

ANALYSIS 7

MILES TO
GO IN J&K

MONEY 8

FARM SECTOR TO CUSHION VIRUS
IMPACT ON ECONOMY: FINMIN

SPORTS 11

AGARWAL MUST HAVE LEARNT
A LOT FROM NZ TOUR

VIJAYAWADA, WEDNESDAY AUGUST 5, 2020; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

NANI URGES
PEOPLE TO
DONATE PLASMA
TO SAVE LIVES

Page 9

INDIA'S TESTING RATE LOWER THAN
OTHERS, SAYS WHO CHIEF SCIENTIST

Noting that lockdown was a temporary measure to contain the spread of coronavirus, a senior official of the World Health Organisation on Tuesday said India has a low testing rate when compared to some of the countries that are successfully trying to curb it. The Chief Scientist of WHO, Soumya Swaminathan, in an interactive session through video conference said, as of now about 28 vaccine candidates for COVID-19 are under clinical trial, of which five are entering Phase-II and over 150 candidates are in pre-clinical trials across the globe. "India as a whole, the testing rates are much lower compared to some of the countries, who have done well like Germany, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan. Even the United States is testing a huge number of people," she said.

INDIAN-ORIGIN WOMAN RESEARCHER,
43, KILLED WHILE JOGGING IN US

A 43-year-old Indian-origin woman researcher in the US was killed while she was about jogging and police have initiated a homicide investigation, according to media reports. According to the police, Sarmistha Sen, who was based in Plano city in the state of Texas, was randomly attacked and killed while jogging on August 1 near the Chisholm Trail Park. Her body was found lying in the creek-area near Legacy Drive and Marchman Way by a passer-by, according to a report in the WFAA.com. Sen, a mother of two sons, was a pharmacist and researcher who studied molecular biology and worked with cancer patients, the fox4news reported. According to the Dallasnews.com, a person of interest in the case has been arrested on a burglary charge.

JOHNSON AND JOHNSON NASAL SPRAY
APPROVED FOR THOSE AT RISK OF SUICIDE

Johnson & Johnson's Spravato has been approved as the first antidepressant for actively suicidal people, as doctors are becoming increasingly concerned about Covid-19's effect on the mental health of Americans. The Food and Drug Administration approval means the quick-acting nasal spray will be available to people with suicidal thoughts and a plan to put them into action, said Michelle Kramer, vice president of J&J's U.S. neuroscience medical-affairs unit. That constitutes 11% to 12% of as many as 17 million Americans who have major depressive disorder. Spravato has been used by about 6,000 people for treatment-resistant depression since its approval in March 2019, Kramer said.

NEW ORDER ON H-1B VISA HIRING,
BLOW TO INDIAN PROFESSIONALS

In a huge blow to Indian IT professionals eyeing the US job market, President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order preventing federal agencies from contracting or subcontracting foreign workers — mainly those on H-1B visas — from hiring. The move came over a month after the Trump administration in June 23 suspended the H-1B visas along with other types of foreign work visas until the end of 2020 to protect American workers in a crucial election year. The new restrictions took effect from June 24. The H1B visa, most sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.

BJP's two-pronged
strategy for Telugu
States

2

HC orders stay on Jagan's
plans of 3 capitals for AP

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh High Court on Tuesday ordered status quo on two new laws that enable the establishment of three new capitals for the state.

A division bench comprising justices Rakesh Kumar, AV Seshu Sai and M Satyanarayana Murthy passed the order during the hearing of a batch of interim applications filed by the Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti seeking a stay and posted the case to August 14 for further hearing.

Ordering the status quo, the court, considered the government plea and gave ten days time to file its counter.

On July 31 the state govern-



ment notified the A P Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act, 2020, and the AP Capital Region Development Authority (Repeal) Act, 2020, immediately after Governor Biswabhusan Harichandan

gave his assent to the related bills passed by the Assembly.

The law gives shape to the YSR Congress government's plan of having three capitals for the state — Executive in Visakhapatnam, Legislative in Amaravati and Judicial capital in Kurnool.

3

Cheating complaint
against YSRCP
MLA by TDP

TDP activists have filed a complaint with the Mangalagiri police, stating that YSRCP MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy has cheated the people living in his Assembly constituency over the continuation of Amaravati as Capital of the State. TDP Tadepalli town president Jangala Sambasiva Rao and other leaders of Mangalagiri and Tadepalli, in their complaint, claimed that Ramakrishna Reddy had promised in the run-up to the 2019 elections that Amaravati would be continued as the only Capital of the State.

3

Sushant's
death case to be
handed over to
CBI: Nitish

5

Panels to check compliance of
safety protocols in industries

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The Andhra Pradesh government on Tuesday ordered a special drive for full-scale inspection of all industrial units in the state to ensure compliance of safety protocols, in the backdrop of a spate of accidents that claimed tens of lives in recent days, particularly in the port city of Visakhapatnam.

A decision to this effect was taken at a review meeting chaired by Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy at his Camp Office here on Tuesday.

A seven-member committee headed by Joint Collector (Welfare) has been constituted in each district to carry out the special drive within 90 days, a senior official said.

The panel would take up the work with the involvement of officials from Factories Department, AP Pollution Control Board,



Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy chairs the review meeting on safety in industrial units across the state, at his camp office in Tadepalli on Tuesday.

Boilers Department, State Disaster Response and Fire Services Department and Director of Electrical Safety and Chief Electrical Inspector (Energy Department).

"In foreign countries there will be a penalty if Compliance Report is not submitted but we do not have that system. We should adopt such policies and those responsible for industrial mishaps should be sternly

dealt with. Any death in industrial sector should be compensated with an ex gratia of Rs 50,00,000. The Industrial Safety Policy should include such specifications," the Chief Minister suggested.

It was also decided to bring out an Industrial Atlas showing the location of industries and industrial parks in the State along with their categorisation.

3

Explosion
at another
pharma unit
in Vizag

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

There seems to be no end to the streak of industrial mishap in Vizag, with another explosion taking place at Vijayasri Pharma unit at Atchutapuram SEZ in the district on Tuesday.

Fortunately, the workers had a narrow escape and only two motorbikes parked on the premises were gutted.

The staff at the SEZ managed to douse the flames and brought the situation under control. The exact reason for the mishap is yet to be ascertained, but pressure in a boiler could have triggered the accident.

3

Ayodhya ceremony today;
core BJP promise fulfilled

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

For the BJP which was once forced to keep the "contentious" Ram temple issue aside to woo allies, the beginning of construction of a grand temple in Ayodhya is an ideological victory over its rivals with even many opposition leaders welcoming the development.

Incidentally, the ground-breaking ceremony by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the temple's construction, in the presence of leading lights of Hindutva movement including RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, will be conducted on Wednesday which coincides with the first anniversary of the annulment of Article 370, another key ideological plank for



the saffron party. It is only fitting, political watchers say, that Prime Minister Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will be the main political

presence at the ground-breaking event, as both are known for their uncompromising commitment to the Hindutva cause.

3

32 from Telugu States
qualify in UPSC examNAMRATA SRIVASTAVA
■ HYDERABAD

A total of 829 candidates, including 32 from Telugu States, have cleared the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Examination this year, paving the way for them to be selected for various posts of IAS, IPS, IRS, IFS etc.

The results of the Civil Service Examination, among the toughest in the country, were announced on Tuesday.

Over three lakh aspirants across the country had appeared for the preliminary Civil Services Examination held in June 2019. Based on the results of the written part in September and the interviews for personality tests held during February-August, a total of 829 candidates qualified in the examinations.

or the first time, 78 candi-



Katta Ravi Teja

dates cleared UPSC under the newly introduced Economic Weaker Sections quota. In all, 11,845 candidates had qualified for the Mains held in various state capitals from September 20 to 29, 2019.

Pedditi Dhatri Reddy, with an all India rank of 46, topped from Telangana, followed by Katta Ravi Teja (77) and Manda Makarandu (110).

3

AP reports
9,747 new
cases, 67
deaths

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Andhra Pradesh's Covid-19 tally mounted to 1,76,333 on Tuesday as 9,747 cases were added as districts like East Godavari, Anantapur and Kurnool continued to report peak load of infections.

The state also registered 67 coronavirus casualties while another 6,953 patients got cured in the last 24 hours, a government bulletin said.

The infection positivity rate climbed further up to 8.11 per cent after 21,75,070 sample tests were completed, at the rate of 40,732 per million population. In all 95,625 coronavirus patients had recovered and 1,604 died so far, leaving 79,104 active cases in the state, the bulletin said.

3

Man to hang for rape, murder
of 7-year-old girl in 2019

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

A special court for Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) cases on Tuesday awarded the death sentence to a man who raped and murdered a seven-year-old girl in Andhra Pradesh in 2019.

A special court in Vijayawada convicted Pentaiah of raping and killing the girl. The court had delivered the

verdict after taking the accounts of 35 witnesses in the case. Even Pentaiah's wife deposed against her husband in the court.

Pentaiah raped the girl in Gollapudi village of Krishna district in Andhra Pradesh and faced charges under Sections 302, 201, 376 of the POCSO act.

While the child's father expressed happiness over the verdict, the prosecution said

that the verdict was delayed for three months due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The scientific approach to the investigation by Vijayawada city police supported by DNA analysis created a strong and fool-proof case for prosecution.

The investigation was completed and chargesheet filed swiftly in line with Disha initiatives.

3

LG Polymers top officials get bail in gas leak case

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Nearly a month after the arrest of top officials of LG Polymers, the AP High Court on Tuesday granted bail to 12 people including the firm's CEO Sunke Jeyong, director DS Kim, additional director Mohan Rao and eight other officials.

The police had booked cases

against the 12 top officials under Sections 278, 284, 285, 304, 337 and 338. Subsequently, they were taken into custody on July 7 for the gas leak that occurred in the early hours of May 7 from the plant operated by LG Polymers at Venkatapuram village outside Visakhapatnam.

At least 14 people died and

hundreds hospitalised.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy subsequently set up a high-power committee to probe the incident, and announced Rs 1 crore compensation to the kin of the deceased.

On June 1, the NGT had ordered the South Korean company to deposit Rs 50 crore.

The Supreme Court had put on hold, for 10 days, the disbursement of Rs 50 crore compensation by LG Polymers for the Vizag gas leak incident, as directed by the National Green Tribunal.

The high-power committee had submitted a 350-page report to Jagan nailing the LG Polymers for human negligence and security lapses.

Will Ganta's migration boost YSRCP base in Vizag?

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

TDP Vizag North MLA and State former HRD minister Ganta Srinivasa Rao has kept political observers guessing over his expected migration to the ruling YSRCP.

He, if sources are to be believed, is very likely to join the ruling party between August 9 and 16 at Tadepalli.

Ganta is said to have influenced the high command of the YSRCP using his networks of friends.

However, only time will tell if his entry will be boon or bane for Jagan government.

The former minister is known for winning elections from different constituencies every time he contests and has never played a losing card in politics. His entry may strengthen the base of the YSRCP in Vizag where it lost in most of the constituencies to TDP.

Contesting from different constituencies and his strong organisational skills, coupled



with the instinct to correctly read the minds of the voters

may help YSRCP improve the party's tally and also when the civic body elections are held. Having its own mayor and corporators in the executive capital will be a huge advantage for the party.

Nevertheless, as many YSRCP leaders, including V Vijayasai Reddy and M Srinivasa Rao, being critical of Ganta, his entry may trigger infighting in the YSRCP, and ultimately affect party unity.

Vijayasai Reddy has been highly critical of Ganta

Srinivasa Rao and often chided him in the social media branding him corrupt to the core.

In fact, the high profile Srinivasa Rao made several attempts to join the party before the elections but all these efforts were spiced by Vijayasai Reddy.

Ganta, who was in the shipping logistics business, was initiated into politics by former minister Ch Ayyanna Patrudu, who is now his arch enemy.

3

Balladeer Vangapandu
passes away aged 77

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Well known balladeer Vangapandu Prasada Rao passed away in the wee hours of Tuesday in Parvathi puram Pendha bondhappalli of Vizianagaram following a prolonged illness. He established Jana Natya Mandali in 1972 and was awarded Kalaratna Purashkar in 2017.



Vangapandu, known for multiple talents of composing, singing and dancing, inspired people through his folk songs. Prominent people, including Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy, MP V Vijayasai Reddy and balladeer Gaddar con-doled the death of Vangapandu.

3

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:

Shravana & Shukla Paksha

Panchangam

Tithi : Dwitaya: 10:49 pm

Nakshatram: Dhanishtha: 09:30 am

Time to Avoid: (Bad time to start any important work)

Rahukalam: 12:21 pm — 01:57 pm

Yamagandam: 07:35 am — 09:11 am

Varjyam: 05:14 pm — 06:58 pm

Gulika: 10:46 am — 12:21 pm

Good Time: (to start any important work)

Amritakalam: 03:34 am — 05:17 am

Abhijit Muhurtham: NIL

VIJAYAWADA
WEATHER

Forecast: Cloudy

Temp: 32/26

Humidity: 82%

Sunrise: 05:56 am

Sunset: 06:47 pm

Current Weather Conditions

Updated august 4, 2020 5:00 PM

It's been a long-cherished dream of the BJP of a foothold in undivided Andhra Pradesh, which took a backseat when the party decided to focus on capturing power at the Centre first. Naturally, its plans to build the party organisation at the village level fell victim to political compulsions.

Time and again, the BJP had to redraw its approach to its political goals strategically in both AP and Telangana, especially after bifurcation.

The political situation in Telangana is considered entirely different from that of AP's. Considerable presence of Muslim minorities in Telangana enables the BJP to reach the Hindu masses in rural belts. Not that such politics is new; the party had been using this tactic even in undivided AP.

Religious polarisation in Telangana region has been the guiding force behind the

BJP's two-pronged strategy for Telugu States



PIN POINT

BJP, right from its earlier avatar of Jana Sangh.

Historically, the right wing had some presence in Telangana region even five decades ago, with the Jana Sangh winning Assembly seats.

Three decades ago, the BJP shot into the limelight by aligning with NT Rama Rao's Telugu Desam Party under the supervision of M. Venkaiah Naidu). The BJP backed NTR in his fight to get reinstated as the Chief Minister after the infamous coup.

This cemented a bond between the two parties, and the BJP gained politically. In the 1984 General Election, the BJP had an impressive win in Hanamakonda seat with the support of TDP. Its nominee C.Janga Reddy defeated the then Union minister PV

The BJP needs the YSRCP more; after all, it is still six seats short of a majority in the Rajya Sabha and Jagan can provide some of the numbers. This basically means that the BJP would prefer putting its expansion plans in AP on hold, for the moment

Narasimha Rao. This was one of the only two seats won by the party that year, leading to BJP patriarch LK Advani famously saying that aP had contributed 'half of the party's strength' at the national level. Having tasted defeat in 1989 though it contested as an ally of the TDP, the BJP decided to move forward on its own then. The move paid off, and it wrested the Secunderabad LS seat on its own in the mid-term poll in 1991.

The 1998 mid-term polls

saw the BJP winning four LS seats. The 1999 elections saw the TDP, under N Chandrababu Naidu, approaching the BJP for an alliance and the pact paid off for both — the BJP won an unprecedented seven LS seats in undivided AP and the TDP 29.

The Vajpayee-led NDA government rode to power and the BJP found a good friend in Chandrababu Naidu. This again put its plans to expand its organisational footprint in



M D RATNA KUMAR
Senior Journalist

undivided AP on hold.

It was this friendship that influenced the BJP to put its resolution favouring bifurcation on the back burner.

The BJP top brass too felt that power at the Centre was more important than bifurcation of AP. In fact

Chandrababu Naidu warned the BJP not to take up the issue of bifurcation if it wanted the support of his 29 MPs.

Following this, the BJP left out the bifurcation issue from NDA agenda while continuing it in the party's agenda.

When the Congress gradually started favouring separate Telangana, the BJP followed, and soon enough, the two major political players at the national level competed with each other in favouring T-issue.

This was a radical departure from the strategy drawn by Venkaiah Naidu for expansion of the party in undivided AP. Venkaiah Naidu himself revealed this plan during the 1985 Assembly elections saying: "We would play the role of real opposition in the Assembly this time. By 1990 elections, BJP would emerge as

main opposition, and by 1995, we will be in a position to take the reins of power in AP".

However, circumstances at the national level forced Venkaiah Naidu to ally with the TDP and is said to have been the main reason for the lack of growth of the party in the undivided state.

It appears that the BJP has realised this fact and its leaders have draw separate plans to get the desired results in the two Telugu States.

The BJP firmly believes that any chance of success in Telangana depends on how well it polarises the people on religious lines.

For this, it has trained its guns at the AIMIM, believing that a majority of the Hindu voters would back anyone that takes on the "Muslim" party.

The BJP is unlikely to look for allies in Telangana, but rely

on religious polarisation to grow politically.

The situation is quite different in AP; the party has already struck an alliance with the Jana Sena of actor Pawan Kalyan. However, the latter has already at odds with his ally — making it clear that he does not agree with the Governor giving consent to Jagan's decision to go for three capitals.

Pawan Kalyan has also associated himself with the farmers of Amaravati who are demanding continuation of Amaravati as the only capital.

In this situation, the AP BJP has got a new president who undoubtedly will act according to the unfolding situation.

At this point of time, the BJP needs the YSRCP more; after all, it is still six seats short of a majority in the Rajya Sabha and Jagan can provide some of the numbers.

This basically means that the BJP would prefer putting its expansion plans in AP on hold, for the moment.



Praveen Prakash, Principal Secretary in the CM's office

Distribution of pattas to tribal farmers to be expedited

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

Senior official and Principal Secretary in the Chief Minister's office Praveen Prakash asked the local forest and revenue officials to speed up the process of distribution of pattas to the tribal farmers under Recognition of Forest Rights Act-2006. The lands are under cultivation under the aegis of Vanarakshna Samithi.

The senior officer on Tuesday trekked for over two km braving the rain to Siripuram in Peda Barada panchayat in Chintapalle mandal of Visakhapatnam district.

