performed every day at Tirumala temple, on a virtual platform from Friday onwards. Following the success of conducting the Varalakshmi Vratam on a virtual platform, TTD is now bringing the famed Arjitha Seva – Kalyanotsavam, which was suspended since March due to Covid-19 restrictions, online. TTD will release the tickets online for the period August 7-31 from 11.00 am today and devotees can buy them by visiting the TTD website - www.tirupatibalaji.ap.gov.in.

The devotees, who wish to take part in the Kalyanotsavam on a virtual platform, need to submit their details, as per TTD terms and conditions, and pay ₹1,000 through the eligible payment gateway and obtain a receipt. They will be sent Srivari Prasadam like uttarium, blouse, etc through the India post free of cost.

The Kalyanotsavam will be performed in Ekantham and it will be telecasted live every day at 12 noon on Sri Venkateswara Bhakthi Channel (SVBC) for the benefit of devotees.

Long wait



Women wait at the IGMC gallery with their kids to get Covid test done in Vijayawada on Wednesday. — C. NARAYANA RAO

Poor response to job interviews of medics

Govt wanted 228 MBBS docs but only 130 candidates came

PATHRI RAJASEKHAR |
DC
NELLORE, AUG. 5

Response has been poor to state government’s announcement of walk-in interviews for recruiting doctors, nurses and sanitation staff in Covid hospitals.

Government wanted to recruit doctors with MBBS degree, besides specialists and qualified nurses on a temporary basis. But just a few have turned up for walk-in interviews.

According to official sources, applications had been invited for 228 MBBS doctors. Only 130 candidates turned up, leaving 98 posts vacant. Of the 126 posts pertain-

● **OF THE** 126 posts pertaining to specialists (general medicine, anaesthesia and pulmonology), only five posts have been filled

● **THERE** is poor patronage for posts of staff nurses too. Only 190 qualified nurses turned up for the 367 available posts

● **THE ONLY** solace has been in recruitment of 100 posts of technicians in anaesthesia for the the total 110 posts

ing to specialists (general medicine, anaesthesia and pulmonology), only five posts have been filled. There is poor patronage for posts of staff nurses too. Only 190 qualified nurses turned up for the 367 available posts. The situation is no different with respect to trainee, whose 67 posts have been filled against the 464 available.

The only solace for authorities has been fill-

ing up of 100 of the 110 posts of technicians in anaesthesia and other departments. With regard to nursing orderlies, 200 of the 314 posts have been filled. Surprisingly, the 314 posts of sanitary staff have no takers.

The dismal response has been attributed to fear of Coronavirus, apart from the fact that the job is available for only six months. A senior official

said they will have to look for alternative options to recruit the workforce to man Covid hospitals, particular because the number of Covid-19 cases has been rising.

Surprisingly 60-odd graduates in BDS came for interviews held at Nellore, though no such posts have been announced. Prompted by this, authorities have been pondering over hiring BDS graduates for a lesser salary and use their services during emergencies. The government had fixed Rs. 70,000 for General Duty Medical Officers (MBBS). There are plans to offer ₹50,000 to BDS candidates, provided the government approves the proposal.

COVID: SERO SURVEILLANCE IN 4 DISTRICTS

SAMPAT G. SAMRITAN |
DC
VIJAYAWADA, AUG. 5

The state government is planning to take up ‘sero surveillance’ to find out how many people have been infected with Covid-19 and how many of them developed immunity to the virus as a pilot project initially in four districts-Krishna, East Godavari, Nellore and Anantapur, beginning from Aug. 5.

In Each district, 3,750 persons will be identified for carrying out such surveillance and out of them, 3,000 persons will be selected from general population while 750 from high risk people like health care professionals, police personnel and others who get exposed to the virus by dint of their work.

Among the targeted number of persons for surveillance, 70% of them will be from rural areas while the remaining 30% will be from urban areas. Persons will also be subjected to surveillance from both containment and non-containment zones.

AP State Covid-19 coordinator and professor in medicine Dr K. Rambabu said, “We will be taking up sero surveillance to find out number of persons infected with the Coronavirus and also their levels of immunity by developing antibodies in their bodies from Thursday onwards in the select four districts. We are expecting the surveillance to be completed in 10 days. All DM&HOs and other health officials have been informed about how to go about the surveillance and based on surveillance results, the state government will come up with a new strategy to handle Covid-19 pandemic in the state.”

GOVT PREPARED TO COMBAT CORONA: NANI

DC CORRESPONDENT
KADAPA, AUG. 5

The state health and family welfare minister Alla Kalikrishna Srinivas (Nani) said that the government was fully prepared for Corona prevention and asked the people also to follow the instructions and cooperate with the government in checking the spread of Coronavirus.

He said a review was held with the medical authorities on the steps to be taken to control Corona cases in the district on Wednesday.

Speaking to the media, he said they were doing 4,500 Corona tests daily in the district. “Only 17 per cent of people in the district are Corona positive. AP is conducting the highest number of tests in the country,” he claimed.

The minister said that thousands of crores was being spent to check the spread of Covid-19. He said that more than 1,000 medical personnel will be deployed in Kadapa district.

He directed the authorities to take immediate action against the mess operators who are not providing proper food at the Covid centres across the state.

He asked the doctors and medical personnel to co-operate and extend services for the prevention of Crona in the CM district. He urged patients who recovered from Covid to donate plasma and save lives.

Notices issued to pvt. hospitals

DC CORRESPONDENT
KURNOOL AUG. 5

Private hospitals doing a brisk business fleecing the covid patients to the hilt by charging exorbitant fee to treat the Covid patients in Kurnool city.