He interacted with the farmers and enquired about the farming and the yield during his hour-long discussion. He told officials to issue pattas to the farmers cultivating coffee under VSS and to the next of the kin in case of death of the farmer.

Enquiring about the number of pattas given in Siripuram village so far, Praveen Prakash suggested that the farmers should be supplied with Silver Oak saplings and coffee plants. He later visited Kandulagadi forest lands under Chintapalle panchayats.

District Collector V Vinay Chand, Commissioner of Tribal Welfare Ranjit Basha, ITDA PO S Venkateshwarulu, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests N Prateep Kumar, Chief Conservator of Forests P Rama Mohan Rao and other senior officials accompanied him to the forests.

VIJAYAWADA BULLION RATES	
GOLD	
	₹ 56,810 (10 gm)
200	₹ 200
SILVER	
	₹ 65,050 (1kg)
350	₹ 350

CHICKEN RATES ₹/KG	
Dressed/With Skin	₹173
Without Skin	₹196
Broiler at Farm	₹119

EGG RATES ₹/100	
HYDERABAD	365
VIJAYAWADA	403
VISAKHAPATNAM	405
RETAIL PRICE	₹4.25

AU Law College laid foundation for my political, public life: V-P

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

As an alumnus of Dr BR Ambedkar College of Law, Andhra University, Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu was delighted to be part of the Platinum Jubilee meeting of the institute virtually on Tuesday

"As a matter-of-fact, I spent some of the most significant and memorable years of my life as a student leader and a prominent personality of Jai Andhra movement in Visakhapatnam. I was initially imprisoned in Visakhapatnam and later shifted to Musheerabad Jail in Hyderabad during the infamous Emergency. I feel fortunate to have studied in this college. My stay in this college laid a strong foundation for political and public life. I always cherish my long association with the beautiful city of Visakhapatnam and its people. I paid my reverential respect in a Facebook post, to all my gurus," he said.

The Vice-President observed that the college has been constantly endeavouring to raise



M Venkaiah Naidu exhorted the students to always strive to protect the constitution. "As advocates and jurists of tomorrow, you have an equally important role to play in shaping the future of this country," he said

the benchmarks for teaching and research to prepare the students for advanced study and research at LL M, and Ph D levels and to build their careers at the Bar. Platinum Jubilee is a major milestone for any institution. It is an occasion not only to list out the achievements but also to introspect and chalk out a roadmap for the future. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate each and every one of you on the occasion.

It is also appropriate that this college has been named after one of the most eminent jurists in the country has ever seen the

chief architect of the Constitution Dr Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. As students of law, he asked all the students to understand the life and work of Dr Ambedkar and to draw inspiration from it so that you may serve this nation to the best of your ability.

He exhorted the students to always strive to protect the constitution. "As advocates and jurists of tomorrow, you have an equally important role to play in shaping the future of this country," he said.

He continued there should not be any room for ambiguity while drafting laws. They

should be simple and uncomplicated. Any ambiguity can lead to the possibility of misinterpretation and misuse and that should be totally avoided. Although many youngsters are joining law courses and becoming lawyers, there continues to be a manpower shortage. "We need to study the reasons for the same and take remedial steps. At the same time, it should be remembered that quality is more important than quantity. I feel that the judiciary should also focus on this issue," he said.

CPI 'advises' Jagan to seek fresh mandate on Amaravati

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The leaders of the Joint Action Committee of Amaravati Parirakshana Samiti here on Tuesday appealed to Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy to think once again on shifting of the capital city from Amaravati to Visakhapatnam.

Addressing the media here on Tuesday, CPI State secretary Ramakrishna expressed happiness over the High Court for ordering a status quo on two new laws that enable the establishment of three new capitals.

"If the Chief Minister has grudge against former Chief Minister N Chandrababu



Naidu, he could have targeted him instead of destroying the State," he opined.

The Chief Minister should concentrate on controlling the Covid-19 rather than other issues, he suggested. The Covid-19 afflicted persons are not served food

properly, doctors and nurses are not attending to them, he alleged. "If the Chief Minister was confident on his decision, he should dissolve the Assembly and seek fresh mandate Amaravati as a poll plank," he advised.

JAC convener RV Swamy said that people of Amaravati have been agitating for the past 230 days. They are compelled to move the judiciary on the decision of the State government," he said.

He appealed to the Chief Minister to think over the issue and take a wise decision by retaining the capital city in Amaravati. He pointed out that Visakhapatnam is 1,200 km from Rayalaseema, which is very difficult to reach.

Bike rider escapes leopard attack

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

Bike riders had a narrow escape from a leopard attack on Tirumala ghat road on Tuesday. According to TTD vigilance sleuths, the leopard tried to attack the bike rider, who was going to Tirumala at 12 pm but he escaped from the attack and informed the vigilance department about the wild animal attack after reaching Tirumala. After two hours, two more bike riders saw the leopard at the same sport on the ghat road and informed the authorities concerned. In view of commuters' safety, the TTD vigilance and forest officials started a combined search operation for the leopard.

Jagan betrayed people with U-turn on Amaravati: Lokesh

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

TDP leader Nara Lokesh on Tuesday accused the ruling YSRCP leaders of taking a U-turn on capital city Amaravati after winning the polls.

He reminded that the YSRCP chief and his party leaders chanted 'Jai Jai Amaravati' before the polls but after romping home, they cheated the people by bringing three capitals concept.

The ruling party leaders shattered the dreams and aspirations of future generations, who are eager to reap the benefits of capital city Amaravati, which was planned as a global city.

In a tweet, Lokesh asked what reason would be there other than sheer selfishness and personal greed for the YSRCP's unwillingness to seek a referendum on 3 capitals decision. The ministers should explain to the people they have taken a U-turn on Amaravati now after having made pre-election promises not to shift the capital city.



● In a tweet, Lokesh asked what reason would be there other than sheer selfishness and personal greed for the YSRCP's unwillingness to seek a referendum on 3 capitals decision

● Lokesh reminded that the YSRCP chief and his party leaders chanted 'Jai Jai Amaravati' before the polls but after romping home, they cheated the people by bringing three capitals concept

● The ruling party leaders shattered the dreams and aspirations of future generations, who are eager to reap the benefits of capital city Amaravati, which was planned as a global city, he pointed out

The former minister said nobody was bothering to implement the much-promised justice delivery within 21 days to the victims of atrocities. "Over 400 atrocities were committed against women and girls in the first 15 months of Jagan's regime. There was only publicity about e-Raskha Bandhan and Disha Act but no effective results in

the field," he alleged.

Lokesh expressed concern that three miscreants molested an ST woman right under the nose of her husband in Kurnool district. For getting a case registered, all the Tribal Associations had to wage an agitation. The government should take immediate action against the culprits in molestation cases, he demanded.

Barbarism ruling the roost in AP, alleges APCC chief

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Expressing concern over the killing of a tribal woman by running a tractor over her in Guntur district by a ruling party leader, Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president S Sailajanath remarked that it appears that barbarism is ruling the roost in the State.

He said here on Tuesday that for a simple reason that the victim, Matrubai, did not repay the loan, knocking her down with a tractor makes one wonders whether we are in a civilised society, or in a barbaric state.

Recalling the earlier attacks on Dr Sudhakar and Dr Anita, Magistrate Ramakrishna, Varaprasad and Kiran in various incidents, the APCC president said that it was crystal



● Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee (APCC) president S Sailajanath said that for a simple reason that the victim, Matrubai, did not repay the loan, knocking her down with a tractor makes one wonders whether we are in a civilised society, or in a barbaric State

● Recalling the earlier attacks on Dr Sudhakar and Dr Anita, Magistrate Ramakrishna, Varaprasad and Kiran in various incidents, the APCC president said that it was crystal clear that the ruling party leaders were behind every atrocity against Dalits, tribals and downtrodden in the State

clear that the ruling party leaders were behind every atrocity against Dalits, tribals and downtrodden in the State. Demanding immediate arrest of the accused Srinivasa Reddy, the APCC president wondered why the accused was not yet arrested. He also demanded stern action against four persons, who outraged the modesty of a tribal woman in

the presence of her husband in Jamminagar tанда of Kurnool district. He also demanded action against the police, who did not take action though the complaint was lodged.

Russia bats for safety of its Covid-19 vaccine

IAN S ■ MOSCOW

The Russian Ministry of Defence has said that a Covid-19 vaccine that it developed in partnership with the Gamaleya Scientific Research Institute of Epidemiology and Microbiology appears to be safe.

On August 3, a "final medical examination" of participants in clinical trials of the vaccine took place at the Burdenko Main Military Clinical Hospital, it said in a statement.

The results clearly showed that all volunteers had a clear immune response resulting from vaccination, the ministry said, adding that there were no side effects or abnormalities in the work of the volunteers.

"Thus, the available data of laboratory and instrumental



studies allow us to speak about the safety and good tolerance of the vaccine," the statement added. The announcement comes amid international skepticism surrounding Russia's approach to developing Covid-19.

According to the World Health Organisation, at least 26 Covid-19 vaccine candidates are in clinical trials around the world, including one early-stage one from the Gamaleya Institute, CNBC reported on Monday. But the UN health

● On August 3, a "final medical examination" of participants in clinical trials of the vaccine took place at the Burdenko Main Military Clinical Hospital, it said in a statement.

● The results clearly showed that all volunteers had a clear immune response resulting from vaccination, the ministry said, adding that there were no side effects or abnormalities in the work of the volunteers

agency did not list any second or third-phase trials from Russia in its latest update of the list.

Last month, officials in the US, Canada and Britain accused Russia of attempting to hack and steal Covid-19 vaccine data. In a BBC interview in July,

Russia's envoy in Britain said that there was "no sense" in the allegations.

According to Russian Health Minister Mikhail Murashko, the country is planning a mass vaccination campaign against the novel Coronavirus for October. "We plan wider (vaccination) for October because we need to launch a new system of treatment gradually," the Minister told TASS News Agency on Saturday.

Another vaccine, developed by the State Research Center of Virology and Biotechnology Vector, was going through clinical trials, he said. Moreover, the Health Ministry in Russia expects that two more vaccine developers will request permission to start clinical trials on volunteers in the coming weeks.

200 Vedic priests to recite Sundarakanda parayanam

PNS ■ TIRUPATI

The holy recitation of Sundarakanda parayanam taken up by the TTD on a daily basis at Tirumala with the goal of bringing relief to humanity from pandemic Coronavirus is ready for another major leap.

The parayanams are daily conducted at the Nada Niranjanam platform at Tirumala by Vedic priests for the past two months and telecast live by the SVBC. On the occasion of completion of the first phase parayanam by 200 Vedic priests was telecast live on SVBC on July 7 and countless devotees enjoined the

parayanam from their homes.

As a follow up 227 slokas of the two to seven sarga of Sundarakanda parayanam will be recited by 200 Vedic priests on August 6 at Nada Niranjanam platform. The Vedic priests from National Sanskrit University (Sanskrit Vidyapeetham), Sri Venkateshwara Veda University, Tirumala Dharmagiri Veda Vijnan Peetham will participate in the parayanams.

TTD appealed to devotees to participate in the parayanams from their homes, along with the SVBC live telecast, and beset blessings of Sri Venkateshwara.

Avanthi takes aim as Ganta prepares to join the YSRCP

PNS ■ VISAKHAPATNAM

The friends-turned foes Ganta Srinivasa Rao and M Srinivasa Rao have been waging a war of words since the time the latter joined the YSRCP.

On Tuesday, firing a fresh salvo, Minister for Tourism Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao aka Avanthi Srinivas, said Ganta was trying to join the YSRCP to shield himself from the cases against him. Ganta's properties are already in the auction phase due to non-payment of loans.

"Wherever there is power, Ganta Srinivasa Rao will be there to find an escape from the cases against him," Avanthi said adding that Ganta's followers are also in the bicycle scandal and land scandals.

Sources added that if Ganta makes it to the party, he would be given priority over Avanti Srinivasa Rao. He is also likely to poach more leaders into the ruling party fold and in the process of weakening the TDP,



which he sees has no prospects in the near future.

Avanti's grouse was that though he was in the Ganta's camp during his long journey in the PRP, the Congress and later the TDP, it was Ganta, who always dominated and marginalised him.

The relationship between them soured when Ganta wanted to contest again from Bheemunipatnam (Bhimili) Assembly constituency, which Avanti represented in 2009 as

PRP MLA. After the duo joined the TDP on the eve of 2014 polls, Avanti was asked to leave Bheemunipatnam and contest the Anakapalle Lok Sabha seat and Ganta was given Bheemunipatnam. Avanti reluctantly contested from Anakapalle and won but he always wanted to represent Bhimili where he established his group of educational institutions and had considerable following after his stint as an MLA there.

■ Firing a fresh salvo, Minister for Tourism Muttamsetti Srinivasa Rao aka Avanthi Srinivas said Ganta was trying to join the YSRCP to shield himself from the cases against him. Ganta's properties are already in the auction phase due to non-payment of loans

■ Wherever there is power, Ganta Srinivasa Rao will be there to find an escape from the cases against him," Avanthi said adding that Ganta's followers are also in the scandals

■ Avanti's grouse was that though he was in the Ganta's camp during his long journey in the PRP, the Congress and later the TDP, it was Ganta, who always dominated and marginalised him

Yanamala likens Jagan to Tughlaq

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Opposition leader Yanamala Ramakrishnudu on Tuesday demanded that Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy and the ruling YSRCP leaders face the challenge of Opposition leader N Chandrababu Naidu on the three capitals decision. He said the Chief Minister, ministers and MLAs have developed a fear of facing the elections just because their government's raising unpopularity across the State.

The TDP leader criticised the ruling party quoting 'Muhammad Bin Tughluq', who had shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, and again from Daulatabad to Delhi, his people saw irreparable damage as it emptied the treasury and ultimately led to the collapse and fall of the Tughluq dynasty.

He predicted that the same thing is likely to happen in the State if people won't protect the State from the present threat, the future is going to be bleak and State would suffer serious financial setbacks.

Yanamala told the YSRCP leaders that a greater damage



would be done to the State if three capitals became a reality. He lamented that already, the Jagan's regime has pushed the State into doldrums, chaos and turmoil during its 14 months rule and the economists were predicting that the coming years would be as bad as the first year of the YSRCP regime.

Yanamala said that the Chief Minister was only cheating the people of Rayalaseema by promising Judicial Capital in Kurnool. He claimed that this was not in the hands of the government as the High Court was established in Amaravati only after an order was issued by the President in consultation with the Supreme Court.

■ TDP leader Yanamala Ramakrishnudu criticised the ruling party quoting 'Muhammad Bin Tughluq', who had shifted his capital from Delhi to Daulatabad, and again from Daulatabad to Delhi, his people saw irreparable damage as it emptied the treasury and ultimately led to the collapse and fall of the Tughluq dynasty

■ The Telugu Desam Party leader predicted that the same thing is likely to happen in the State if people won't protect the State from the present threat, the future is going to be bleak and State would suffer serious financial setbacks

■ The former minister for Finance lamented that already, the Jagan's regime has pushed the State into doldrums, chaos and turmoil during its 14 months rule

Man drives tractor over borrower

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

In a horrifying incident, a man, said to be an YSRCP sympathiser, murdered a woman by driving a tractor over her at Sivapuram thanda in Nakarikallu mandal of Guntur district. According to police, Bonamukkala Srinivas Reddy gave Rs 3.80 lakh as loan to Manthriya Naik, who pledged his 2.75 acres of land. When Naik failed to repay the loan, Srinivas Reddy went to the land and claimed ownership. Naik and his wife Ramavathi Mantri Bai (55) first pleaded with him not to usurp their land, and when he started driving a tractor over it, they tried to obstruct him. Unrelenting, Srinivas Reddy drove the tractor over Mantri Bai, killing her on the spot. Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, Guntur rural SP Vishal Gunni said that Narasaraopet DSP M Veera Reddy arrested Srinivasa Reddy, who had fled the spot, from his brother's residence based on the complaint of Mantriya Naik. The police case registered.

Govt braces up for 2nd phase of Mana Badi Nadu-Nedu

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

The government is bracing up for the second phase of Mana Badi Nadu-Nedu with the near completion of first phase under which over 15,000 schools are being revamped with all the amenities and ambience, which are poised for completion by September 5.

Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy held a review meeting on Mana Badi Nadu-Nedu at the camp office here on Tuesday, during which officials had given a PowerPoint presentation of the works done during the first phase and he has instructed on the completion of works on time with no compromise on quality.

The Chief Minister said that the works should progress on time and the wall paintings should be good on the eye and every class room should have colourful furniture and the paintings should be lively. The feedback was good from parents, officials said adding that the admissions rate would be more than what they have expected for the upcoming academic year.

The Chief Minister said that the hygiene should be maintained in the kitchen. He has examined the Jagananna Vidya Kana kit to be given to students on the reopening day (September 5). He has personally checked the bags, books, note books, shoes, socks, uniform cloth and said that there should not compromise on quality.

He asked officials to focus on



The Chief Minister said that the works should progress on time and the wall paintings should be good on the eye and every class room should have colourful furniture and the paintings should be lively. The feedback was good from parents, officials said adding that the admissions rate would be more than what they have expected for the upcoming academic year

completing all the works by September 5, which is the Teachers' Day. The Chief Minister instructed officials to provide clean drinking water to children in schools and for that purpose mineral water plants should be started and maintenance is equally important, he told officials and asked them to complete the process on time.

A school built, way back in 1938 in Kankipadu panchayat of Krishna district, which was in a dilapidated condition and even recommended by Parents' Committee for dismantling it, was taken up under Mana Badi and now wears a new

look, which has won all round appreciation, officials said and displayed its then and now (Nadu Nedu) pictures, along with Ramachandrapuram Mandal Parishad School in Ontimitta mandal of YSR Kadapa district, and Gidijala Judge High School, pictures to show the marked difference after the revamp.

Education Minister Adimulapu Suresh, Education Secretary Buditi Rajaksekhar, State Education Commissioner V China Veerabhadru, Finance Secretary SS Rawat and other officials participated in the meeting.