Amelia hospital , a private nursing home come under scanner as It was allegedly collecting Rs 1 lakh per day from patients to treat Covid.

Recently a patient from Uyyalawada was admitted at Amelia Hospital to get treatment. He was charged ₹7 lakh for one week treatment. As the patient died on fifth day, the relatives of the patient said that they were denied dead body until the entire ₹7 lakh was paid.

They ran from pillar-to-post to convince the hospital authorities to deliver the dead body to perform last rites as they had already paid ₹5 lakh. Reluctantly the hospital authorities delivered the dead body, but on the condi-

tion that they will not give the medical bills.

Stung by the inhuman attitude of the hospital authorities , they pulled another ₹50,000 and paid the money to the Amelia Hospital authorities to get the case details including medical bills and got delivery of the dead body.

When contacted, the DM&HO Mr. Ramadan Giddaiah said that he was issuing a notice to the errant Amelia Hospital.

He said he also got several complaints from patients about exorbitant rates being charged levied by the hospital . He said that Vijaya Diagnostics was also charging astronomical prices for testing the nasal swabs to determine if there was Coronavirus in patients.

He said that a drive is being taken up in that city to rein in the hospitals in the private sectors as they have unleashed a reign of financial terror among the patients.

Tirupati to be shut for 9 more days

AVINASH P.
SUBRAMANYAM | DC
TIRUPATI, AUG. 5

To contain the spread of novel Coronavirus, the temple city of Tirupati will remain as a containment zone for another nine days until August 14th, however, with some relaxation for businesses, Municipal Commissioner P.S. Girisha announced here on Wednesday.

Speaking to mediapersons, the municipal commissioner said that the business hours for both essentials and non-essential services as well as public and vehicles movement will be allowed only from 7 am to 2 pm. He said, the imposition of lockdown from July 20 to August 5 has helped in bringing down the surge of Covid-19 cases in the city.

“The percentage of positive cases among the tested persons has come down to 15 per cent from 20 per cent after the imposition of lockdown in the city. Now, we

are confident that extending another lockdown in the city would help the civic administration to further bring down positive cases,” he maintained.

The commissioner made it clear that yoga and gym centres will not be permitted to open in the city limits till August 14.

“Though the nationwide relaxation under ‘Lockdown 3.0’ allows gyms and yoga centres to resume, they will not be permitted to reopen. The decision was taken to curb the surge in positive cases,” he clarified.

Mr Girisha, however, said that the civic body will consider the reopening of the parks for public and a decision would be taken in a couple of days.

Meanwhile, to a query, the commissioner said that the testing capacity has now been enhanced to 2,000-2,500 tests in the city after extending the testing facilities in Urban health centres, mobile testing centres, SVIMS and SVRR.

HIT-AND-RUN: VEHICLE TRACED IN 24 HRS

DC CORRESPONDENT
NELLORE, AUG. 5

Atmakur police, led by the Circle Inspector Y.V. Somaiah and SI G. Santosh Kumar Reddy, seized a car involved in a hit and run case within 24 hours after the incident and they are on the lookout for the driver.

According to Mr Somaiah, an unidentified vehicle knocked down and killed one Doraswamy Reddy, 35, of AS Peta when he was travelling

on a scooter on Nellore – Mumbai national highway at Narampeta in Atmakur mandal late on Monday evening.

With the help of eyewitness info and CCTV footage at the toll gate near Atmakur, the CI and SI could trace the vehicle at CS Puram village near Pamuru in Prakasam district.

They have shifted the vehicle to the Police Station in Atmakur and launched a man hunt for the driver, who is at large.

AGRICULTURE JOINT DIRECTOR ARRESTED

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, AUG. 5

Anantapur agriculture joint director Habib Bhasha was arrested by CCS police in connection with sexual harassment on women employees at his office here on Wednesday.

The official was detained at his residence in AP Housing Board Colony and shifted to Disha police station.

Police booked case against the agriculture joint director Habib Bhasha under Nirbhaya Act following complaint by women employees from his office

and launched a manhunt for the official since Monday.

Meanwhile, the agriculture department higher authorities issued transfer orders for Habib Bhasha by posting him to Chittoor district on Tuesday and also posted Ramakrishna, project director DWMA as the joint director of agriculture, Anantapur.

CCS DSP E. Srinivasulu and his team f are investigating the case and recorded statements from the women employees. Police arrested Habib Bhasha before he was in plan to join at Chittoor.

Super speciality hospital to be opened today

DC CORRESPONDENT
ANANTAPUR, AUG. 5

The super speciality hospital which has been pending for the last seven years is complete and the authorities decided to inaugurate it on Thursday. They also decided to shift the Covid-19 patients to this hospital.

The hospital works have been pending following differences between the ruling and opposition parties for the last six years.

This hospital for Rayalaseema region was sanctioned as part of sops sanctioned during bifurcation of the state and was actually scheduled to start by December, 2017.

The Centre had also allotted another hospital to

Anantapur through the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India. The work was named as upgradation of Government Medical College under ‘Pradhan Manthri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSY)’ under phase-III. The hospital was planned to provide all top medical facilities for the patients from Anantapur and surrounding districts because the area is distant from state capital Amaravati and people will not be reach there fast.

The hospital was sanctioned with an estimated of ₹75.27 crore in 2016 and work started on June 6, 2016 in the vacant land of cancer hospital.

WEST GODAVARI CASES STILL REMAIN HIGH

From page 1

Among the new infections, East Godavari was worst hit with 1,544 cases, followed by 1,368 in Kur-nool, 1,260 in Anantapur, 842 in Visakhapatnam, 730 in Guntur, 729 in Kadapa, 677 in Chittoor, 665 in Vizianagaram, 582 in West Godavari, 537 in Nellore, 440 in Krishna, 405 in Srikakulam and 349 in Prakasam.

Rate of recovery is good in East Godavari, with 14,424 people having been discharged from hospitals after recovery, followed by 12,667 in Anantapur, 12,146 in Kurnool, 11,374 in Guntur, 10,713 in West Godavari, 7,452 in Chittoor, 6,078 in Vizag, 5,532 in Krishna, 5,101 in Kadapa, 5,104 in Srikakulam, 4,312 in Nellore, 3,983 in Prakasam and 2,573 in Vizianagaram.

Guntur recorded the highest number of 16 deaths, followed by 12 in Vizag, 10 in Srikakulam, eight in Chittoor, seven in East Godavari, five in Krishna, four in Nellore, three each in Kurnool, Vizianagaram and West Godavari, and two each in Anantapur, Kadapa and Prakasam.

COVID | SPREAD

As malaria is prevalent in Agency, the tribals are worried

Adivasis demand total shutdown

K.M.P. PATNAIK | DC
VISAKHAPATNAM, AUG. 5

Adivasi farmers, students, traders and rights activists have demanded the authorities for a complete shut-down of Vizag Agency for a week or ten days to prevent the possible community spread of the virus in their villages.

The Vizag Agency, comprising eleven Mandals with over 6.5 lakh popula-

tion, has reported over 250 Covid-19 cases and two virus deaths so far.

Compared to the cities and rural pockets, Vizag Agency (hilly terrains) is a critical area as it is a core area where Malaria is prevalent till September and now Covid-19 pandemic added to their woes.

“Under these circumstances, if the people in the region further exposed to the dreaded

Covid-19 with inadequate medical facilities, things will turn out to be a disaster,” said Rama Rao Dora, District Convener of the Adivasi JAC.

He demanded closure of all the commercial establishments, liquor outlets and government offices (except medical and health) for a week or ten days besides asking the authorities to impose stricter restrictions on the

people entering the Vizag Agency from other places. The local vendors, traders and shopkeepers in Vizag Agency agreed to restrict their business from 6 am to 8 am (medical stores exempted) from August 5 to August 13 but the support from the authorities for a complete lockdown of Vizag Agency was needed.

Rama Rao Dora added, Additional DM&HO Dr Leela Prasad said that two

persons (Hukumpeta and Paderu Mandals) in Vizag Agency died of Covid-19 and they were tested positive after their death.

As of now, 83 people recovered from the virus and discharged from the hospitals.

At present, Vizag Agency has two Covid Care Centres (Paderu and Araku Valley) to treat the virus infected people, he added.

HOW THE STRUGGLE UNFOLDED

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

1993: Centre on April 3 passes 'Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act' for the acquisition of land in the disputed site

1994: SC on Oct 24 in the Ismail Faruqui case says mosque was not integral to Islam

2002: HC begins hearing on determining who owns the disputed site.

2010: On Sept 30 Allahabad High Court in a 2:1 majority rules that the disputed site should be split between Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and Ram Lalla.

2011: Supreme Court stays the HC ruling.

2016: Subramanian Swamy files a petition in Supreme Court seeking construction of Ram Temple at the disputed site.

2017: SC suggests 'out of court' settlement to disputing parties. SC constitutes a three-judge bench to hear pleas challenging the 1994 verdict of the Allahabad HC. UP Shia Central Waqf Board tells SC that a mosque could be built in a Muslim-dominated area at a reasonable distance from the disputed site

2018: Supreme court starts hearing all civil appeals on the dispute

2019: SC once again refers the case for mediation but it yields no result.

August 6, 2019: After mediation fails, SC begins day-to-day hearing of the case which goes on for 40 days.

October 16, 2019: Hearing concludes, SC reserves judgment.

November 9, 2019: SC delivers its verdicts in favour of Hindus and rules that the land belongs to Ram Lalla. It also orders the union government to provide an alternative five-acre land to the Sunni Waqf Board for a mosque.

December 12, 2019: Supreme Court rejects a batch of review petitions on this from the Muslim side

August 5, 2020: PM Modi performs bhumi puja and lays foundation stone at Ayodhya for initiation of Ram Temple construction.

SHORT TAKES

SUSHANT'S CASE TRANSFERRED TO CBI BY CENTRE

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 5

In a major setback to Maharashtra government, the probe in connection with the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput is all set to be taken over by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) following an uncalled for tussle between the Mumbai police and the Bihar police who filed a criminal case against actor Rhea Chakraborty.

The Maharashtra government has repeatedly ruled out transferring the investigation to the CBI saying that Mumbai police are doing proper investigation.

The decision to transfer the probe to CBI was taken by the Centre after Bihar Chief Minister recommended that the case filed by the Patna police be transferred to the central investigation agency. The apex court has also sought for the responses from the Maharashtra and Bihar governments along with Rajput's father on Chakraborty's plea seeking transfer of case investigation to Mumbai police. The replies have been asked to be filed within three days. This comes as a massive embarrassment for the Mumbai police.

The Enforcement Directorate, meanwhile, recorded statement of Rajput's manager Samuel Miranda on Wednesday. The officials are probing the alleged laundering of funds that were supposed to have been transferred fraudulently from the dead actor's account, as per his father.

OPPN LEADERS MEET FOILED BY J&K POLICE

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 5

The authorities stalled the mainstream Opposition leaders' move to convene a meet to deliberate on the prevailing situation and formalise a joint strategy on issues, a year after Jammu and Kashmir was stripped of its special status and split up into two Union Territories.

The meeting was scheduled to take place at the residence of former chief minister Farooq Abdullah along Srinagar's high-security Gupkar Road at all entry and exit points.