V-P wants Ramarajya envisaged by Gandhiji

PNS ■ VIJAYAWADA

Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu drew a parallel between Ramarajya imagined by Gandhiji and an ideal justice system. He was addressing, through virtual mode, the Platinum Jubilee meet of Dr BR Ambedkar College of Law, Andhra University, on the occasion of its 76th Foundation Day here on Tuesday.

He expressed concern over the mounting pendency of cases from the Supreme Court to the lower courts and urged the government and the judiciary to ensure faster justice by addressing the issue. He also underscored the need to make delivery of justice speedier and affordable.

Recollecting the words of Gandhiji, who had said, "Whether Rama of my imagination ever lived or not on this earth, the ancient ideal of Ramarajya is undoubtedly one of true democracy in which the meanest citizen could be sure of swift justice without an elaborate and costly procedure." Rama is an embodiment of Indian culture. He is the ideal king, an ideal human being. He combines in himself some of the finest qualities a human being can aspire to imbibe. The foundation of Ramarajya is truth and justice and that is what strengthens various institutions of democratic governance, including judiciary.

Balladeer Vangapandu passes away aged 77

Continued from Page 1

Expressing deep sorrow, the Chief Minister described the passing away of Vangapandu as "very painful", and said that the balladeer would be remembered forever.

Vangapandu is survived by his wife Vijayalakshmi, three sons and a daughter Vangapandu Usha. He worked in Hindustan Shipyard Limited from 1976 to 1999. He was associated with the revolutionary movement for many years along with Gaddar and had Yeruvaka and Polikeka, both books of songs.

Will Ganta's migration boost...

Continued from Page 1

He became Anakapalle MP in 1999 and in 2004 entered the Assembly from Chodavaram. In 2009 he joined actor Chiranjeevi's Praja Rajyam Party and won from Anakapalle Assembly. He became minister after PRP merged with the Congress. He quit the Congress and joined TDP in 2014 and became HRD minister and a powerful leader in coastal Andhra.

32 from Telugu States qualify in...

Continued from Page 1

MEET THE TOPPERS
1) Pedditi Dhatri Reddy - rank 46

A graduate from IIT Kharagpur (2015), Black Belt in Karate and a district level Bronze medalist, Dhatri always aspired to be a part of the Civil Service. "I always wanted to be a part of the Indian Police Service or Indian Administrative Service. In 2018, my first attempt at the UPSC exam, my ranking was 233. I didn't know what service I would be selected for; so, I took the exam again. I am currently training to be an IPS officer in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad," says the girl, who hails from Nalgonda.

2) Katta Ravi Teja - rank 77
Ravi, a graduate from IIT Delhi, has set his eyes on civil services from childhood. "It's a childhood dream come true. I am so happy and so are my parents. My father, who is a journalist, would tell me how IAS/IPS officers work towards making a better country for people, on the ground level. So, I knew from a young age that I would strive to join the Civil Services. Thus, I started preparing for the exam since the last year of my college. This is my third attempt at the paper, and I am happy to get a double-digit rank. It is a great achievement. Last year I was selected for the Indian Postal

Service," (sic) says the 26-year-old Hyderabad lad.

3) S Rushikesh Reddy - rank 95

It took Rushikesh five attempts to get a two-digit rank. "I am already in the service right now, working for Indian Railway Traffic Service, posted in Lucknow. I cleared the exam in 2017. However I wanted to be a part of IPS. So, I reappeared and got through this time. I started preparing for the UPSC exam during my last year in IIT Delhi," he shares. Rushikesh is a native of Kadapa.

4) G Chandeesh - rank 198
A resident of Hyderabad, and originally from Chittoor, Chandeesh is currently undergoing training as a part of the IPS-2018 batch Tamil Nadu cadre. "I am already a part of the services. Earlier, in 2017, I was selected for Indian Information Services. However, I want to be a part of Indian Administrative Service or Indian Foreign Service. Hence, I reattempted the examination. I am happy with my rank; however, I am yet to see which services I would be allotted this time," he shares.

5) Vinay Kant - rank 516
He is the son of a constable serving in the Special Branch of the Siddipet Police Commissionerate. Vinay Kant began his Civils preparation a year ago, serving as Assistant Executive Officer in the Rajya Sabha Secretariat (AEO). He

was ranked 516th in the UPSC exam. The Commissioner of Police congratulated the constable on the occasion. On the occasion, the Commissioner said that parents should encourage their children to go to higher peaks in the field in which they are proficient.

Low participation rate in Telugu-speaking states

Going by the strength of students from various states who took the UPSC examination, the participation of both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh students has been very low.

In 2019, there were 79,697 aspirants from the Telugu-speaking states who had applied for the preliminary examination, but only 40,732 actually appeared from six centres i.e. Hyderabad, Warangal, Visakhapatnam, Anantapur, Vijayawada and Tirupati. In Hyderabad, 658 candidates had registered to appear at the Mains examination, of whom only 641 took the exam.

At All-India level, out of those who appeared for the Mains examination, 2,304 had been selected for the Personality Test. Experts say that about 60 to 65 candidates from the Telugu-speaking states have qualified for the Personality Test.

Katta Ravi Teja, who ranked 77 in CSE this year, feels that the condition is improving.

AP reports 9,747 new cases...

Continued from Page 1

The recovery rate improved to 54.23 per cent and the mortality rate stood at 0.91 per cent. East Godavari district reported 1,371 more cases in the last 24 hours, followed by Anantapur with 1,325 and Kurnool 1,016. Kurnool became the second district in the state after East Godavari to cross the 20,000-mark in the overall number of Covid-19 cases.

Man to hang for rape, murder of...

Continued from Page 1

The trial was also conducted swiftly and completed by March, however, case was reserved for judgement when lockdown was announced.

This was the 18th conviction in cases of Rape or Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act that has been secured by AP Police since Disha Bill was passed in Andhra Pradesh in December, 2019.

DGP Gautam Sawang appreciated the professional

alacrity displayed in the investigation by the Vijayawada City Police and said that this conviction is a message that those guilty of crime against women and children will not be spared and act as a deterrent to all such predators.

The DGP stated that further consolidation of Disha initiatives in line with Government's vision of a safe and secure society for women and children is on the anvil in a steadfast manner.

In a move to provide secu-

rity to women against the heinous crimes, Chief Minister YS Jaganmohan Reddy had enacted the AP Disha Act in 2019.

Under the Disha Act proposed by the AP state government, the accused will get capital punishment if there are proper evidences to prove within 60 days of the crime. The Andhra Pradesh government had also set up 18 Disha police stations in the state for speedy investigation of sexual offences against women.

Panels to check compliance of safety...

Continued from Page 1

The Atlas should be like a guide and reckoner for those who want to start an industry in the State.

A styrene vapour leak in LG Polymers unit at a village near Visakhapatnam in May had left 12 people dead and over 580 ill while a crane mishap at the Hindustan Shipyard Limited in the coastal city killed ten workers.

In the first phase, all hazardous chemical industries, covered under the Manufacture, Storage and Import of Hazardous Chemical Rules, 1989, will be covered under the special drive, according to Special Chief Secretary (Industries and Infrastructure) R Karikal Valaven. Industries that store, manufacture or handle explosive substances as defined under the Explosives Act and the Petroleum Act and all red category industrial units would also be covered in the first phase, he said.

In June, the Central Pollution Control Board directed all the state PCBs to ensure that risk studies were duly undertaken by all industries dealing with hazardous chemicals and that their onsite and off-site plans are operational.

Mock drills are also required to be carried out for testing the plans, in accordance with the National Green Tribunal order.

After the styrene vapour leak, the High Power Committee headed by Special Chief Secretary (Environment) Neerabh Kumar Prasad had recommended a series of steps to be taken by various departments for preventing such mishaps in future.

"Based on these recommendations, we decided there is an immediate need to organise a special drive of inspections for ensuring compliance of all safety protocols and environment norms by all industrial units," the Special Chief Secretary (Industries) said.

Prior to the inspections, managements of the industrial units are required to prepare a report on safety protocols and environmental norms being followed as per the relevant Acts, rules and regulations.

Valaven directed the head of departments to ensure that the inspections begin immediately and the industrial units in high priority, based on safety risk assessment and pollution load, be asked to prepare the reports maximum within a fortnight.

Explosion in another pharma unit in Vizag...

Continued from Page 1

It may be recalled that Vizag city witnessed four major industrial accidents since May this year. The Styrene vapour leakage from LG Polymers, Hydrogen Sulphide leakage from Sainor Life Sciences pharma company, fire mishap at Visakha Solvents pharma company and crane collapse at Hindustan Shipyard Limited has claimed 26 lives and over 500 were hospitalised.

District Collector V Vinay Chand said that they have formed a team of experts to study the safety measures in the industries to mitigate the mishaps. He also said that they will act against the management of the Industries if they were found flouting the safety norms.

Ayodhya ceremony today : Another core BJP promise fulfilled under Modi

Continued from Page 1

Notably, Modi as a national office-bearer in the BJP played an important role in L K Advani's 'Ram Rath Yatra' in 1990 while Adityanath's late guru Mahant Avaidyanath headed the group of sadhus and Hindu organisations that was formed in 1984 to spearhead the temple movement.

If the Supreme Court's verdict in November, 2019 in favour of building the temple at the site, where believers hold that Lord Ram was born, put a legal closure to the historical dispute between Hindu and Muslim groups, the beginning of its construction is likely to further consolidate Hindutva sentiments.

"For us, the Ayodhya issue had ceased to be a political issue long back. It was always a matter of faith for us, and our manifeestoes in all general elections underlined our commitment to build the temple and also scrap Article 370. But, of course, now

that both promises have been fulfilled, we will talk about

them," a BJP leader said.

Though it was Vishwa Hindu Parishad under late Ashok Singhal which conceptualised the Ram Janmabhoomi movement in 1984 and began mobilising sadhus and Hindu groups nationwide, the issue gained political currency like never before after the then BJP president L K Advani started his 'Ram Rath Yatra' in 1990.

This had followed the party's decision to come out openly in support of the temple's construction, where the Babri mosque stood at that time before being brought down by frenzied kar sevaks in 1992, in its national executive meeting in Palampur in 1989.

Advani's Rath Yatra was also seen as a counter to the Mandal politics aimed at reservation for Other Backward Groups unveiled by the V P Singh government in 1990.

Advani launched the famous 'Rath Yatra' from Somnath temple in Gujarat on September 25, 1990, drawing people in thousands as his chariot rolled through the country's heartland, at times triggering com-

munal riots as well, while the movement gained momentum.

The 'Rath Yatra' was to end in Ayodhya on October 30, 1990 but was cut short after the then Bihar chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav ordered Advani's arrest in Samastipur, citing the alleged communal tension it had caused.

Many 'kar sevaks' (religious volunteers) were killed in police firing in Ayodhya on October 30 as the Mulayam Singh Yadav-led government in Uttar Pradesh used force to stop them from reaching the disputed site. Hindutva groups put the death toll at over 55 even as police said it was 17.

As the Ram temple wave picked up steam, a considerable section of backward castes warmed up to the BJP, which formed its first government in Uttar Pradesh with Kalyan Singh, an OBC, becoming chief minister in 1991.

The demolition of Babri Masjid at the disputed site on December 6, 1992 made the party a pariah in politics for a while but could not stop its rise to power.

Keen to shun the tag of political "untouchable", the BJP under Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Advani was forced to put the issue, considered contentious by most parties, along with Article 370 and the Uniform Civil Code on the backburner to make new allies, a necessity for coming to power in the coalition era between 1989-2014.

The party has been steadfast in its commitment to its core causes after Modi took charge of the party and brought it to power in 2014. This was the first time that the BJP won a majority in the 543-member Lok Sabha, making it immune to political pressures that its earlier government under Vajpayee often felt.

The waning of the Hindutva movement due to a variety of reasons coupled with the BJP's organisational atrophy in Uttar Pradesh saw the party steadily losing ground there since late 90s before the 'Modi wave' of 2014 helped it reclaim its bastion in the Lok Sabha polls and then notching up an unprecedented win in the 2017 assembly polls.

HC stays Jagan's plans...

Continued from Page 1

The petitioners, who have already filed a batch of writ petitions opposing the three capitals move, expressed fear that the government was likely to shift the capital from Amaravati and sought a stay on the two new Acts. Accordingly, the court ordered a status quo in the matter.

Cheating complaint ...

Continued from Page 1

They alleged that the YSRC cheated the people after coming to power by proposing three Capitals, hence the cheating complaint. The complainants said that Ramakrishna Reddy had pointed to YSRCP president YS Jaganmohan Reddy building a house at Tadepalli and claiming that the capital would not be shifted. Handing over the complaint, the TDP activists demanded the police to book Ramakrishna Reddy under Section 420 of the IPC.



Big day for Ayodhya, BJP, outsiders not welcome

PNS ■ AYODHYA

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

Ayodhya is decked up for the bhoomi puja that will be attended at the Ram Janmabhoomi by 175 people, who figure in a select guest list of seers and politicians topped by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Concerned over the spread of coronavirus, the authorities are encouraging others not to come to the temple town, asking them to mark the occasion by celebrating at their homes. The groundbreaking ceremony will be tele-

Concerned over the spread of coronavirus, the authorities are encouraging others not to come to the temple town, asking them to mark the occasion by celebrating at their homes. The groundbreaking ceremony will be telecast live.

cast live. Roads leading to Ayodhya display hoardings with the picture of the proposed Ram temple and of Ram Lalla, the infant Ram, the deity now housed in a makeshift temple.

Around the town's Hanumangarhi area named after a well-known temple which Modi will visit on Wednesday both police sirens and bhajans in praise of Ram are heard.

Most of the shops in the locality wear a new look, with

their fronts painted in bright yellow. A large number of policemen were deployed there on Tuesday. Some sat in the sweet shops, waiting for their next instructions. Roads leading into the area are barricaded. Yards of yellow cloth and marigold garlands were being hung on poles.

Even on the day before the event, security checks on vehicles heading to Ayodhya begin from adjoining Barabanki district itself on the Lucknow-Ayodhya road.

Policemen take down details, including mobile numbers of the travellers.

Senior Superintendent of Police Deepak Kumar said the focus of the force is on maintaining the COVID-19 protocol.

So we are not going to allow any outsider to enter Ayodhya city, he said. Prohibitory orders are also in force and not more than four people will be allowed to gather. The markets and shops will remain open but with strict adherence to the COVID protocol, he said. Outsiders will be stopped from entering the city, but Ayodhya residents will be allowed in if they produce any identification document.

We are also carrying out random checks on people living in Ayodhya to ensure that



Temple symbolises struggle between genuine' and pseudo' secularism: Advani

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Former deputy prime minister, BJP patriarch and, above all, a key architect of the Ram temple whose rath yatra' gave fillip and form to the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, L K Advani won't keep his date with history on Wednesday.

The 95-year-old, who in 1990 charioted the Ram rath' that made him the face of Hindutva politics and was instrumental in consolidating support for the BJP, said in his autobiography that the temple is a symbol of the "struggle between genuine secularism and pseudo secularism".

Advani won't be in Ayodhya for the bhumi poojan' of the temple because of his age. In his 2008 autobiography My Country, My Life, he expressed the hope that it would write a new chapter in national integration.

In his book, he linked the Ram temple being built where a large section of devout Hindus believes is where Ram was born to the Somnath temple in Gujarat where he started his rath yatra' from.

The Somnath temple, which was looted and destroyed sever-



The Somnath temple, which was looted and destroyed several times before being reconstructed under the supervision of Sardar Patel in 1951, was a testimony of India's determination to erase the history of bigoted alien attacks and regain its lost cultural treasure, Advani said in his book

The plan was to end the yatra' in Ayodhya after passing through Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. But it ended prematurely at Samastipur in Bihar on October 23, 1990 with Advani's arrest.

He was arrested on the orders of then Bihar chief minister and Janta Dal leader Lalu Prasad Yadav and kept in detention at an irrigation department bungalow in Massanjore near Dumka, which is now in Jharkhand.

Slogans of Jai Shri Ram, Saugandh Ram ki Khate Hain Mandir Wahin Banayenge and Jo Hindu Hit Ki Baat Karega Wahi Desh Pe Raj Karega followed the yatra' wherever it passed, leading to communal polarisation and

tension, and riots in some places.

Advani countered the reports, writing in his book that the recurring theme in his speeches was of a positive approach to religious faith and Ram bhakti se lok shakti jagrut ho sakti hai (worship of Ram can awaken the strength of people).

Underlining that the Ayodhya movement was the continuation of the spirit of Somnath, Advani wrote that it is important to know the history of the Somnath temple to understand the movement for a Ram temple. The Somnath temple, he said, stands as a sobering reminder that a weak nation that cannot defend itself against external attacks stands to lose its cultural heritage also besides political freedom.



Prominent Muslims to grace temple ceremony

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a gesture of reconciliation, two prominent Muslims who lived through deadly riots following the razing of a mosque in northern India in 1992 plan to attend the foundation-laying ceremony for a Hindu temple on Wednesday on the same site, they said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose Hindu nationalist party has been leading the demand for a temple there dedicated to the god-king Ram, is expected to be the chief guest at the event in Ayodhya town.

Construction was made possible by a verdict late last year from the Supreme Court of India awarding the disput-

ed site to the Hindus, and the planned visit by the two well-known Muslims underscored an easing of animosity between followers of the two religious faiths in one of Hindu-majority India's most communally sensitive regions.

"Whatever happened are things of the past," said Iqbal Ansari, one of the Muslim litigants. "I've been invited and I think it's the wish of Lord Ram and I am going to attend it."

Mohammad Sharif, another Muslim honoured with one of India's highest civilian awards for doing the last rites of unclaimed bodies since the riots, told Reuters he too had got an invitation and was keen to be there.