The J&K police with the help of CRPF sealed the area by laying concertina wire and erecting steel barricades. A spokesman of the NC said, "Evidently, the government has abandoned any pretence of being democratic."

CPIM leader Muhammad Yousuf Tarigami who was among the invitees said, "It would have been after months of incarceration and denial of liberty that we could sit somewhere to open our hearts."

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

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

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

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

Kokje said, "There is enthusiasm among Hindus across the world over the foundation stone laying for the Ram temple in Ayodhya."

"The smooth manner in which the work of temple construction has been going on after the formation of Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra by the central government is amazing."

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

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

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

The VHP, which spearheaded the Ram temple movement, started carving stones for the structure at its workshop in Ayodhya in 1990. Kokje said post-Independence, the plan to build a Ram temple in Ayodhya lagged behind due to "vote bank" politics of the Congress. He said, "Now Congress leaders are trying to show themselves as friendly towards Hindus in the changed atmosphere in the country."

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

His comments, in a series of tweets, came on a day when Prime Minister performed the groundbreaking ceremony for



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

the Lord Ram temple at Ayodhya. "Dear Hindus, Most important lesson is that control of State power by Hindus is absolutely essential for sustenance of Dharma."

"When we didn't control State, we lost our temple. When we regained, we rebuilt. The 282 (seats) in 2014 and 303 (seats) in 2019 to Sri Narendra Modi made today possible", Surya, who is also the party's BJP youth Wing state general secretary, tweeted.

He also said that the survival of India depends on the survival of Sanatana

Dharma. "The Sanatana Dharma, that is nationalism," Sri Aurobindo had said in his Uttarapara speech.

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

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust chief Mahant Nritya Gopal Das said that the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya is a work of public welfare and it is like building the nation and the world.

"The feeling, wish and desire of the Hindu people is that a divine temple is constructed at the earliest and we are able to see it with our eyes," he said.

Gopal Das said the construction of the temple is like building the nation and building the world. It is a work of public welfare, he said.

"It is a matter of happiness. I was often asked when will the temple be built," he said, adding he now says, "*Ek oar Modi aur ek oar Yogi, ab nahi to kab banega* (On one side Modi and on the other Yogi, if not now then when?)." - PTI

Architect of the movement missed

ANIMESH SINGH | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

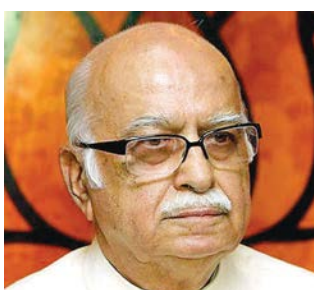
He was the architect of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement who catapulted the BJP from two Lok Sabha seats in 1984 to 120 in the 1991 general election.

But on Wednesday, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi presided over the Ram Mandir *bhoomi puja* in Ayodhya, Lal Krishna Advani possibly watched the ceremony on television as the party and organisers tried hard to "explain" his absence at the event.

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

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

The snub to Mr Advani, while others like Kalyan Singh, Uma Bharti and Vinay Katiyar were invited, signals the complete isolation of the veteran leader, who simply issued a statement expressing his "happiness" at the event.



IUML not happy with PriGa's views

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 5

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

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

"We have expressed our displeasure over Ms Gandhi's statement as we

believe it was out of place," said IUML national leader and Lok Sabha MP P.K. Kunhalikutty.

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

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

Subsequently Congress general secretary K. C. Venugopal had called Kunhalikutty to allay their apprehensions.

Meanwhile, Congress MP from Kerala T.N. Prathapan urged Sonia Gandhi to take a firm stand against the Sangh Parivar agenda on Ram Temple.

C'garh to develop Lord Ram's maternal home

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
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.

Chhattisgarh chief minister Bhupesh Baghel has announced a plan to develop Chandkhuri, around 30 km from Raipur, as a pilgrim centre 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 converted into a grand temple without disturbing its original form," a twitter post by Mr Baghel said.

The eighth century Mata Kaushalya temple in Chandkhuri is the only shrine of its kind in the country.

The temple stands in the middle of a lake in the village. A bridge, christened Hamuman 'pul' (bridge), connects the temple to the mainland.

An idol of Mata Kaushalya holding Ram adorns the sanctum sanctorum of the shrine.

The shrine will be developed as a grand temple and infrastructure in the area will be developed to make it a pilgrim Centre, the Chhattisgarh government declared.

The project will cost around ₹15 crore.

The Bhupesh government is mulling to develop a religious circuit, christened Ram Gaman Path, by connecting the temple to other places in the state

where Lord Ram, his wife Sita, and his brother Laxman spent a significant time of their exile period.

It is estimated to cost ₹137 crore to develop the religious circuit. Groundbreaking ceremony for the project was performed on December 22 last year. "The project to develop Mata Kaushalya temple will take off by August end," the state government said.

In fact, the development of Mata Kaushalya temple and Ram Gaman Path was one of the key poll promises made by the ruling Congress ahead of 2018 assembly elections in the state.

"The Ayodhya temple will boost religious tourism in Chandkhuri," Nachiketa Mishra, a tourist operator based in Raipur said.

Clashes in WB over celebrations

Kolkata, Aug. 5: BJP workers clashed with police in some parts of West Bengal on Wednesday over celebrating the groundbreaking 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

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



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 known, but initial reports suggested a fire had detonated a warehouse at the port. Abbas Ibrahim, chief of Lebanese General Security, said it might have been caused by highly explosive material that was confiscated from a ship some time ago and stored at the port.

— AP

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 re-erected — 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.