Will contribute two months' salary, silver brick for Ram temple: Raj Min



JAIPUR: Rajasthan Transport Minister Pratap Singh Khachariyawas said he would contribute his two months' salary and a silver brick for the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya. He said the "bhoomi puja" of the temple on Wednesday "will be like Diwali all over". "I will give two months' salary and a silver brick for the construction of Ram temple, the minister said. He also called upon the

people to contribute for the construction of the temple. "It (the 'bhoomi puja' ceremony) will be like Diwali all over and there should be Diwali inside us too," he said.

Prohibitory order imposed in K'taka

BENGALURU: Prohibitory orders have been imposed at several places in Karnataka aimed at maintaining law and order in the state, in view of the groundbreaking ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on Wednesday. Places where prohibitory orders under section 144 of the CrPC (banning assembly of four or more people) have been imposed include Kalaburagi, Kodagu, Dharwad and Mangaluru. Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Tuesday reviewed the security preparedness ahead of the 'bhoomi poojan' in Ayodhya tomorrow with senior home department and police officials. In a video statement released after the meeting, Bommai said district administrations- Deputy Commissioners and Superintendents of Police- depending on the local situation have been given the powers to impose section 144.



Rawat asks people to light diyas at home to mark bhoomi puja



DEHRADUN: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Trivendra Singh Rawat said Tuesday the groundbreaking ceremony of Ram temple in Ayodhya will be a "red-letter day" in the country's history and urged people to celebrate it by lighting diyas at home. "Several battles were fought and hundreds of people sacrificed their lives for the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. It will be a red-letter day in the history of India when Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays the foundation stone for it tomorrow," Rawat said in a message. "My appeal to people is to celebrate the golden occasion like Deepawali by lighting diyas at their homes," he added.

BJP leader seeks renaming of Delhi's Babar Road to 5, August Marg

NEW DELHI: A day before the groundbreaking ceremony for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, former Union minister and BJP leader Vijay Goel on Tuesday demanded that the Babar Road in Bengali market here be renamed as 5, August Marg. Goel, the former Delhi BJP president, said he has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah and the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) urging to rename the road. "Babar was an invader who attacked Hindustan and demolished Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The prime minister is going to perform groundbreaking ceremony for a grand temple in Ayodhya Wednesday. At such a time, it will be an appropriate move to rename Babar Road as 5, August Marg," Goel said in a press conference.



We're overjoyed, but making sure it doesn't become Jamaat 2.0: VHP



AYODHYA: The VHP Tuesday said the bhoomi puja ceremony for a Ram temple in Ayodhya is a rare moment that comes once in several lifetimes and that they are overjoyed, but are making sure the event does not become a coronavirus hotspot. Vishva Hindu Parishad national working president Alok Kumar also rejected questions about the muhūrta of the event, saying the

"best advice" has been taken including from the Head of the Jyotish Department of the Banaras Hindu University on timing of the ceremony. "It is something which comes once in several lifetimes, the finest moment, and we are overjoyed.

Hardik Patel announces Rs 21,000 donation for Ram temple

AHMEDABAD: Gujarat Congress leader Hardik Patel on Tuesday announced that he and his family will donate Rs 21,000 for the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya in UP. In a statement here, the newly-appointed working president of the Gujarat Congress said though he has "immense faith" in religion, he is not a "radical", and hoped the temple would usher in 'Ram Rajya' in India. The statement came on the eve of the 'bhoomi puja' ceremony for the temple at Ayodhya, an event to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, other leaders and religious figures. "Lord Shri Ram's temple is coming up in Ayodhya. Me and my family have faith in God and that is why we have decided to donate Rs 21,000 for the construction of Ram temple.



BJP to give away 5 lakh laddoo packets in MP

PNS ■ INDORE

With an eye on the upcoming by- polls, the ruling BJP in Madhya Pradesh announced that it would celebrate the ground-breaking ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya by distributing nearly five lakh packets of laddoos in Sanver SC reserved constituency in Indore district.

However, alleging political gains behind the move, the opposition Congress has demanded that the district administration prevent the BJP from doing so in light of the COVID-19 situation in

the state.

"We will celebrate the foundation-laying ceremony for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya in a grand manner and as part of it, we will organise religious programmes in all 252 villages of Sanver constituency and distribute five lakh packets of laddoos," the BJP's Indore district unit president Rajesh Sonkar said.

Each and every house in the constituency will be covered in the distribution programme, which will be conducted by following all COVID-19 protocols, he claimed.

Ram temple will deeply connect Indian society to its roots: Vaidya

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the Sangh's decades-long ideological pursuit of a Ram temple in Ayodhya being realised, the RSS joint general secretary Manmohan Vaidya said Tuesday that the temple will deeply connect the Indian society to its cultural roots to prosper economically and expand culturally as a model to guide humanity.

Projecting Ram temple as a "symbol of Bharat's glorious past", Vaidya said this temple will guide humanity to live together in harmony, peace and prosperity in this ethnic, religious and culturally diverse world.

Referring to Dr Rajendra Prasad's speech on restoration of Somnath temple, Vaidya said the country's first president had stated that the construction of Somnath temple would be deemed complete only when as a nation India acquires those high level of cultural values in social and national life and the econom-



ic prosperity which it once had.

"Same thing applies here with Ram Mandir. Besides being a holy shrine, it will become epitome of cultural values and economic prosperity," Vaidya said.

Saying that the construction of the temple will be a "landmark moment" in Indian history, Vaidya added, "Ram temple will help us get deeply connected to our cultural roots to prosper economically and expand culturally as a model to guide humanity to live together in harmony, peace and prosper-

ity in this ethnic, religious, culturally diverse world."

Vaidya has been putting forth the views of RSS on Ram temple. He has said it should not be seen as a political issue but as a matter of faith for the Indian society at large.

Construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya has been central to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's ideology, figures prominently in its idea of a "Hindu Rashtra" and is seen as a symbol of cultural nationalism.

Though the Vishwa Hindu



Parishad and the BJP, both members of the larger saffron family, had been at the forefront of the Ram temple movement, it was the Sangh, as the ideological fountainhead of the family, that remained the guiding force in the struggle.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's name being imprinted on the invitation for the 'bhoomi puja' ceremony along with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as the guest of honour establishes the significance of the saffron organisation in the movement.



SHORT READS



No flight ops at Kolkata airport on revised total lockdown days

KOLKATA: Authorities of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport Tuesday announced that flight operations at the airport will remain suspended on all the revised seven days of total lockdown in West Bengal this month starting from August 5. The airport had suspended flight operations on July 25 and 29 due to total lockdown announced by the state government. "As per the state government order dated 03.08.2020, flight operations at #KolkataAirport will remain suspended on the revised lockdown days: 5th, 8th, 20th, 21st, 27th, 28th & 31st August 2020," the Kolkata airport said in a tweet. The West Bengal government had earlier decided to impose a biweekly complete lockdown in the state to break the chain of COVID-19 transmission. The West Bengal government on Monday announced changes for the fourth time in the complete lockdown dates in August and took all Sundays - a popular marketing day out of the purview of the restrictions. As per the new changes the Lockdown will be enforced on August 20, 21, 27 and 28, instead of August 16, 17, 23 and 24 as announced earlier, the government order said.

Raj ACB arrests police officer in bribery case

BIKANER: The Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) of Rajasthan has arrested the additional superintendent of police of Ganganagar district in a case of graft for allegedly demanding Rs two lakh bribe, official sources said here. The arrest took place on Monday night, the sources in the ACB said, adding that a middleman has also been held from the Srikanpur area. "Accused Additional SP Amrit Jeengar had demanded a bribe of Rs two lakh to settle a case. After verification of the complaint, the accused official was caught from his official residence late last night," a source said. A senior ACB official in Jaipur said Jeengar's house in Jodhpur has been seized and the matter is being probed.

Patnitop land grab case: CBI searches at 11 locations in J-K

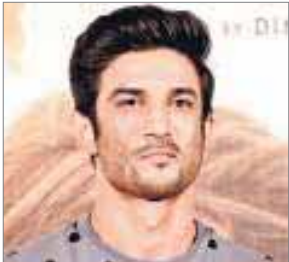
NEW DELHI: The CBI on Tuesday conducted searches at 11 locations in Jammu and Kashmir, including at the residential premises of the then CEOs of Patnitop Development Authority, for alleged land encroachment in the tourist area in Udhampur district, officials said. The searches are spread at 11 locations including Jammu, Udhampur and Kathua districts at the offices and residential premises of public servants including former CEOs, Patnitop Development Authority--KK Gupta, MA Malik and SM Sahni they said. The CBI had conducted a preliminary enquiry on the directions of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court following which an FIR has been registered, they said.

Sushant's death case to be handed over to CBI: Nitish

PNS ■ PATNA

In an important development in the actor Sushant Singh Rajput's death case, the Bihar government on Tuesday decided to recommend a CBI inquiry into death by suicide case of the Bollywood star on a request from his father. Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said on being informed by state Director General of Police Gupteshwar Pandey about his talk with the late actor's father K K Singh seeking an inquiry by the central investigating agency into the matter, he told the DGP to get a proposal ready immediately and send it to the state government. "The state government will formally recommend the case to be handed over to the CBI today itself after completing all the procedures and formalities", the CM said.

The development comes a day before the Supreme Court is slated to hear a petition of Rajput's rumoured girlfriend Rhea Chakraborty, an accused in the FIR filed in Patna, seeking transfer of the case to Mumbai, where an investigation in the matter is already on.



The state governments of Bihar and Maharashtra have already filed separate caveats in the top court seeking to be heard before any order is passed on Chakraborty's plea. The father of the late actor has also filed a caveat in the apex court.

A close associate of the Bihar CM said, that Rajput's father made a plea for the CBI inquiry citing hurdles created by the Mumbai police to the investigating team of the Patna police to prevent fair probe.

After a series of complaints against the Mumbai police for not cooperating with the four-member Patna police probe team, the acrimony between Maharashtra and Bihar police over jurisdictional issues escalat-



ed after an IPS officer, who had landed in Mumbai on Sunday for leading the SIT probe in the case, was quarantined under the COVID-19 regulations in force in the city. The development was deplored by the Bihar chief minister who termed it "inappropriate and forcible".

Bihar police chief Gupteshwar Pandey has said that they have lodged a formal protest with the Mumbai municipal authorities over the "forcible quarantine" of Vinay Tiwari who was on official duty. Regarding decision to hand over the inquiry to the federal agency, Kumar said, "I have been saying that the state government will recommend a CBI probe if the father (Sushant's father) asks for it.

Maharashtra slams CBI probe recommendation

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The ruling NCP and Congress in Maharashtra on Tuesday slammed the Bihar government for recommending a CBI probe into the death of actor Sushant Singh Rajput, saying the move encroaches upon rights of the state government and helps the BJP in "destruction" of Constitution. Maharashtra minister and NCP national spokesperson Nawab Malik said the Nitish Kumar government was probably trying to divert attention from its 'failure' in combating COVID-19 by recommending a CBI probe. Hours earlier, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said in Patna that his government had made the recommendation after the deceased actor's father made a request.

IRS officer Pradeep Singh tops civil services exam 2019

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

IRS officer Pradeep Singh tops the list of 829 candidates who have qualified for the prestigious civil services, including the IAS, the IPS and the IFS, the Union Public Service Commission announced on Tuesday. The top three rank holders -- Singh, Jatin Kishore and Pratibha Verma -- are serving officers. Singh is a resident of Haryana, while Kishore hails from Delhi and Verma from Uttar Pradesh.

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

Twenty-nine-year-old Singh, a 2019-batch Indian Revenue Service (customs and central excise) officer, is undergoing probation at the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes and Narcotics (NACIN) in Faridabad. He said his main emphasis would be on improving education and farm sectors as he has become part of the most sought-after Indian Administrative Service. "I have opted for my home



state Haryana as the preferred cadre state for the IAS. I am happy that I will now get the chance to work for my state," said Singh, who had taken leave to prepare for the examination. Second-rank holder Kishore is a 2018-batch officer of Indian Economic Service (IES) and currently posted as Assistant Director in the Ministry of Rural Development here. "It was my second attempt in the civil services examination. I am happy to have got second rank," he said.

Kishore, aged 26, said education and environment would be his focused areas. He is a native of Delhi.

Verma, an officer of Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax), said she wanted to become an

"It is like a dream come true. It is a pleasant surprise for me. I always wanted to be an IAS officer. I would like to work for the deprived sections of society," Pradeep Singh said

IAS officer since her childhood. "I was inspired by the way IAS officers act as the first responder at the time of any crisis. They are always on the frontline at the time of difficult situation. That is why I decided to prepare again for the exam (after getting selected in the IRS)," she said.

Verma had got 489 rank in the civil services exam 2018.

"I would like to work for women empowerment and children-related issues, especially in my home state Uttar Pradesh," she said. Verma, who hails from Sultanpur in UP, said her parents played an important role in motivating her for the civil services.

Covid-19 tally rises to 18,55,745 in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's COVID-19 tally increased to 18,55,745 with 52,050 people testing positive for coronavirus infection in a day, while the recoveries crossed the 12-lakh mark on Tuesday, according to the Union Health Ministry data. The death toll due to COVID-19 climbed to 38,938 with 803 fresh fatalities being reported in 24-hours, the data updated at 8 am showed.

A total of 12,30,509 people have recovered, while there are 5,86,298 active cases of coronavirus infection in the country presently. The recovery rate among COVID-19 patients has risen to 66.31 per cent, while the fatality rate has further dropped



to 2.10 pc, the data stated. The total number of confirmed cases also includes foreigners. This is the sixth consecutive day that COVID-19 cases have increased by more than 50,000. A cumulative total of 2,08,64,750 samples have been tested up to August 2 with 6,61,892 samples being tested on Monday, the highest done in a day so far, scientist and media coordinator at ICMR, Dr Lokesh Sharma, said.

Curfew in Kashmir ahead of first anniversary of revocation of Article 370

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

A curfew was imposed across the valley on Tuesday as authorities apprehended violent protests in view of plans by separatists and Pakistan-sponsored groups to observe August 5, the first anniversary of revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status, as black day. Police and CRPF personnel were deployed in strength across the valley to ensure that the plans of the separatists to disturb peace did not succeed, officials said. They said police vehicles, fitted with public address systems, went around localities announcing imposition of strict curfew for two days. "People are requested not to violate the law and stay indoors," the police said.

Barricades have been set up at



hundreds of places in Kashmir, including Srinagar city, to regulate movement of essential services and emergencies while concertina wires have been also been laid, the officials said.

The authorities had announced on Monday that the curfew would be imposed in Srinagar and other parts of the valley in view of the inputs

about violent protests endangering public life and property as the separatist and Pakistan-sponsored groups were planning to observe August 5 as a "Black Day". An order issued by Srinagar district magistrate Shahid Iqbal Choudhary said any such mass gathering would also be detrimental to efforts related to COVID containment.

Plea for taking law test from home; HC seeks Centre, NLU consortium stand

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court Tuesday asked the Centre and the Consortium of National Law Universities (NLU) to reply to a law graduate's plea challenging the requirement of physical appearing at exam centre for the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) 2020 amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

Justice Jayant Nath asked the central government to inform the court whether it would be permissible to hold such an exam at physical centres in view of the prevailing pandemic.

The court issued notices to the central government and the



NLU, seeking their stand by August 10 on the petition which has sought that the online CLAT exams be allowed to be undertaken from home.

CLAT is a centralised exam for admissions to bachelors and masters courses in law in 22 NLUs in the country and is conducted by the consortium.

Provide PPE, face masks to people in old age homes: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Tuesday said pension to elderly persons should be disbursed on time and those living in old age homes across the country be provided with personal protective equipment (PPE), sanitisers and face masks during the persisting COVID-19 pandemic.

The elderly are suffering and steps should be taken by the administration to attend to them whenever any request is made, the top court said. The authorities should ensure timely disbursement of pension to them and the elderly in old age homes be provided PPE kits, the top court said.

A bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan said this while hearing a plea filed by former Union minister and senior advocate Ashwani Kumar who said that at the time of the pandem-



ic, it is necessary that pension to elderly reaches them on time.

Kumar told the top court that crores of elderly people are living alone and appropriate direction should be issued that pension reaches to those, who are already identified and eligible for it, on time.

Senior advocate V Mohana, appearing for the Centre, told the bench that states are already making efforts in this regard and this is not an adversarial issue.

When Mohana sought one week to file reply on the plea, Kumar opposed it and said urgent actions are needed in this matter. The petitioner also raised the issue of the need to provide face masks, sanitisers and PPE to the elder people to protect them from the deadly virus.

The bench also dealt with another application which has sought direction for treatment of elderly for coronavirus without any discrimination.

Smog tower installation project in Delhi

SC asks Centre to start work soon

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Tuesday asked the Centre to "start at the earliest" the work for installation of smog tower at Anand Vihar in east Delhi, which is aimed at helping in combating air pollution.

A bench headed by Justice Arun Mishra was informed by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that setting up of the smog tower, a structure designed as large-scale air purifier to reduce air pollution, would take 10 months and the authorities would be unable to curtail this time limit. "It is ok but the work should start at the earliest," the bench said. The apex court asked Mehta to apprise it on August 10 about the time frame and also when the work for installation of the smog tower can be started.

Book reveals daring exploits of Indian spymasters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A new book gives a peep into the heroic covert operations carried by India's external spy agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and thereby narrates a gripping account of what actually happens behind the grey walls of the secret society.

The book, titled "RAW: A History of India's Covert Operations", also gives a detailed account of real spies and reveals hitherto unknown aspects of their life, trauma and temptation, triumphs and setbacks in executing each of their "Mission Impossible". It is written by investigative journalist and author Yatish Yadav. RAW, whose founder was



legendary spymaster Rameshwar Nath Kao, was established in 1968 to satisfy the need for increased intelligence that was identified during the 1962 Sino-Indian Border War and during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965.

"The idea behind the book is to do a deep dive into the unanswered questions sur-

rounding the spy agency - its operatives, and put forward some the significant role that it played and its impact on national security and long-term secret diplomacy.

"While writing it, I came across a number of these brave shadowy warriors and developed a close connection with each of them and I hope it does justice to their stories of valour and sacrifices," said the author.

Mughal-e-Azam' screenplay enters Oscars library to mark 60th anniversary

PNS ■ LONDON

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

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



"I hope future generations can learn and get inspired by the work of my late father and his incredible team of writers. I want to humbly thank the Academy Awards for accepting the screenplay," he said

Mughal-e-Azam' started with words from the greatest writing team ever assembled in Hindi cinema and I thought the best way to honour them was to permanently preserve their screenplay in the world's most renowned film library," said

Akbar Asif, a businessman based in London. "I hope future generations can learn and get inspired by the work of my late father and his incredible team of writers. I want to humbly thank the Academy Awards for accepting the screenplay," he said.

India 'Flying Blind' on Corona data, say experts

Amit Shah, the man leading India's fight against Covid-19 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's top lieutenant, has been among government leaders touting the country's low death rate as a success story.

In late June, Mr Shah said India had seen much fewer deaths from the virus than the global average and other nations like the U.S., Brazil and the U.K. That showed a "country like India, even when compared to developed countries, has fought this fight very well," he told New Delhi-based Asian News International in an interview.

Officially India's death rate is nearly 20 times lower than the U.S., even though it has the world's fastest growing epidemic and the third highest number of total cases -- now including Amit Shah, who confirmed on Sunday that he was hospitalised with the virus. But independent experts are warning India has failed to properly record fatalities, and say



better data collection is needed if the country is going to get a handle on the epidemic.

"The problem is a mix of poor data culture and a bloated, corrupt bureaucracy," said Steve H. Hanke, professor of Applied Economics and the founder and co-director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Applied Economics, Global Health, and the Study of Business Enterprise at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, pointing to a report

by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"Missing or low-quality data are always a major problem when attempting to form public policy in the health -- or any other -- field," he said. "It's equivalent to the pilot of an aircraft flying blind." The country of 1.3 billion has more than 1.8 million confirmed infections and close to 40,000 deaths, according to the most recent data from the Johns Hopkins University. Its mortality per

"Missing or low-quality data are always a major problem when attempting to form public policy in the health -- or any other -- field," he said

100,000 is about 2.82 compared to 47.33 in the U.S and 44.92 in Brazil, the data shows.

Unregistered Deaths

Bloomberg contacted officials in the capital New Delhi, the financial hub Mumbai and the southern industrial center of Chennai to obtain data for total deaths in each month from March to July for 2019 and 2020. Figures from Chennai showed overall deaths this year were higher than last year, with a spike in June, while Mumbai provided two

different data sets that couldn't be compared. Multiple calls to municipal corporation officials in Delhi yielded no data.

India's death registration data was patchy even before the virus struck. The vast majority of deaths, especially in rural villages, take place at home and routinely go unregistered. For others the cause of death listed is often anodyne -- old age or heart attack. Experts believe that only between 20%-30% of all deaths in India are properly medically certified.

The pandemic has stretched the country's already ramshackle health infrastructure to near breaking point, highlighting every fault-line that already existed. Data collection is a prime example. Covid-19 data from the federal and state governments is either without any breakdown of gender and age -- crucial when assessing the impact of disease -- or lacking comparisons with deaths recorded over similar periods in previous years.

After Ayodhya

As the foundation stone is laid for the temple, we must not let triumphalism get the better of Lord Ram's *dharma*



Years of politics and the clash of "isms" have actually overlooked the cultural consciousness and the civilisational ethos that Lord Ram represents. Revered variously as *Maryada Purushottam* Sri Ramchandra Raja of Ayodhya or the *Imam-e-Hind*, he has, beyond being a central figure of the Hindu pantheon, been an anchor of the Indic way of life and the way it should be lived. As Swami Vivekananda said, "he is an embodiment of truth, morality and ideals." The God-king of Ayodhya, who set an example of what social order should be and how it should be conducted, is, therefore, more of a human construct, one we

could model ourselves after easily. And he was a selfless leader of people, putting them first. His wars were on principle of the right over wrong; he could have converted all the *rakshasas* into his own clan after killing Ravana but he chose not to. Simply because he respected his limits and that of others and believed in upholding the sense of righteousness. It is this vision that pervades our collective consciousness and regardless of whether a temple at his birthplace was demolished and a mosque built in its place, which in turn was overrun, the fact is Ayodhya is unanimously believed to have been the place where he was born. In that sense, it is our existential fountainhead. He is a belief and emotion so strong that restoring his birthplace is not about historical corrections but a return to the truth as it should be seen and practised. To that extent the *bhoomi puja*, or the foundation-stone laying ceremony at the site, is not just a milestone, it is an edict on what *dharma* should be. It should not be about Hindu triumphalism but about upholding values exactly the way he would have wanted. Lord Ram was a pluralist, not an isolationist. Celebrating him shouldn't be about symbolism, for majoritarian might is measured by grace, not by muscularity of an imposition. But that is a tall order in today's show and tell politics. What began as a mass movement to reclaim the site, launched by the BJP in 1989 to chart an alternative political path, gained massive traction once the then party supremo LK Advani began a Rathayatra from Gujarat. Although he couldn't complete the yatra, it aroused passions across the country and paved the way for the party's ascendancy to political power. And in the process, religiosity overtook secularism as an electoral agenda. Only social justice forces in the shape of VP Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Lalu Prasad Yadav held out. But that led to polarisation and Ram became less of a guiding visionary with his neo-disciples becoming more like avengers of historical insult. Hinduism became Hindutva. In fact, the Congress, too, was taken in by the Hindutva wave with Rajiv Gandhi himself allowing the opening of the Babri Masjid gates and 'shilanyas' prayers to be held inside for fear of losing the Hindu vote. This opened the floodgates for the right-wing fringe like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Bajrang Dal to claim political centrastage. That's when the temple became more than a symbolism, a runaway cause to justify everything from a majoritarian perspective. Rajiv Gandhi had grossly misjudged that the mosque, too, could co-exist. That was not to be. Advani had merely sought a balanced discourse where Hinduism could be defined not by exclusion, revisionism and minority appeasement but as an inclusive philosophy of national life. One that translated into the reasoned prime ministership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Unfortunately, today he and many seniors have been benched, not even consulted or properly invited to temple affairs. Meanwhile, the hardline extremism and otherisation of non-Hindus have become the centrifugal force of the BJP, one that has been condoned by a tacit electorate, which returned the Narendra Modi Government with a brute majority. One that has the silent approval of the Opposition, which has fallen in line, swept aside by the tide of identity politics.

So what after Ayodhya? Is it the culmination of temple politics or will it be milked further electorally? Or will it spur a demand for more reclamations at Kashi and Mathura? At one time, hardliners would have been enthusiastic but the BJP's ideological anchor, the RSS, is itself cautious about continuing the temple issue beyond the Ram *jannabhoomi*. In fact, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has categorically said that there are no plans for either Kashi or Mathura, that the RSS does not get into agitations and that the Ram temple was an exception. Having won a massive mandate, the BJP had to address its core constituency and has delivered a promise made many years ago and which at one time seemed just manifesto material. But both the RSS and the BJP are also realist about consolidating power. While the nation heaved a collective sigh of relief at the resolution of the Ayodhya dispute, there is undoubtedly a sense of fatigue about continuing politics in the name of Ram. There are much bigger concerns in the post-pandemic world to tackle, the bleak economy and restarting the nation once again. Even Ayodhya wants to get back to normal, hoping the temple will accelerate the local economy. Besides, the BJP's image has already taken a beating courtesy hate crimes, cow vigilantism and the anti-citizenship law protests and it wouldn't want to create new faultlines or give ammunition to others to do so. Ram *rajya* may be ideal but the BJP has got to get real.

Forlorn hopes

Wholesale dispatches for the auto industry are climbing back to 2019 levels. Is this a good sign or a false dawn?



When reports from the automotive industry came early in August, they were reassuringly positive. The country's largest carmaker, Maruti-Suzuki, said that wholesale dispatches to dealers were up by one per cent from July 2019. The country's second-largest carmaker, Hyundai Motor India, registered a decline of two per cent for domestic dispatches. While both carmakers have showed a considerable decline in exports, other producers, too, displayed a relatively healthy number of wholesale dispatches for July 2020 compared to July 2019. Even two-wheeler companies, Hero Motocorp, Honda and

TVS, showed considerable numbers in July 2020, almost matching July 2019 numbers and importantly climbing significantly over sales in June 2020. And in a sign that the rural economy is picking up, tractor sales for July 2020 continued to surpass expectations, showing double-digit growth for all leading manufacturers.

However, there are some signs that things have not all returned to normal. Commercial vehicle sales are still muted, with transporters still having excess capacity. With educational institutions and public transportation services limited, there has been almost no offtake of buses in the past four months. One must draw attention to the difference between wholesale and actual retail sales; the latter are yet to recover. While most manufacturers have managed to get their production in order, thanks to special permissions even in lockdown zones, retail sales have been hit as dealerships have had to stay closed on days when cities, districts and even whole States endured lockdowns. What must also be remembered is that the entire automotive industry was suffering in 2019. Sales had been muted as the economy was still sputtering. In fact, last year, sales were down sharply from 2018. One should wait and watch to see how actual retail sales in the months of August and September pan out. These are historically weak months leading up to the bonanza of the last three months of the year, the so-called "festive season." And while it is encouraging to see that auto manufacturers have managed to get their houses back in order, much more needs to be done for the entire economy to get back on track after the Wuhan virus derailed all hopes of growth. These might be green shoots but they may not be enough to ensure that the plant called the economy grows big and strong by 2021.

Turning liability to asset

Merely privatising the PSBs will get us nowhere. Along with this move, the Government must bring sector-specific reforms. And they must come quick



GOURAV VALLABH

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its Financial Stability Report released on July 24 warned that the Gross Non-Performing Assets (GNPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) could rise up to 14.7 per cent by March 2021 from the current 8.5 per cent in March 2020. This piece of news was followed up by former RBI Governor Urjit Patel's shocking revelation that the central bank wanted to be tough against the loan defaulters but the Government wanted him to "go soft", which eventually forced him to resign. A series of happenings in the banking sector in recent times has made everyone doubt the character and intentions of the current Government to recapitalise public sector banks (PSBs).

Recently, the All India Bank Employees Association (AIBEA), too, released a list of 2,426 borrower accounts that have been categorised as "wilful defaulters" with dues amounting to ₹1,47,350 crore to the banking system. It also mentioned that such huge amounts are being technically written off by the NDA Government. Moreover, recently, the Union Government announced that only five PSBs would continue to exist and that the rest of the unmerged banks would be sold off to private bidders in the name of recapitalisation. Only last year, the Government had merged 10 State-owned banks into four, creating a handful of larger banks in the process.

On the one hand, the Government is trying to infuse private capital into the PSBs and on the other, it is forcing both the State Bank of India (SBI) and Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) to bail out failed private sector banks such as Yes Bank. The statements and actions of the Government appear to contradict each other. A comparison of the BSE PSU bank index *vis-a-vis* BSE Sensex from 2014 to 2020 reveals that the former has seen no growth in the last six years while the latter has seen a steady rise. The BSE PSU bank index has instead fallen by 2.63 per cent, while the overall index has grown approximately by 11 per cent on a CAGR basis. This clearly reflects that investors are not happy with the way the PSBs have been functioning.

On the one hand, the Government is pushing for a technical write-off of bad loans, on the



other, it has failed to investigate or punish the willful defaulters. This is evident from the fact that SBI has been recovering less than one per cent of its write-offs each year. As per reports, SBI's technical write-off of bad loans in the last eight years amounted to ₹1.23 lakh crore, while recovery from bad debts during the same period was less than ₹9,000 crore, which is less than one per cent of the collection efficiency every year.

Around 84,545 fraud cases — involving about ₹1.85 lakh crore — were reported by scheduled commercial banks and select FIs during 2019-20 as per RBI in an RTI response. This takes the total loss to ₹3.6 lakh crore due to frauds in the last six years (FY 2014-15 to 2019-20). Since July 19, 1969, when 14 banks were nationalised, they have been contributing immensely to build credit lines for the marginalised sectors like agriculture. The National Credit Council, in its meeting held in July 1968, emphasised that commercial banks should finance priority sectors like agriculture and small-scale industries.

Over the years, the priority sector lending norms have seen major changes and have, in fact, evolved with a greater focus on those segments that have traditionally been neglected from accessing credit. Thus,

“THE GOVERNMENT MUST COME UP WITH A WHITE PAPER THAT MUST BE PREPARED IN CONSULTATION WITH ECONOMISTS, FORMER FINANCE MINISTERS AND RBI GOVERNORS. THE WHITE PAPER SHOULD INCLUDE DIVESTMENT PLANS FOR PSBs. A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION INTO THE DIVESTMENT PROCESS, TOO, IS A MUST”



SOUNDBITE

In this profession (cinema), you are only as good as your last project. Some films don't turn out the way you expect them to.



Actor
—Sharman Joshi

The decisions that Governments take now will have lasting impact on hundreds of millions of young people, and on the development prospects of countries for decades to come.



UN chief
—Antonio Guterres

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



Former RSS ideologue
—KN Govindacharya

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Better late than never

Sir — PV Narasimha Rao should be remembered for being a tactful Prime Minister, who handled a peculiar situation that developed in the country when an uncontrolled gathering pulled down the disputed structure at Ayodhya on December 6, 1992, paving the way for the ultimate foundation stone-laying ceremony for a grand Ram temple today.

He will also be remembered for successfully running a minority Government for a full five-year term and paving the way for a new era of economic reforms. It is indeed regrettable that like many other Congress veterans, he was not only sidelined by his own party but even insulted after his death. The Congress still refuses to look beyond the Gandhis.

Though a bit late, the present ruling Government has done well to honour forgotten national heroes such as Rao and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The real tribute, however, will be when Rao is honoured with the highest civilian award of Bharat Ratna. He deserves the maxi-

mum recognition.

Madhu Agrawal
Delhi

Change for good

Sir — Once again, the Prime Minister's Office intervened at

COVID-19 fallout on children

Data collated so far show that children are less affected clinically by COVID-19 than adults; they are not completely immune to SAR-CoV-2; are only less susceptible to contracting the virus and developing severe disease from it; and they can be carriers but are far less likely to spread the contagion than adults. However, the Coronavirus pandemic affects children less in terms of health but its impact on their lives and growth is incalculably immense. It has turned their world upside down; has exacerbated the problems already faced by them due to poverty, malnutrition, regressive cultural values and practices, poor parenting and physical abuse.

The pandemic has caused a decline in economic activity, fall in household incomes and has forced millions of families to subsist on reduced daily intake of food. Deprived of adequate nourishment, children suffer stunted physical and cognitive growth. Governments must arrange to provide food to children who used to get mid-day meals in schools. Children are creative, inquisitive and agile; they need classrooms and playgrounds to grow up and blossom.



som. They are at an impressionable age; they are profoundly affected by what happens to them and around them. The pandemic makes it a ceaseless struggle between their resilience and vulnerability to cope with its impact. It is important to ensure that children don't wilt and come to think of themselves as the "lost generation." Their protection, health and well-being must be the world's priority.

G David Milton
Maruthancode

prices of refreshments.

M Pradyu
Kannur

Trust Govt hospitals

Sir — With the Coronavirus having breached the 1.8 million mark, it has spared none. Even Bollywood celebrities, as well as many of our leaders, have been hit by the virus. Union Home Minister Amit Shah is the latest one to have contracted the disease and has been hospitalised in one of the best and costliest private hospitals in the country.

Several other Ministers at the Centre as well as in States have contracted the virus. Shockingly, most of them were treated and continue to be admitted in private hospitals. To the contrary, when an average person falls sick, he/she prefers reaching out to a Government hospital as private ones are unaffordable. Our administrators must start trusting the Government facilities.

Rishi
Via email

Send your feedback to:
letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

The Congress must decide

The party needs leadership, direction, revival, a new narrative and unity. Maybe even a non-Gandhi at the helm, soon



KALYANI SHANKAR

For the first time since Sonia Gandhi took over as the Congress president after the resignation of Rahul Gandhi last August, the rift between the “old guard” loyal to Sonia and Team Rahul has come out in the open. The reason for this is simple. Both the senior and younger leaders are frustrated with the *status quo* in the party when it sorely needs to revive, with a strong leadership at the helm. However, this “old guard” versus “young Turks” fight in the Congress is not new. It was there even during Indira Gandhi’s days when she split the party in 1969, pushing out the syndicate led by the then Congress president K Kamaraj. The syndicate thought that they could manipulate Indira but she proved to be a shrewd politician and emerged stronger despite the split. After she won the Bangladesh war, politically she reached her zenith. Later, when the Congress party split in 1978, Congress (Indira) emerged as the real Congress.

When Rajiv Gandhi succeeded Indira in 1984 after her assassination, he was surrounded by his own coterie. But he also kept some of the senior leaders close to him. Since Rajiv was a politically strong leader with over 400 Congress MPs backing him, the feud between the seniors and younger leaders was muted.

Later, after Rajiv’s assassination, a section of the old guard brought Sonia into the party in 1988. They were loyal to her while she also depended on them for support and guidance as she was a political greenhorn. It was a big task to guide such an old party as the Congress. Things went smoothly for years and over time Sonia tightened her grip on the party.

However, the fight between the old guard and the young leaders began when she promoted her son. While the senior leaders were apprehensive about their future, Rahul’s team was getting impatient to get meatier roles within the party and in Congress-ruled States. The politically-savvy old guard managed to block all attempts to bring a non-Gandhi to the helm of the party and bring back Sonia when Rahul resigned last August. Rahul himself criticised the old guard in the May 25 Congress Working Committee meeting.

Now, with the departure of Jyotiraditya Scindia in March and rebellion by Sachin Pilot — two of the closest aides of the Gandhi scion — Team Rahul is further agitated. The fact that the newly-elected MP Rajiv Satav, said to be close to Rahul, was bold enough to be critical of the old guard and the UPA-2, says a lot about the divide within the party. It was only after senior leaders like Anand Sharma, Manish Tiwari, Milind Deora and so on retorted strongly that Satav withdrew his remarks about UPA-2.