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

— 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 epi-

demic, 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

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

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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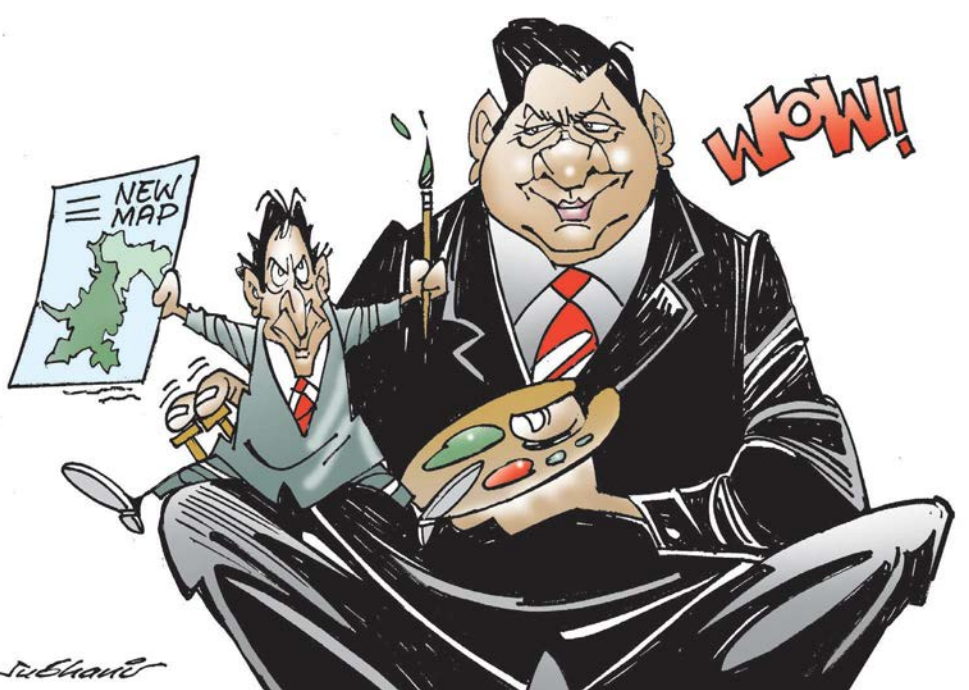
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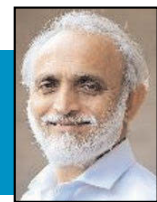
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Subhani



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



Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Jr

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ple, between state and religion.

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

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

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

VIRTUAL CLASSES

Due to this worst pandemic, the education system in India has shifted to the virtual world. As there is no proper access to internet, many poor students are not able to gain education due to financial constraints. As a result, they get into the depression resulting in a number of suicides. These classes also last for hours adversely affecting the students.

B.Prem Sai
Visakhapatnam

DSC ASPIRANTS

The AP government has revamped 15,000 schools and supplied kits to students on September 5 (Kits for students as schools re-open, DC, Aug. 5). The government is rejuvenating schools and students but not focusing on teacher and student ratio. There is scarcity of teachers from Day One. All BEd and SGT trained teachers are waiting for new DSC for this academic year.

D. Ravikumar
Yendada, Visakhapatnam

COVID TRAUMA

It is very sad that patients suspected to have Covid are approaching private hospitals demanding huge sums of money for treatment. Government hospitals are hardly accommodating patients when they approach them citing lack of vacant beds though the ruling party says several beds were arranged by spending ₹350 crore rupees per day. Every house needs to be visited and tests conducted.

P. Koormarao
Visakhapatnam

Email your letters to info@deccanmail.com, editor@deccanmail.com. You can also send them to Editor, Deccan Chronicle, 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad-500 003.

50 YEARS AGO IN DECCAN Chronicle

Plan schemes to be reviewed for more jobs

NEW DELHI, August 5

The Centre is reviewing the Fourth Plan schemes to create more jobs. This was stated by Mr D. Sanjivayya, labour minister, in the Lok Sabha. After a 40-minute question-and-answer debate, members blamed the government for a lopsided Plan in which industries were being reserved exclusively for small-scale sector to create jobs.

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

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

Visaka Industries posts 49% rise in Q1 net profit

Visaka Industries, the second-largest manufacturer of cement roofing sheets in the country, posted a 49 per cent rise in net profit at Rs 34.4 crore in the first quarter of financial year 2021 compared to yearago period's Rs 23.07 crore. The EBITD margins grew to a very healthy 21 per cent in Q1 compared to 14 per cent in the same period the previous year. The company attributed profits to tightening of costs and maximising sales.

Ajay Tyagi gets 18 months' extension at Sebi

Exchange Board of India



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.

ITR scrutiny reduced to 0.25% in AY 2018-19

Income tax returns picked up for scrutiny has reduced to 0.25 per cent of the total ITRs filed in assessment year (AY) 2018-19, from 0.55 per cent in AY 2017-18, the finance ministry said. The IT Dept is changing its role from enforcement to facilitating taxpayer services. In continuation of the same, the number of cases selected for scrutiny has reduced drastically over the years, the ministry said in a tweet.

Jyothy Labs Q1 net up 34% to ₹50 crore

FMCG firm Jyothy Labs reported 33.78 per cent rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 50.01 crore for the June quarter against Rs 37.38 crore in the year-ago quarter. Total income stood at Rs 436.93 crore, up 2.22 per cent. Jyothy Labs managing director M. R. Jyothy said: "Our team with flawless execution combined with our portfolio comprising daily use 'essential hygiene' has delivered positive sales growth."

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

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 5

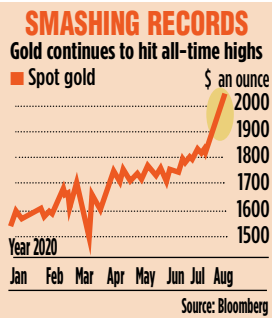
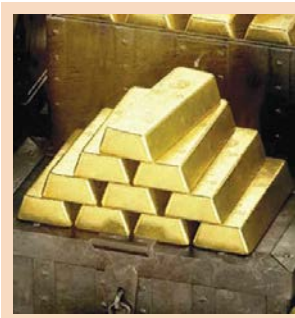
Gold in the international market breached the psychological level of \$2,000 per ounce as the dollar continued to weaken amidst a gloomy global economy.

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 investment for investors," said Prathamesh Mallya, 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 Sprout Inc., said in a report. "We see increased fiscal spending ahead, extremely accommodative monetary policy in place for years and a challenging economic recovery."

Maruti brings new S-Cross petrol SUV



MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 5

Maruti Suzuki, India's biggest carmaker, on Wednesday drove in the new S-Cross petrol SUV to boost sales in the fiercely competitive auto market.

Priced Rs 8.39 lakh at Delhi showroom, Maruti S-Cross will compete with the likes of the Renault Duster, Nissan Kicks, Kia Seltos and Hyundai Creta. The S-Cross is offered in four variants—Sigma, Delta, Zeta and Alpha manual costing Rs 8.39 lakh, Rs 9.60 lakh, Rs 9.95

Motown Buzz

lakh and Rs 11.15 lakh, respectively. The automatic Delta is priced Rs 10.83 lakh, Zeta Rs 11.18 lakh and Alpha Rs 12.39 lakh.

KTM DUKE 250 BS6 COMES AT ₹2.09 L

MICHAEL GONSALVES PUNE, AUG. 5

Bajaj Auto on Wednesday launched the BS6 model of KTM Duke 250 motorcycle priced at Rs 2.09 lakh at Delhi showroom. The KTM Duke 250 is a direct rival to the likes of Suzuki Gixxer 250 and the Husqvarna 250 Twins. With the latest update, the bike has turned costlier by around Rs 4,000. Select KTM dealerships have started booking with a down payment of Rs 5,000.



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 sharpest decline in RevPAR in Q2 2020, with a 93.9 percent 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.

Driven by the weak numbers of Q2, the hos-

pitality 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.

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.

Kuwait's \$112 bn pension fund has cash to burn

FIONA MACDONALD AUG. 5

Kuwait's \$112 billion pension fund plans to boost investments in private equity and infrastructure following an overhaul that left it sitting on too much cash.

A new management team was brought in during 2017 to transform the state-owned institution after a corruption scandal involving a previous manager. The fund has since exited more than \$20 billion in questionable deals in a "major clean-up" of its portfolio, according to Raed Al-Nisf, deputy general manager for investments and operations.

"The revamp is paying off. The Public Institution for Social Security, also known as PIFSS, had a record investment profit of \$7.3 billion in the three months through June, an almost fourfold increase from a year earlier.

The fund aims to have 12 to 17 per cent of its portfolio in real estate, followed by private equity at between 8 per cent and 13 per cent, and infrastruc-



ture at 3 to 10 per cent, he said, without detailing current holdings.

"This is a moving target, but it's a range we're normally in," Al-Nisf said. "We're long-term investors by definition, we don't have a need for cash on a yearly basis."

Cash accounts for about 11.5 per cent of its investments, which the fund aims to cut to 4 per cent over the next seven months, he said. At one stage the fund had a "catastrophic" 41 per cent of cash available for investments, Al-Nisf said.

It has a different mandate to the sovereign wealth fund because it handles pensioners' savings, Al-Nisf said. "We aim to have the best stocks and best-performing managers, it's not a political role," he said. "We follow opportunity."

—Bloomberg

It's a different Prime Day for Amazon this time

SARITHA RAI AUG. 5

Amazon.com Inc will kick off its first Prime Day since the coronavirus outbreak from Thursday in India, modifying almost everything about the retail bonanza to navigate the realities of a new era.

Prime Day will have the customary deep discounts, hundreds of exclusive products, new launches and cashback offers. But in a profound departure from the past, the global retailer will have a virtual operations room instead of a real one, with thousands of employees coordinating the sale from their homes, and stringent hygiene protocols for its armies of packers, sorters and deliverymen.

India is a test case for the e-commerce pioneer and founder Jeff Bezos, the

world's richest person. The US version of Prime Day has been postponed from its usual spot in July, with the new date yet to be announced. "After a lot of conversations, we decided to go ahead with Prime Day," said Akshay Sahi, head of Prime at Amazon India. "Life has to go on. Sellers have to get back on their feet." That Amazon is holding its 48-hour sale despite the pandemic underscores the intense competition in the country's online retail sector. The Seattle-based retailer is fighting giant rival Walmart Inc-owned Flipkart as well as the powerful Indian conglomerate Reliance Industries Ltd, whose Jio Platforms launched its grocery delivery service in 200 cities and is fast expanding into categories like electronics and apparel.



Flipkart has announced its own Big Savings Day, clashing with its rival's dates. The sales events have overlapped for years, vying for the attention of both shoppers and sellers listing on their platforms. This year's Amazon event will be devoid of the usual Bollywood dancing and the endless supply of Indian street foods, foot massages and costume parties. Instead, hundreds of employees will plan and coordinate the sale from home; their only respite, virtual mood-boosters like standup comedy and selfie

competitions. The critical element is safety preparation for workers, customers and deliverymen, said Sahi. In-person training has been suspended and new workers are being trained via apps. There will be no customary stand up meetings at the start of each shift. Instead, it will be white-board communication. Shift and break times have been staggered to more evenly to distribute attendance at cafeterias and communal areas. Markings on the floor will prevent loaders and

sorters from stepping too close to each other. The online retailer said it has made over a hundred such process changes in its buildings, stipulating new rules on face coverings and daily temperature checks.