Sonia and Rahul are not like Indira and Rajiv. Leading a weakened Congress is different from leading a politically-strong party. The departure of two young and charismatic leaders like Scindia and Pilot in the last four months and the loss of Madhya Pradesh and a wobbling Rajasthan have weakened the leadership further. Younger leaders from Team Rahul like Milind Deora and Jitin Prasada are likely to leave soon.

The immediate urgency in the party is the leadership vacuum. If Rahul wants to come back as the party chief, he should do so at the earliest. The “Bring Rahul” chant has already begun. Fortunately for the Gandhis there is no challenge to Rahul. However, if he does not want to come back, Rahul should make it clear now.

Dissent in the Congress is also not new as it functioned as an umbrella party providing space for all kinds of opinions. But discussing differences within the party forum and publicly airing grievance are two different things. The generational divide in the Congress goes much beyond and if no corrective measures are taken, it will affect the revival of the party.

Can this issue be resolved? It is indeed tricky, as both camps are not willing to wait. With both Sonia and Rahul helplessly watching the fight and with a leadership crisis plaguing the party, they need some quick and out-of-the-box thinking. As the old guard says, now is the time for introspection and correction. The party should have a conclave like it did in Pachmarhi and Shimla.

Former Minister Salman Khurshid has put the present crisis in perspective. In an article, he sums up, “The loss of promising young leaders, irrespective of the reason, is indeed unfortunate and sad. But the young, who feel we, the older generation, are not giving way, must not forget that there are even younger ones waiting on the sides. The crisis is not about young and old but about those who want to leave and those who are determined not to abandon the ship in stormy weather.”

The erosion has begun in the party like it happened before Sonia took over in 1998. The Gandhis should realise that 2020 is not 1998. Also, the family has proved that they are not vote catchers now. The party needs leadership, direction, revival, a new narrative and unity. Maybe even a non-Gandhi at the helm, soon. But it needs to decide fast as time and tide wait for none.

(The writer is a senior journalist)

IT IS A BIG TRAGEDY. IT COULDN’T HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND THE POLICE. THAT IS WHY NO ACTION IS BEING TAKEN.

—CONGRESS RAJYA SABHA MP
SHAMSHER DULLO

POINTCOUNTERPOINT



I ASSURE YOU AS THE CHIEF MINISTER THAT NO ONE WILL BE SPARED AND THE GUILTY WILL BE PUNISHED TO ENSURE JUSTICE.

—PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER
AMARINDER SINGH

Miles to go in J&K

Politically, the revocation of Articles 35A and 370 marks the fulfilment of the BJP’s poll promise but emotional integration may take more time and requires imaginative handling by all stakeholders



PRAMOD JAIN

During the last one year, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has seen many far-reaching changes.

On August 5, 2019, the Parliament revoked Articles 35A and 370 of the Indian Constitution and reorganised J&K through an Act of Parliament, carving J&K as well as Ladakh as Union Territories (UTs) out of the erstwhile State. The J&K Constitution became inoperative, all Central laws now extend to J&K and many State laws are inoperative. The other major changes included the abolition of the bicameral legislature and its replacement by a unicameral arrangement and reduction in the life of the Assembly from six to five years. There is now only one flag in J&K i.e. the Tricolour. Though politically, the revocation of Articles 35A and 370 marks the fulfilment of the BJP’s long-held election promise, emotional integration may take more time and requires imaginative and sustained handling by various primary and secondary stakeholders.

Institution-building for good governance: Good governance is predicated upon a reasonably robust institutional framework in terms of both structure and agency. While a lot has been done in terms of the structure, the agency needs due attention, keeping the long-term horizons in view.

J&K never had direct British rule or the Indian Civil Service (ICS). The All India Services (AIS) were extended to it as late as the 1960s and have not yet bloomed in the real sense. Till recently 50 per cent local induction — especially when the State services are themselves recruited on a very narrow, limited-to-J&K base — was a regressive policy that has been done away with. For administrative integration and for higher standards of public administration, the UT should have 100 per cent direct recruit AIS officers. Fortunately, the IAS, IPS and IFS cadres have been reviewed and are being expanded shortly. There are quite a few bright wo/men in the State services; they need encouragement, exposure and training. Post-1990, the J&K Police managed to get enormous authority, manpower, infrastructure and funds. But they need to adequately attend to maintaining law and order, crime management and normal policing. This must be done in a manner that is transparent and ensures public access as well as accountability at various levels of the civil set-up.

Civic engagement: To build a progressive and modern UT, the focus must be on strengthening, even re-doing, from the perspective of the user-citizens, the institutions of governance so that they speedily and professionally respond to public issues, people’s problems and local needs. Civic engagement and public outreach programmes like “Back to Villages”, devolution of more powers including control over staff, functions and funds to the elected municipal and panchayat bodies, block development councils (BDCs) *et al* are indeed welcome steps. Giving good monthly honoraria to all, having life insurance and providing the protocol equivalence of District Magistrate to all the BDC Chairmen will boost their morale and motivate others to join public life, thereby strengthening the local democratic institutions. However, the new initiatives must be supplemented by a “Back to Basics” programme in every department, both in the UT secretariat and in the field, so as to attend to the basic but forgotten/ignored/diluted aspects pertaining to the very *raison d’être* of governance.

At the core of this approach lies the need for an enhanced civic engagement and to afford an opportunity to the enlightened citizens, especially urban, to relate to and become a part of the system, thereby enhancing the “ownership” of the

“INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT BASED ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT HAS TO BE A GENUINELY PARTICIPATORY EXERCISE, IN WHICH ALL DELEGATED RESPONSIBILITY IS DISCHARGED BY THE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES; ALL DECISION-MAKING HAS TO BE THEIRS. THE TRADITIONAL, BUREAUCRATIC AND TECHNOCRATIC APPROACH, JOKINGLY CALLED ‘YOU PARTICIPATE, I DECIDE,’ HAS TO BE REPLACED BY A PRO-PEOPLE ORIENTATION IN THE GOVERNMENT MACHINERY, ESPECIALLY IN THE STATE RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND PANCHAYATI RAJ DEPARTMENT AND IN THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT”



Government-funded schemes and projects. This energisation of the administrative structure and agency, coupled with enforcing accountability and productivity, especially at the cutting edge levels, will reduce citizens’ trust deficit, enhance social capital and mainstream the marginalised population — the processes of social engineering necessary for inclusive development.

People as stakeholders: Inclusive development based on civic engagement has to be a genuinely participatory exercise, in which all delegated responsibility is discharged by the elected representatives; all decision-making has to be theirs. The traditional, bureaucratic and technocratic approach, jokingly called “you participate, I decide”, has to be replaced by a pro-people orientation in the Government machinery, especially in the State Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Department and in the Urban Development Department, besides others having a significant public contact.

The newly-empowered Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and municipal bodies must not be seen as the Government’s departmental appendages or field units, as the officers tend to be seen, but as separate *loci* of power. Better functioning bodies must be given additional responsibilities and funds so as to build their stake in local area development. A new and revamped grievance redress mechanism (complaints registering methodology) needs to be put in place so that people can raise their voice about all that is unwanted or unacceptable. The old practice of officers holding regular camps in villages and at the *tehsil* headquarters needs to be strengthened and institutionalised. All vacant seats in panchayats, BDCs and other bodies must be filled up through early elections. Now that the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments have been extended to J&K, bringing about positive changes is both imperative and logical. The statutory post of the ombudsman for the PRIs also needs to be filled up early.

Restoring basic services: Connected with the above is the task of restoring basic services like 4G, which will go a long way to assuage the grievances of the younger generation and help businesses. Essential services like high-speed internet, power and water supply must keep pace with the citizens’ expectations. While there is a marked improvement in the supply of quality electricity in the twin capitals and major towns, similar improvement is yet to be registered with regard to rural areas. People often complain that every wind and rainstorm leads to a power breakdown. Better power and water supply and other managerial issues must be tackled with the people’s participation, taking PRIs on board, with the Divisional Commissioners and District Development Commissioners playing the key role of coordination and monitoring.

Strengthening the rule of law: The rule of law is a basic ingredient of a democratic system, free society and a market-led economy. It postulates that all citizens are equal before law, none is above the law, none can be condemned unheard, none can be a judge in his own cause; there would be no arbitrariness in decisions taken by public authorities. The celebrated historian and author, Niall Ferguson, avers that the decline in the rule of law is a major factor contributing to the degeneration of nations.

In almost every Assembly session in J&K, there have been acrimonious debates, *inter alia*, on the alleged backdoor appointments, political bigwigs being asked to recommend names for selection of candidates, appointments through relaxation of rules and so on. In this backdrop, the rule of law needs to be strengthened and re-established, wherever required, in the day-to-day working of the administration at various levels, and it needs to be visible.

The task may require training and re-training the decision-makers, their intensive monitoring and introduction of checks and balances as well as giving punishments for wrongdoing. It is indeed difficult, though not impossible.

Political party development: Though the timing of the electoral event is the sole discretion of the Election Commission of India, election to the State Assembly is the logical next step. Since political parties are a necessary part of the electoral and democracy-building processes, they need to come out of their current, self-imposed hibernation. All parties need also to seriously go in for “political party development.” They should groom ideologues with a grip over the political economy and public policy issues, those who can link up the macro and micro, and devise vision, mission, strategy and plan of action to establish a bottom-up interface with the voters, especially the younger ones.

All parties perhaps need a new pedagogy and communication approach, through social media platforms, emails and text messages. They also need to strengthen the governance institutions because people’s political behaviour is always influenced by the institutions, political and administrative. Collectively all of them have a responsibility to ensure that democracy delivers, and delivers to the satisfaction of the electorate at large.

Limitation of stereotypes: It has been seen that J&K-related stereotypes don’t generally capture the essence of all that is good, bad and ugly, and only strengthen the archetypal discourse fixated on the romantic-emotive. The need of the hour is a broad spectrum of new, bold, long-term and sustainable policy initiatives and their time-bound, effective and professional implementation. Lieutenant-Governor GC Murmu will do well to nudge political parties to resume political activity sooner than later. He is already consolidating on the work done by the Union Ministries and the UT administration but the efforts need to be speeded up and expanded as early as possible. There cannot be a trust deficit for long.

(The writer is a retired IAS officer of the J&K cadre)

The kingmaker with the heart of a king

Now that Amar Singh is no longer with us, I am sure he will be remembered by the ordinary people as long as they live for his kindness



SANTANU GANGULY

It was August 2018 and I was curating a Bengali Film Festival in Delhi. National Award-winning actress Rituparna Sengupta was one of the guests at the festival. While heading towards her hotel from the airport, she told me, “I have invited Amar Singh for the opening ceremony.”

So I conveyed the message to the organisers. But to my surprise, they informed me that the Samajwadi Party leader and Rajya Sabha member could not be accommodated as the festival got support from the Chief Minister of Delhi, Arvind Kejriwal. The Chief Minister’s Office had clearly mentioned that as per established protocol, no other political

persona from any other political party could be present at the function. It was a very peculiar situation and the organisers were very tense as they did not want to offend the Chief Minister.

So, the moment Amar Singh arrived, I took him to the conference room, since the opening ceremony was yet to begin. I made him comfortable, gave him a cup of tea and set up an interview with *Doordarshan*. My intention was to let the Chief Minister arrive and take his seat on the stage before seating Amar Singh in the front row among the audience.

Those moments spent with Amar Singh, while waiting for Arvind Kejriwal to arrive, turned out to be very memorable. I got the opportunity to talk to the veteran politician, industrialist, the close friend of Bollywood royalty Amitabh Bachchan and the kingmaker of Indian politics over tea for about half an hour. I call him kingmaker, because of the way he saved the Manmohan Singh Government in a floor test in Parliament. Even his



harsh critics will have to agree that he had been blessed with exceptional floor management skills in Parliament.

During our chat, I was amazed to hear him speak fluent Bengali. Then he claimed himself to be a Bengali at heart and began talking about his school and college days in Kolkata, the time, the memories, the culture, the people and, of course, the politics.

It was then that I reminded him of his great contribution to the Cinefan: Asian Film Festival, 2003.

This was before Cinefan was merged with Osian’s. Aruna Vasudev had a hard time organising the festival as she got very nominal Government and corporate support. So she had approached Amar Singh on the recommendation of Vasant Sathe. At that time, Amar Singh gave us the ₹1 lakh we needed as the cash award for the Best Film voted by the audience. That was received by veteran filmmaker Goutam Ghose, for his Bengali film *Abar Aranye* (In the forest, again). As Amar Singh was very busy with some political engagement, he requested Vasant Sathe to present the award.

After listening to my tale, Amar Singh just smiled and said, “You know the ordinary people and the poor people always gratefully remember whatever little I have done for them. It has happened many times that during my visit to my constituency, many people come along with their children and ask them to touch my feet. They tell their children that ‘he is your grandfather. He did our *Kanyadaan*. Without his help our

marriage would not have been possible! Frankly speaking I don’t even remember the occasion or I personally don’t recall all the people, but they remember my help. I think my purpose in life is solved.” After a small pause, he continued, “But whatever I have done for rich people... no one ever thinks about those efforts.” I could see the sadness on Amar Singh’s face when he said that.

During the course of our conversation, I discovered that he was an avid reader and had an amazing collection of books in his personal library. After learning this fact, I requested him to visit the book store next door before going to the auditorium. He readily agreed and chose a good amount of books, mostly on history and politics. The store employees panicked as they did not have the facility to take payments through a credit or debit card and the bill was a whopping ₹20,000. Unfazed by this, Amar Singh just murmured “Oh! That’s not a big amount”, and took out the money from the pocket of his kurta and gave it to them.

Meanwhile, Kejriwal arrived and the opening ceremony of the film festival began. So we proceeded inside the auditorium. Amar Singh got his designated seat and everything went smoothly.

After the ceremony, when Kejriwal got off the stage to leave, Amar Singh just got up and with folded hands said to him in Hindi, “*Kyun, nehi pehchane ji?* (Didn’t you recognise me?)” Kejriwal, with his popular and charming smile, quickly held Amar Singh’s hands and exchanged greetings very cordially.

Anyway, at the end of the day, all of us were discussing Amar Singh’s sad acknowledgement of the fact that the ordinary people remembered his good deeds but the rich never remembered his kindness. Somehow, to this day, I can’t forget the sad, hurt face of Amar Singh. Now that he is no longer with us, I am sure he will be remembered by the ordinary people as long as they live.

(The author is a Delhi-based film festival curator, director, producer and freelance writer)



FOREIGN EYE



GIVING WINGS TO CREATIVITY

The Coronavirus pandemic has reconfigured the home as a site of creativity, one glimpsed through webcams and headphones. The format will surely vanish when arts venues reopen around the world. But for some women musicians this year, before and during the lockdown, the domestic space has offered artistic liberation at odds with the home’s reputation as a place of constraint for women. (The Guardian editorial)

CAPSULE



ITC's Bhadrachalam facility gets 'GreenCo Platinum+' rating

NEW DELHI: ITC on Tuesday said its paperboards and specialty papers business integrated facility at Bhadrachalam, Telangana, has been conferred the 'GreenCo Platinum+' rating by CII Green Business Centre, as part of the Green Company rating system. The 'GreenCo Platinum+' rating is given to industries for demonstrating leadership and commitment towards environment conservation by CII with a comprehensive framework that evaluates performance of green features of companies on 10 broad green parameters. These parameters include energy efficiency, renewable energy, water conservation, waste management, material conservation, green supply chain, among others.



Rupee settles 3 paise down at 75.04 against USD

NEW DELHI: The rupee pared some of its initial losses and settled 3 paise down at 75.04 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, even as domestic equity market was trading with significant gains. The rupee opened weak at 75.13 at the interbank forex market, then pared some of its early losses to settle at 75.04, down 3 paise over its previous close of 75.01 against greenback. The domestic unit witnessed an intra-day high of 74.85 and a low of 75.17 against the American currency. Forex traders said, while positive equity market and foreign fund inflows supported the rupee, factors like weak Asian currencies and rising Covid cases dragged down the local unit. The dollar index, which gauges greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, fell 0.08 per cent to 93.46.



Lupin gets USFDA nod for generic diabetes drug

NEW DELHI: Drug maker Lupin on Tuesday said it has received approval from the US health regulator to market a generic diabetes drug in America. The Mumbai-based company has received a tentative approval from the USFDA for its Empagliflozin tablets, in strengths of 10 mg and 25 mg, Lupin said in a statement. The product is a generic version of Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc's Jardiance tablets which are indicated as an adjunct to diet and exercise to improve glycemic control in adults with type 2 diabetes mellitus. As per IOVIA MAT March 2020 data, the drug had an annual sales of around USD 4,368 million in the US.

Farm sector to cushion virus impact on economy: FinMin

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The worst seems to be over and the agriculture sector will provide a cushion for the coronavirus-hit economy this fiscal as there are prospects of good monsoon, finance ministry said in a report on Tuesday.

India is well on the path of recovery from a trough in April, ably supported by proactive Government and Central Bank policies, the Macroeconomic Report for July, released by the Economic Affairs Department said.

"With India unlocking, the worst seems to be over for the economy as high-frequency indicators recovered in June 2020 from unprecedented troughs in April; however, risks on account of rising COVID-19 cases and intermittent State lockdowns remain," it said.

It further noted that the rise in Covid cases and subsequent intermittent lockdowns make the recovery prospects



fragile and called for constant and dynamic monitoring. Pinning hopes on the farm sector, the report said, agriculture is set to cushion the shock of the Covid pandemic on the Indian economy in 2020-21.

"With the forecast of a normal monsoon at 102 per cent of long-period average (LPA), agriculture, which contributes about 15 per cent of total gross value added, is set to cushion the shock of Covid pandemic

on the Indian economy in 2020-21," it said.

Timely and proactive exemptions from Covid-induced lockdowns to the sector facilitated uninterrupted harvesting of rabi crops and enhanced sowing of kharif crops, it said, adding, a record procurement of wheat has enabled a flow of around Rs 75,000 crore to the farmers which will boost private consumption in rural areas.