Hand cleaning is mandated no less than eight times during a shift. Even the slightest sign of elevated temperature requires a worker to remain at home for three days. When a delivery person arrives at a customer's door, he is required to ring the door bell and then step several feet back. India's Prime Day schedule has skirted the inauspicious early September Shraadh fortnight when Hindus pay homage to their ancestors. The sale could not be scheduled later because of the onset of the festival season.

—Bloomberg

Service sector contracts for fifth straight month in July

BENGALURU, Aug. 5: India's dominant services industry, a key driver of economic growth, shrank for a fifth straight month in July as restraining measures to stop the spread of the coronavirus hurt business activity and led to record job cuts, a survey showed.

India has recorded the third highest number of coronavirus cases globally, behind only the United States and Brazil, with over 1.8 million confirmed infections and more than 38,000 deaths, according to a Reuters tally.

That has forced state and central governments to impose strict lockdown measures to curb the spread of the virus, keeping people at home and businesses closed, stifling demand and cementing fears of a deep recession.

The Nikkei/IHS Services Purchasing Managers' Index INPMIS=ECI increased to 34.2 in July from 33.7 in June, however, it was still well below the 50-mark separating growth from contraction.

July was the fifth straight month the index was sub-50, the longest such stretch since a 10-month run to April 2014.

"The coronavirus pandemic and subsequent introduction of lockdown measures continued to weigh heavily on the Indian service sector in July. Business activity and new orders dropped again, with the rates of decline remaining rapid overall," Lewis Cooper, an economist at IHS Markit, said in a release. "Panellists frequently reported temporary co-pany closures and weak demand as a result of the pandemic," IHS Markit said in the statement. —Reuters

SHORT TAKES

Cyclist Clarke passes away

Hyderabad: Richard Clarke, former international cyclist, national champion, coach and administrator, passed away in the City on Wednesday morning. He was 55 and left behind his wife and two sons.

Richard started his cycling career in 1979 as a junior under coach Mumtaz Ahmed and represented the State (then combined Andhra Pradesh) and Indian Railways at several National Cycling Championships. His pet events



Richard Clarke

were on track — Individual Pursuit and Time Trial. Richard was chief coach of the South Central Railway as well as Indian Railways and vice-president of Telangana Cycling Association. “On behalf of the Telangana Cycling Association, I express deep condolences to the bereaved family members,” TCA secretary K. Dattatraya said in a statement.

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 411 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. Set a target of 329 the same score they finished on to beat England at the 2011 World Cup the Irish laid the foundations with a 214-run stand between Stirling and captain Balbirnie in the final match of the Royal London series on Tuesday. Stirling was run out for 142 while Balbirnie holed out for 113 with 50 still required from 33 deliveries, but Kevin O'Brien — the hero of Bangalore — fittingly got them over the line from the penultimate ball. After being asked to bat first, England had stuttered to 44-3 but Eoin Morgan's 106 from 84 balls was the cornerstone of 328 all out in 49.5 overs.

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).

STEFAN NAMED CHAMP MARC'S REPLACEMENT

Paris: Reigning MotoGP world champion Marc Marquez will miss his second straight race after he was ruled out of Sunday's Czech Grand Prix following another operation on his fractured right arm, his team said Tuesday.

“After undergoing a second operation on his injured right arm, Marc Marquez and HRC have decided that the world champion will not ride in the Czech Republic in order for him to recover more,” Repsol Honda said in a statement.

The Spaniard underwent further surgery Monday in Barcelona on the arm he broke in the season opener in Spain on July 19. He missed the following race in Jerez despite initially being declared fit. Marquez will be replaced this weekend by German test rider Stefan Bradl. — AFP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOP OPERA

IPL franchises want procedures tweaked



In this photoshopped photo shared by Chennai Super Kings, captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni is seen leading his team out of the dugout donning Keffiyehs.

● **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.**

pressures of competitive sport do not make it any easier.

“We understand protocol and bubble strategy from the England versus West Indies series included activities such as golf, visits to specific restaurants and visits to some pre-determined places. Can IPL consider this with advice of medical professionals?” the note read.

“Can the IPL also consid-

er allowing food orders from designated delivery outlets using contactless deliveries to the hotel,” the note added.

Amidst other things, they also want early on-boarding of players coming in from the Caribbean Premier League and the bilateral series between England and Australia which concludes on September 16.

— 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.

“So, I would say coming out from all those tests you need to be clear with your head on what you are going to do on the field because at the end of the day when you are playing a sport, you need to enjoy the game,” the vice-captain of Chennai Super Kings further added on the testing protocol in place.

— PTI

ENGLISH | FOOTBALL

FULHAM EARN SPOT IN TOP TIER LEAGUE

London, Aug. 5: Fulham secured an instant return to the Premier League after one season away by beating west London rival Brentford 2-1 in the Championship playoff final.

Joe Bryan scored twice in extra time at Wembley to give Fulham the win in what is widely called the most lucrative game in football.

Fulham will receive at least 135 million pounds (\$176 million) over three years after securing promotion, a year after being relegated from the world's richest football league.

Fulham owner Shahid Khan failed with a bid to buy Wembley a year ago, and his team had to celebrate in an empty stadium on Tuesday due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

Bryan broke the deadlock after catching goalkeeper David Raya by surprise with a free kick from nearly 35 yards in the 105th minute as both teams expected a cross into the box.

The goalkeeper comes ridiculously far off his line, Bryan said.

The left back netted again in the 117th minute after playing a one-two with Aleksandar Mitrovic to clinch promotion in Scott Parker's first full season in charge of Fulham.