"Since September, 2019, the terms of trade has moved in favour of agriculture and has reinforced rural demand. This has manifested in an increase in rural core inflation between March and June 2020. As a result, the push for growth in coming months appears to be pitched in rural India," it said.

Pointing at the recent landmark reforms announced in agricultural sector, it said the deregulated and liberalized the agricultural sector, further, empower the farmers to become a bigger and more stable participant in India's growth journey.

Talking about some parameters showing improvement, the report said, contraction in industrial activity, measured by Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and eight core industries, has eased in May as compared to April. Industrial output increased across all sectors and sub-sectors within IIP in May as against April.

July exports reach almost last year's level: Goyal

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Showing signs of significant improvement, the country's exports in July have reached almost the level of the corresponding month last year, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday.

He said several indicators are reflecting that the economic activities are reviving in the country.

"Our exports have almost reached last year's July level, with nearly 90 per cent of our export of July 2019 having come back. And, in fact if we were to remove the oil related exports, where we are largely a small value adder... we are 95 per cent plus on the revival of our exports," he said.

The minister added that the country "today is in a mood" to not only bring back economic activity but also become self-reliant, improve the quality and competitive pricing of products. Officially the export numbers for the month of July would be released by the commerce ministry during mid-August.



World shares mixed after Asian mkt track Wall St rally

PNS ■ SINGAPORE

Shares were mixed in early European trading on Tuesday after a strong day of gains in Asia, while US futures edged lower.

Benchmarks slipped in London and Frankfurt on Tuesday but rose in Paris, Tokyo and Hong Kong.

Investors appeared to be shrugging off surging coronavirus case loads in dozens of countries after the S&P 500 started off August by closing within 3% of the record high it set in February.

According to the World Health Organization's tally, there were nearly 18 million confirmed coronavirus cases as of Tuesday, up from 10.2 million at the beginning of July, as outbreaks expanded or revived in many regions.

Such tallies are thought to vastly understate the number of actual cases due to limits of testing and other issues.

Germany's DAX lost 0.6% to 12,572.29 while in London, the FTSE 100 edged 0.3% lower to 6,017.13. The CAC 40 in Paris was 0.1% higher at 4,879.84.

The future contract for the S&P 500 fell 0.3% while the future for the Dow lost 0.2%.

The continued spread of the coronavirus is raising worries that the economy could backslide again, snuffing out recent budding improvements.

But overnight, the S&P 500 added another 0.7% onto its four-month winning streak, closing within 3% of the record high it set in February, at



Sensex rallies 748 points; RIL, HDFC Bank sparkle

MUMBAI: omestic equity benchmark Sensex soared 748 points on Tuesday, led by massive buying in index majors Reliance Industries and HDFC Bank amid heavy foreign fund inflows and a positive trend in global equities.

The BSE Sensex settled 748.31 points or 2.03 per cent higher at 37,687.91, while the NSE Nifty rallied 203.65 points or 1.87 per cent to 11,095.25.

Reliance Industries was the top gainer in the Sensex pack, surging around 7 per cent.

HDFC Bank jumped nearly 4 per cent after the

RBI approved the appointment of Sashidhar Jagdishan as Managing Director and CEO of the bank for a period of three years.

Maruti, Axis Bank, HDFC, ICICI Bank and Bajaj Finance also finished with gains.

On the other hand, Tech Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, HCL Tech, UltraTech Cement and Infosys were among the laggards.

According to traders, stock-specific action in index-heavyweights drove the markets higher. Further, strong foreign fund inflows and positive cues from global markets cheered investors.

3,294.61.

Microsoft and Apple alone accounted for most of the S&P 500's gain: Through the pan-

demic Big Tech has remained almost immune to such concerns on expectations that it can continue to grow.

Listed cos may approach Sebi to resolve grievances against proxy advisors

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Listed companies may approach Sebi to resolve grievances against proxy advisors, who advise shareholders on corporate governance issues and assist them with voting recommendation, the market regulator said on Tuesday.

This will be applicable from September 1, according to a Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) circular.

The regulator noted that

proxy advisors, over the past few years, have played a key role in enabling shareholders to effectively participate in corporate governance decisions

Proxy advisors provide advice to institutional investors or shareholders of a listed entity, in relation to exercise of their rights in the company includ-

ing voting recommendation on agenda items.

However, due to the inherent nature of the work, it is probable that proxy advisors and listed entities may have different views on any agenda item of the listed entity leading to grievances, Sebi said.

"In order to facilitate resolution of such grievances of list-



ed entities against Sebi registered proxy advisors, the listed entities may approach Sebi," the regulator added.

The market watchdog will examine the matter for non-compliance by proxy advisors with the provisions of the code of conduct specified under Research Analyst Regulations and the procedural guidelines for proxy advisors.

On Monday, the regulator came out with procedural guidelines for such advisors.

H-1B VISA WOES

US' new executive order based on misperceptions: Nasscom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Industry body Nasscom on Tuesday said US President Donald Trump's executive order against hiring H-1B visa holders for federal contracts "appears to have been made based on misperceptions, and misinformation".

In a statement, Nasscom said that as the world opens up post COVID-19 pandemic-induced lockdowns, it is important for the US to be able to access talent critical to the recovery phase.

Measures that restrict access to talent will slowdown the recovery phase of the US economy, jobs, innovation, and research and development, it cautioned.

US President Trump on Monday signed an executive order asking federal agencies to hire Americans, and preventing them from contracting or subcontracting foreign workers, mainly those with H-1B visas.

The move is expected to be a setback to Indian IT professionals eyeing the US job market.

Earlier on June 23, the Trump administration had suspended H-1B visas along with other types of foreign



work visas until the end of 2020 to protect American workers in the crucial election year.

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

"President Trump's executive order on 'Aligning Federal Contracting and Hiring Practices with the Interests of American Workers' appears to have been made based on misperceptions, and misinformation," Nasscom said.

A part of the executive order focuses on federal contracting, and part of the order focuses on the H-1B visa program in

general, it said.

"Both elements of the Executive Order mandate reviews, reports, and development of policy and practice and recommendations rather than mandating any immediate changes," it added.

Nasscom noted that the order comes at a time when there is a "huge shortage" of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) skills in the US, that workers on short-term non-immigrant visas like H-1B and L-1 help bridge. The industry association pointed out that unemployment rate for computer occupations (those most common amongst H-1B visa holders) declined from 3 per cent in January 2020 to 2.5 per cent in May 2020.

21 startups are unicorns valued over \$1bn: Study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India is home to 21 unicorns, or startups with over USD 1 billion in valuation each, and 40 more of such companies have been founded overseas by people of Indian origin, a report said on Tuesday.

Amid talk of regulating investments from the northern neighbour, the study found that three Chinese investors have backed 11 of the Indian unicorns.

With the 21 unicorns collectively valued at USD 73.2 billion, India is the fourth biggest in terms of unicorns, behind the US, China and the UK, as per the Hurun Global Unicorn List.

The number of Indian unicorns is just a tenth of China's 227, it said, adding China has only 16 businesses started outside the country by its diaspora as against the 40 in India. The valuation of the



unicorns founded globally by Indians is USD 99.6 billion, led by the fintech Robinhood at USD 8.5 billion.

"Of the 61 unicorns founded by Indians, a massive two-thirds are based outside of India, predominantly Silicon Valley in the USA, whilst only 21 are based in India," Hurun Report chairman and chief researcher Rupert Hoogewerf said. He added that the founders of these 40 unicorns need to be recognized as much as someone like Google's chief executive Sundar Pichai and Microsoft's Satya Nadella.

The research pegged the overall number of unicorns at 586 across the world in 29 countries and 145 cities.

KPIT Tech says worst is over after 21% fall in Q1 net profit

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The 21 per cent decline in net profit to Rs 24.22 crore in the June 2020 quarter was on the expected lines as clients cut back on spends during the coronavirus pandemic and the "worst is over for the company", small-sized tech player KPIT Technologies said on Tuesday.

The Pune-headquartered company's co-founder and chief executive, Kishor Patil, said the ongoing September quarter will be "flattish" and things will improve from the December 2020 quarter onward both from the revenue and profitability perspectives.



"The worst is over for us. There was a fall in revenue that affected the profits. We have signed two large deals in the past four months and I am confident of the future," Patil said.

He said a few clients chose to defer technology spends because of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on their businesses that led to a decline in

revenue to Rs 492.7 crore from the preceding March quarter's Rs 556.28 crore and the year-ago period's Rs 505.7 crore. The company announced its earnings for the quarter on Monday.

Patil had guided towards a 15 per cent decline in revenue and has performed better than that. He said that despite the revenue decline, it has been able to hold on to the operating margins that came at 13.4 per cent.

From the third and fourth quarters, it is aiming to drive up the profit margins through levers including higher offshoring of work, he said, pointing to a higher proportion of work coming to India.

Passenger entities urge relief pkg for school bus operators

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Private passenger transport operators' bodies BOCI and SBOA on Tuesday urged the Maharashtra government to provide relief package, including waivers in taxes, extension on moratorium on interest and deferment of motor insurance to the coronavirus pandemic-impacted school bus operators.

Claiming that over 50,000 school buses and around 1.5 lakh bus staffers are currently in financial distress, the Bus and Car Operators Confederation of India (BOCI) and the School Bus Owner Association (SBOA) in a joint release also warned that if these measures are not provided immediately most of the

operators might go out of the business.

"With the entire school curriculums moving online, bus owners are burdened with taxes, insurance, maintenance, EMIs and parking charges, among others, due to which they are forced to lay off their staff, as they are not being paid by schools or parents," said the release.

It added that the sector has made several representations to the authorities in the transport department, the state's ministries and to Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray to draw their attention to multitudes of issues faced by the sector and have urged urgent action to alleviate their pain.



Thousands of women employees who accompany school buses to take care of school children have also been rendered jobless by the lockdown and are struggling with the most difficult phase of their lives, it said.

The association has requested the government on bus staffers' salaries for the entire lockdown period, waiver of taxes, deferment of motor insurance, extensions of moratorium and waiver of interest, among others.

Besides, it has also sought increasing the age limit of school buses for operating in Mumbai to 20 years from 8 years at present and to 20 years from 15 years in other areas of Maharashtra, parking facilities for school buses, GST input credit benefits and banning of illegal private vans plying as school buses.

"We are staring at a bleak situation as the schools are closed for many months, whereas in Maharashtra, new academic year commences from April for ICSE and state board classes commences from June and bus fees is collected accordingly," SBOA President Anil Garg.

He added that simultaneously, bus owners have not received the transportation

fees for the academic year ending May 2020. Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis and followed by repeated extension of lockdown, many schools have started their classes online and schools have refused to pay bus owners saying that parents are not paying fees for buses as they are not using the bus service, said Garg.

This situation has led to thousands of bus operators being jobless as there is nothing that we can do to retain our staff. Over two lakh people in the state are already dependent on these buses for their livelihoods and many owners have taken loans to buy buses and haven't been able to pay their loan instalments, he said.

JSPL July output rises to 7.40 LT, sales at 7.62 LT

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

JSPL on Tuesday said its July steel sales and output increased as compared to the year-ago period with Managing Director V R Sharma noting that India Inc is getting back to normalcy.

"India Inc is getting back to normalcy, as companies can mend supply chains, getting more workers back on the job, resulting in the increased domestic steel demand. Thanks to the Government's efforts to reboot the economy by announcing the stimulus package," Sharma said.

He made the remarks in a

press release issued by Jindal Steel and Power Ltd (JSPL) sharing improved production and sales numbers for July.

JSPL's consolidated crude steel output rose 13 per cent to 7.40 LT in July from 6.56 LT in the same month last year.

During the month under review, the company's consolidated sales also improved to 7.62 LT, up 25 per cent from 6.11 LT in July 2019.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi said new opportunities always emerge during challenging times, JSPL followed the same path and successfully overcame the challenges, Sharma said.

Snapchat testing new feature to take on TikTok

Photo-messaging app Snapchat has started testing a new feature that lets users set their Snaps with music, similar to what Chinese short-video making app TikTok offers.

Snap, the parent com-

pany of Snapchat, has inked music rights deals with several major companies, including Warner Music Group, Universal Music Publishing Group and Merlin, reports CNET.

The new feature will let user's friends send 'Snaps' with music and one will be able to view

the album art, song title and name of the artist.

In addition, there will also be a 'Play This Song' option that opens a web view to Linkfire so one can listen to the full song on a streaming platform like Spotify, Apple Music and SoundCloud. The new feature is set to roll out to this fall in the US

as well as Canada and Australia.

Instagram has also rolled out its TikTok-like clone functionality called Reels, that is available in India in the testing phase.

Google-owned YouTube is working on a TikTok rival called Shorts, to be introduced

by the end of this year.

Meanwhile, Microsoft has confirmed it is in talks to acquire the operations of video-sharing platform TikTok in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand markets following a conversation between Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella and President Donald Trump.



Xiaomi launches affordable Redmi 9 Prime in India

Expanding its Redmi series, Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi on Tuesday launched Redmi 9 Prime in India at a starting price of Rs 9,999 (4GB+64GB variant).

The 4GB+128GB storage option will be available for Rs 11,999 in four colours — space blue, mint green, matte black and sunrise flare — from August 17.

The smartphone features a 6.53-inch full-HD+ display with 19.5:9 aspect ratio, 394ppi pixel density, and 400nits brightness.

The device is powered by an octa-core MediaTek Helio G80 processor, which is backed by Mali-G52 GPU.

The smartphone has a quad rear camera setup that includes a 13MP primary image sensor, 8MP secondary image sensor, a 5MP macro shooter and a 2MP depth sensor.

For selfies, there is an 8MP camera sensor at the front.

The Redmi 9 Prime packs a 5020mAh battery that supports 18W fast charging and comes bundled with a 10W charger.

There is also a rear-mounted fingerprint sensor, a 3.5mm audio jack, and a USB Type-C port. It even comes with P2i coating, free phone case, and TUV certification.



Apple may launch new iPhone 12 lineup in 2 stages

Apple has confirmed that the launch of the iPhone 12 will be delayed due to "temporarily constrained" supply chain and now a new report claims that the launch will be split into two stages.

The Cupertino based tech giant is planning to launch four different models of the iPhone 12 later this year, sporting 5.4-inch, 6.1-inch, and 6.7-inch OLED screens. However, Apple may launch two 6.1-inch iPhone 12 followed by the 5.4-inch and 6.7-inch models at a later date, reports *DigiTimes*.

The 6.1-inch models

will be available first as suppliers have begun to ship SLP (substrate-like PCB) mainboards for them. Whereas, the SLP for the other two models will start shipping by suppliers starting late August.

The 6.7-inch and 6.1-inch model will be higher-end devices with triple-lens cameras, while the 5.4 and 6.1-inch models will be lower-end iPhones with dual-lens cameras and a more affordable

price tag.

All four iPhone models are expected to feature OLED displays and 5G support, as famed Apple analyst Ming-Chi Kuo previously claimed.

This would not be the first time Apple had spaced out an iPhone launch. In 2018, the iPhone 8 was launched in September and the iPhone X in November.



Existing Sony PS4 controller not to work with PS5 games

The Japanese consumer electronics giant Sony has confirmed that its existing PS4 controller will not work with PS5 games.

"We believe that PS5 games should take advantage of the new capabilities and features we're bringing to the platform, including the features of DualSense wireless controller," the company said in a statement.

A PS5 owner will need to buy additional controllers to play PS5 games, much like how PS3 controllers didn't work on the PS4.

Meanwhile, any PlayStation officially licensed third-party controllers will work with PS4 games on the PS5.

Sony has not listed the supported games, but the company does confirm that officially licensed racing wheels, arcade sticks, and flight sticks will work with PS5 games and supported PS4 games.

In addition, the company also confirmed that PlayStation Camera will work with PS5 for playing supported PS VR games.

The PS5 will feature a custom eight-core AMD Zen 2 CPU clocked at 3.5GHz and a custom GPU based on AMD's RDNA 2 architecture hardware that promises 10.28 teraflops and 36 compute units clocked at 2.23GHz.

It will also have 16GB of GDDR6 RAM and a custom 825GB SSD.

The PS5 will also feature 4K Blu-ray drive and will still support discs, but those games will still require installation to the internal SSD.



Nokia to set up robotics lab at IISc for 5G research

Finnish telecom gear maker Nokia on Tuesday announced a collaboration with the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru to establish a network robotics laboratory for research on socially relevant use cases based on 5G and emerging technologies.

The Nokia Centre of Excellence (CoE) for Networked Robotics will promote interdisciplinary research involving robotics, advanced communication technologies and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to develop use cases across areas like emergency management, agriculture and industrial automation, the company said.

The centre will promote engagement and cooperation between academia, start-ups and

industry ecosystem partners in research and development of use cases.

The centre supports and aligns with the government's initiatives of Start-up India.

The Nokia CoE will be available to the IISc community and its ecosystem partners for advanced research projects involving designing next-generation networks and applications of Artificial Intelligence for solving pertinent social problems.

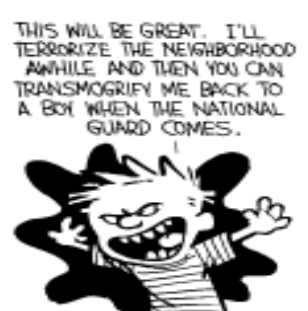
"Collaboration with a global technology leader, Nokia, will go a long way in helping our students to gain knowledge and insights and make significant contributions to the development of innovative and societally relevant 5G use cases," Professor G Rangarajan, Director, IISc, said in a statement.