Brentford, which boasted a 59-goal strike force in Said Benrahma, Bryan Mbeumo and Ollie Watkins, was kept in check in the most important match of the season.

— AP

● **Joe Bryan scored twice in extra time at Wembley to help Fulham make it back to the Premier League after being relegated last season.**

Champ Nadal no 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 said, “sitting out the tournament scheduled to begin August 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.

Nadal's plan to skip the U.S. Open came shortly after the Madrid Open, scheduled for September, was canceled because of the pandemic.

“We know that the reduced tennis calendar is barbaric this year after four months stopped with no play. I understand and thank for the efforts they are putting in to make it happen.” Nadal wrote on Twitter.

— AP

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 from Germany before a training session.

Last year, Nagal reached his maiden Grand Slam at the US Open after winning all his qualifying round matches to set up a dream encounter with the legendary Roger Federer.

In the much-anticipated clash, the 22-year old from Jhajjar took a set off Federer before going down 6-4, 1-6, 2-6, 4-6.

— PTI



Camila Giorgi of Italy returns to Rebecca Peterson during their singles match at the Palermo Ladies Open on Wednesday. Giorgi won 7-5, 6-4.

Juvan upsets top seed at Palermo

Palermo (Italy), Aug. 5: Slovenian qualifier Kaja Juvan upset second-seeded Marketa Vondrousova of the Czech Republic 1-6, 7-5, 6-4 in the first round of the Palermo Ladies Open, the first official tennis tournament since March.

Vondrousova won the first set in just 29 minutes and then came from 4-0 down in the second to take a 5-4 lead and was just two points away from winning the match before Juvan recovered.

Juvan took another 4-0 lead in the third set and secured the match when Vondrousova hit a forehand into the net. It was her first career win against a top-20 ranked opponent.

A limited number of fans were allowed into the 1,500-seat stadium court and had to follow social distancing measures.

There are also strict rules for the players, such as handling their own towels,

not shaking hands with their opponents, and no autographs or photos with fans.

Juvan was spoken to by the umpire after throwing items including her visor and wristbands to the crowd.

Juvan will next face Camila Giorgi, who became the fourth Italian to progress to the second round after beating Rebecca Peterson 7-5, 6-4.

Sara Errani, Elisabetta Cocciaretto and Jasmine Paolini won their first-round matches on Monday.

Top-seeded Petra Martic eased into the second round with a 6-0, 6-3 win over Alison Van Uytvanck. The Croatian will face Russian qualifier Ludmilla Samsonova, who beat Kirsten Flipkens 6-4, 6-2.

But fifth-seeded Elise Mertens lost 4-6, 1-6 to qualifier Aliaksandra Sasnovich.

— AP

MAVERICKS TRIUMPH

Orlando, Aug. 5: Luka Doncic delivered a monster triple-double performance as the Dallas Mavericks bagged their first win of the NBA's delayed season in an overtime thriller against the Sacramento Kings on Tuesday.

The 21-year-old Slovenian scored 34 points, with 20 rebounds and 12 assists as the Mavericks completed a 114-110 victory to get their campaign back on track in the Western Conference.

Tim Hardaway Jr. and Kristaps Porzingis also came up big with 22 points apiece as the Mavericks overturned an 11-point deficit to seal victory at the HP Field House on the NBA's Orlando campus.

— AFP

Sindhu hits gym on Day 1

MOSES KONDETY | DC
HYDERABAD, AUG. 5

Confined to home for four months, P. V. Sindhu grabbed the first opportunity to get a full training session on Wednesday when gyms in the City opened up post the Covid-forced lockdown.

The badminton world champion sweated it out at the Suchitra Academy in the morning as she went through the grind. “The focus was on strengthening muscles but overall it was a full body exercise which felt really good, a satisfying session,” a pumped-up Sindhu told this newspaper.

She's understandably delighted. “I am happy that we all are back on track again. All these months I've been training at home but then we don't have the kind of equipment a full-fledged gym has. Also, my trainer is here to guide me, which is an advantage,” she said.

How did her muscles respond? “Not too bad,” she beams. “They were already fine as I had been training regularly at



Sindhu shows the paintings that she made during the lockdown in Hyderabad on Wednesday. — R. PAVAN

home all this while — my trainer used to give me exercise schedules to work on. I'd say it was not too hard for me to get back,” she explains.

Now, she wants to get back on the court. “I wish the on-court training also starts soon and we'd be playing again but we don't know how it's going to be. It's not an easy task — we don't know how many people are going to be there, how we will practice... we have to wait

and see,” the 25-year-old said.

Once that happens, the tall title-holder has plans to “learn new strokes” to add to her armoury.

Thanks to apprehension around the world, Sindhu is unsure about the tournaments to target. “As of now many of them have been cancelled... the next available event is in October but much depends on the quarantine norms in different countries. If we're quar-

antined for two weeks on arrival, we can't go out or practice, which negates the trip. In that context we just don't know where we are right now or what tournament we're gonna play,” she's bemused.

Amidst the Covid gloom Sindhu has managed to paint bright pictures, literally. “I have always liked painting. I used to draw in my diary but never painted on the canvas. In this lockdown I thought I will try that since I had not much to do... it came out well, so I carried on and did about 10 of them,” she chuckles.

Among scenes of her imagination is a tree with a couple of people around, just the buildings, the moon on a dark night and water. “I really like nature. It gives me a very good vibe,” Sindhu says.

Are her brush strokes as fast as her shots on court? “It doesn't take me long,” she laughs. “I complete one painting in a day... need two hours at best to apply the finishing touches,” she deftly adds, much like the drop shot that gently ends a point.