FUN

ARCHIE



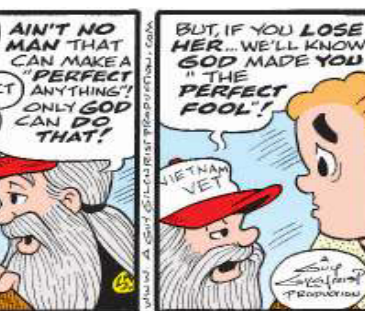
CALVIN AND HOBBS



GARFIELD



NANCY



GINGER MEGGS



REALITY CHECK



SPEED BUMP



CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- Speaks very quietly
- A builder follows these when building a house
- The backbone
- Athens is the capital city of this country
- Fewer
- You see with these
- The large country just north of the USA
- Weary
- Near
- Young people

DOWN

- A huge sea mammal
- A six-legged creature
- Shove
- Lift up
- Food that looks like lots of worms
- A daily publication
- A small dish under a cup
- Garden soil
- A nut from an oak tree
- A worshipped statue



SUDOKU



Yesterday's solution								
2	8	4	9	3	1	5	6	7
6	3	7	4	8	5	1	9	2
9	1	5	6	2	7	4	3	8
4	5	6	3	7	8	2	1	9
3	7	2	1	4	9	8	5	6
8	9	1	2	5	6	7	4	3
7	2	9	5	1	3	6	8	4
1	6	8	7	9	4	3	2	5
5	4	3	8	6	2	9	7	1

Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

Most Read NEWS

Detained 'drug smuggler' cat escapes high-security prison

A cat detained at Sri Lanka's main prison while allegedly trying to smuggle drugs and cell phone SIM cards has escaped, media reports said Tuesday. The feline was detected by jail intelligence officials on Saturday at the high-security Welikada Prison, a police official said. He said nearly two grams of heroin, two SIM cards and a memory chip were found in a small plastic bag tied around the cat's neck. But it escaped on Sunday from a prison room where it was kept, the Aruna newspaper said. There was no immediate comment from prison authorities. The prison had reported an increase in incidents of people throwing small packets of drugs, cell phones and phone chargers over the walls in recent weeks. Sri Lanka is battling a major drug problem with some anti-narcotics detectives also implicated in selling confiscated drugs. Police last week seized an eagle allegedly used by drug traffickers to distribute narcotics in a suburb of Colombo.



Iceland broadcasts screams to relieve Covid-19 stress

Iceland is marketing itself as the "perfect place to let your frustrations out" as it channels the power of "scream therapy". People struggling with the events of this year are being invited to let off steam by recording their screams and having them played over a loudspeaker in a remote part of the country. Seven speakers are being set up around the country for the campaign and participants can choose locations such as the peak of Festarfjall in Reykjanes Peninsula and Skogafoss waterfall. Iceland's tourist board has set up a website for the project. It says: "You've been through a lot this year and it looks like you need the perfect place to let your frustrations out. Somewhere big, vast and untouched. It looks like you need Iceland." Scream therapy became popular in the 1970s as a way of relieving stress and anxiety. Psychotherapist Zoe Aston said: "The events of this year mean most of us have experienced increased feelings of frustrations, fear, loneliness, anger or guilt, and we have all coped in different ways."



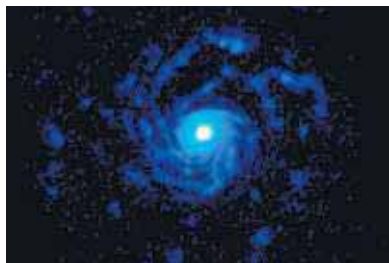
Early Mars was covered in ice rather than flowing rivers

Mars may once have been covered in ice sheets like those in the Arctic, rather than flowing rivers, according to a new study. When the valleys that cross across Mars's surface were spotted and further explored, they led to hope that rivers once flowed across its surface. That helped contribute to the idea that the planet was once wet and warm, with rainfall and oceans. But the water that previously existed on the planet might actually have been there in a similar way to the ice that formed similar channels in the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. That could actually be more helpful to any alien life that might once have lived on the ancient Mars, the researchers say, since the ice sheets would offer protection, allowing the water underneath to stay stable as well as serving as a barrier against the solar radiation that is thought to have once bombarded the Martian surface. Researchers examined thousands of Martian valleys, which allowed them to generate detailed information on their construction. They then compared those channels found on Mars's surface with those channels, helping to understand what conditions might have given rise to them.



Mysterious structures found extending out of strange star

Mysterious, huge spiral structures, extending out of a young star, have been spotted by astronomers. The "complex set of spiral arms" reaches out 1,000 times the distance between the Earth and the Sun, and could shed new light on how planets are born. The unexplained spirals were seen coming out of a young variable star, known as RU Lupi, which is thought to be producing new worlds, and has become known as a "planet factory" as a result. Most images of those planet-forming discs have shown them as a neat collection of gas and dust, with rings and gaps that suggest new planets are being born there. When astronomers first looked at RU Lupi's collection of dust, it looked the same, with a relatively neat organisation that appeared to be forming new worlds. But studies of the gas rather than the dust in the disc that surrounds it appears to show that the process of forming those planets is much more complex, and less neatly arranged, than previously thought. The complicated web of gas looks something like a miniature galaxy, researchers said.



PAK SET FOR ENGLISH TEST We're very well prepared: Azhar

IAN S ■ MANCHESTER

England will be wary of the unpredictable Pakistan side when the two teams clash in the first Test of the three-match series at the Old Trafford beginning Wednesday.

This will be the visitors' first appearance in an international match since coronavirus stoppage while for the hosts, they will look to bring their form and confidence over from the recently-concluded three-Test series against West Indies.

In the World Test Championship (WTC) points table, England moved up to third position following a 2-1 series win over Jason Holder's troops. The hosts have a chance to leapfrog Australia to second place, while Pakistan can overtake New Zealand to fourth position.

For this series, England have named the same squad that clinched them the Wisden Trophy and it will once be interesting to see what will be their bowling combination for the first Test.

A lot has been said about veteran fast-bowlers Stuart Broad and James Anderson playing together. They started just one of three matches in the last series together and showed in the final Test why they remain England's best bet in home conditions.

"Jimmy and Broady go together like Morecambe and Wise or Bonnie and Clyde," former England spinner Graeme Swann was quoted as saying by mirror.co.uk.

"They have formed one of the most successful bowling double acts Test cricket has known. Why



PAKISTAN-ENGLAND IN TESTS				
Venue	Tests	Eng won	Pak won	Drawn
In Eng	53	23	12	18
In Pak	24	2	4	18
In UAE	6	-	5	1
Total	83	25	21	37

HIGHEST INNINGS TOTALS
England in England: 589-8 dec in 152.2 overs at Manchester 2016
England in Pakistan: 546-8 dec in 189. overs at Faisalabad 1983-84
Pakistan in England: 708 in 220.3 overs at The Oval 1987
Pakistan in Pakistan: 636-8 dec in 156.2 overs at Lahore 2005-06

LOWEST INNINGS TOTALS:
England in England: 130 in 59.3 overs at The Oval 1954
England in Pakistan: 130 in 79.2 overs at Lahore 1987-88
Pakistan in England: 72 in 39.3 overs at Birmingham 2010
Pakistan in Pakistan: 158 in 70 overs at Karachi 2000-01
England's lowest total against Pakistan is 72 in 36.1 overs at Abu Dhabi in 2012

would you want to chuck it out before its sell-by date?" "can understand the attraction of 90mph pace, and both Jofra and Woody are huge assets. But I'm sorry, you don't discard blokes with 500 Test wickets lightly" he added.

Not to forget talismanic all-rounder Ben Stokes, who recently displaced West Indies captain Jason Holder from the top of the ICC all-rounders' list. He will once again

ly conditions of England. Not to forget they could also unleash spinners at the Old Trafford.

"We will keep an eye on the pitch and the weather conditions, today and tomorrow, before taking a decision on whether to play two spinners or not," Misbah said. "It is a possibility and an encouraging sign for us."

"The pitch and weather conditions might be favouring us at the moment but you still have to execute your plans properly to win," he added.

Pakistan will also take confidence from the fact that they have done well in the last two Test series in the England. The 2018 series ended in a 1-1 draw while the 2016 series also ended with both teams sharing spoils after the conclusion of four-Test series (2-2).

SQUADS:

England: Joe Root (C), James Anderson, Jofra Archer, Dominic Bess, Stuart Broad, Rory Burns, Jos Buttler, Zak Crawley, Sam Curran, Ollie Pope, Dom Sibley, Ben Stokes, Chris Woakes, Mark Wood, James Bracey, Ben Foakes, Jack Leach, Dan Lawrence

Pakistan: Azhar Ali (C), Babar Azam, Abid Ali, Asad Shafiq, Faheem Ashraf, Fawad Alam, Imam ul haq, Imran Khan, Kashif Bhatti, Mohammad Abbas, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Shan Masood, Sohail Khan, Usman Shinwari, Wahab Riaz, Yasir Shah.

have a huge say in the outcome of the series.

As for the visitors, they lack proper match practice going into the first Test but head coach Misbah-ul-Haq has stated players have done well to acclimatise themselves with the tough English conditions.

"When you play after a long gap there is bound to be some sort of nervousness but that is natural. As soon as the players step on the field, it will go away," Misbah said. "The players are fresh and anxiously waiting for the series to begin."

Pakistan will also be pinning their hopes on young fast-bowling duo Shaheen Afridi and Naseem Shah to shine in the bowler-friendly

IAN S ■ LONDON

Pakistan Test captain Azhar Ali said that the players are raring to go after their long break enforced by the coronavirus pandemic. Pakistan take on England in a three-match Test series starting on Wednesday. This will be followed by a three-match T20I series and the team has been in the country since late June.

"All players are excited to play the series. COVID-19 is there and for the moment we have to carry on with it," Azhar told reporters on the eve of the first Test which will be played at Old Trafford.

"We are lucky that we will be playing cricket which is what we love the most. A lot of talk is going on about cricket happening in these tough times but I feel that the best thing is that we wanted to play and we are now getting to that. Credit to ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board) and PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) for arranging this series."

"We have prepared very well with whatever facilities we had with us and ensured that no player gets left behind and gets frustrated."



ed. We enjoyed the camp a lot."

Azhar said the team is motivated by their Test performances in recent years in England. Pakistan have not lost a Test series in England since 2010.

"Challenges is something you have to take as a cricketer and England tours are always difficult with or without Covid. But we have performed well in our last few series here and that is a big source of motivation. We will be looking to repeat and upstage that," he said.

The 35-year-old admitted that the visitors' pace battery may be inexperienced but is confident of them performing well considering the talent that they have.

"Our fast bowling attack is inexperienced but you have seen their talent and how they have bowled in the last few series. I think of myself as very lucky as a captain that we got bowlers like these who can threaten any team in Test cricket. You can't buy experience, that comes with playing matches but there is a lot of capability there."

"Our batting experience is better. There is Shan Masood, Asad Shafiq and I have all played a lot. Babar Azam has gained a lot of experience now. As a team our combination is pretty good."

Dhoni is one of a kind: Rohit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's prolific opener Rohit Sharma feels Mahendra Singh Dhoni is "one of a kind", playing down recent comparisons of his leadership style and composure with the two-time World Cup-winning former captain.

In a Super Over podcast, out-of-favour India batsman Suresh Raina called Rohit the "next MS Dhoni for the Indian cricket team".

Rohit, who is the vice-captain of India's limited overs teams and also leads Mumbai Indians in the IPL, reacted to his leadership style being likened to Dhoni.

"Yes, I heard about that comment from Suresh Raina," Rohit said in a twitter video he posted in reply to a fan question.

"MS Dhoni is one of a kind and nobody can be like him and I believe comparisons should not be made like that, every individual is different and has his strengths and weaknesses."

Raina is impressed with Rohit's record of leading Mumbai Indians to a record four IPL title triumphs, one more than Dhoni at Chennai Super Kings.

Rohit has also led India to title wins at the Nidahas Trophy (T20I format) in Sri Lanka and the



Asia Cup (50 overs) in 2018 while standing in for Virat Kohli.

Overall, he has led India in 10 ODIs and 19 T20Is, winning eight and 15 of them respectively.

"I have seen him, he is calm, he likes to listen...I have played under him when we won the Asia Cup in Bangladesh," Raina had said.

"MS Dhoni was brilliant. He (Rohit) has won more (IPL) trophies than MS, but they both are very similar. Both of them, as captains, like to listen."

"When your captain is listening, you can solve a lot of problems, you can solve the mental aspects of the players. So in my book, they both are wonderful."

Agarwal must have learnt a lot from NZ tour

IAN S ■ NEW DELHI

Former India pacer Ashish Nehra feels opening batsman Mayank Agarwal has shown a lot of promise in the initial days of his international career and will only get better and score a lot of runs in the days to come.

Agarwal has so far played 11 Tests for India in which he has scored 974 runs, including three hundreds and four half-centuries.

"He (Agarwal) has done really well in domestic games and India-A and that's how he got his chance. He is not somebody who has been playing domestic cricket for one or two years and suddenly he comes to the scene. He has scored a lot of runs and I am sure with time he will get better and better," Nehra said while speaking on Star Sports' Cricket Connected show.

The 29-year-old however wasn't able to perform to his potential on the New Zealand tour. In the two-Test series which India lost 0-2, he could manage scores of 34, 58, 7 and 3.

However, Nehra said New Zealand is the "most difficult" place to bat in the world and that's why after playing there, Agarwal would have gathered a lot of experience.

"It takes time and New Zealand is not an easy place. With my experience, for batters, the most difficult place on this planet when it comes to cricket-playing nations is New Zealand. New Zealand has always been tough, so Mayank Agarwal, I am sure has learnt a lot from the New Zealand tour," said the former left-arm pacer.



Starc does not regret missing IPL

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

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

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

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



"I'm happy to spend that time when the blokes are at the IPL in September I'll be getting ready for a summer."

"The IPL will be around next year and if I feel the urge or people want me around I'll definitely consider it, but as of this year I'm very comfortable with the decisions I've made."

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

The lanky pacer is currently training with his NSW state teammates and waiting for a confirmation for Australia's white-ball tour of the UK.

"It's still very much up in the air which is the way of the world at the moment. It's changing day by day. We're having weekly meetings about the challenges of the tour and where this all sits. We've got another one on Thursday to see if there's any progressions on that," he said.

"All the players are preparing to play and planning to go. It's now up to Cricket Australia and the government on both sides as to whether we jump on that plane. In terms of the cricket, we'll just get ready for the series."

Australia's tour of England comprising three T20s and as many ODIs is scheduled to begin on September 4, pending clearance.

DC welcome decision to conduct IPL in UAE

Captain Shreyas Iyer and Co-Owner Parth Jindal believe the team will miss its fans, but can make it a season to remember

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Looking forward to the new season of the Indian Premier League with excitement, JSW and GMR co-owned franchise Delhi Capitals on Monday welcomed the IPL Governing Council's decision to organize the 13th edition of the IPL in the United Arab Emirates, owing to the COVID-19 situation in India. The tournament will be held between September 19 - November 10, and across 3 venues in the UAE - Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. Speaking on the commencement of the new season, team co-owner and Chairman Mr. Parth Jindal said, "There is no doubt that the news of the IPL taking place has come as a breath of fresh air for all of us. The fact that the IPL is going to be conducted amidst such challeng-



ing times is another testament to the BCCI and to IPL's global standing as one of the top leagues amongst all sports in the world.

The number of people who have expressed delight is remarkable and we all at DC are looking forward to giving it our all for our fans to bring the trophy to Delhi this season. IPL truly has the power to lift the morale of our country as we fight the COVID pandemic and I for one am delighted that IPL 2020 is being conducted.

To our Delhi Capitals fans, I would like to stress on how

important your support is going to be for our team, even though you will not be able to make it to the stadiums this year it will be our endeavor to keep you engaged remotely throughout the tournament in the best and most innovative way possible. Do keep the love and support coming in from the safety of your homes. I can assure you it's going to go a long way in bringing the best out of our players."

Dhiraj Malhotra, CEO, Delhi Capitals, said he believes the upcoming edition will be a significant one. "It's never an easy decision to have to host an Indian Premier League outside India. However, given the current circumstances, I believe this is going to be a very significant edition of the tournament, not just for the league, but the sport of cricket itself."

Aus-WI postpone T20 series

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Cricket Australia on Tuesday said it has put on hold a three-game T20I series against the West Indies which was scheduled to be held in October. Matches of the T20 series were slated to be held in Townsville, Cairns and the Gold Coast on October 4, 6 and 9 respectively. It was supposed to be a warm-up series ahead of the T20 World Cup but with the showpiece event being postponed last month due to the global health crisis, the two cricket boards decided to postpone it. "Together with @windiescricket, we have agreed to postpone the Twenty20 series originally scheduled for Queensland in October," Cricket Australia said in a tweet. "Serving as warm-ups for the ICC T20 World Cup, the series will now coincide with the rescheduled T20 World Cup in Australia, in either 2021 or 2022."

Casillas ends his playing days

AP ■ MADRID

Former Spain and Real Madrid goalkeeper Iker Casillas officially announced the end of his playing days on Tuesday, more than a year after his last match.

The 39-year-old Casillas was with Portuguese club Porto but hadn't played competitively since a heart attack

in May last year.

"What is important is the path you travel and the people who accompany you, not the destination to which it takes you," Casillas said on Twitter.

"With hard work, you will always arrive where you want. I can say, without a doubt, that it has been the path and the destination that I've always

dreamed about.' Casillas said announcing his retirement was one of the "hardest" and "most difficult" days of his career.

His contract with Porto ended after the team defeated Benfica last weekend to win the Portuguese Cup. He didn't play but celebrated with his teammates and lifted the trophy.



Nani urges people to DONATE PLASMA TO SAVE LIVES

In a bid to speed up COVID-19 recovery, doctors have been asking patients who recovered from the virus to donate their plasma to people that are fighting it.

Taking the request forward, Tollywood actor Nani shared a video urging people to donate their plasma to save more lives. The actor said that to be in a position to help save someone's life is a beautiful gift and one must use it. He shared that 500 ml of one's plasma with COVID 19 antibodies can save the lives of two patients battling the virus. He added that the same amount of donated plasma will be formed back in the donor's body within two days and so there's nothing to lose from this tiny act of kindness.

"There is no bigger satisfaction than being able to help than receive," the actor said.

The actor informed his viewers that Cyberabad Police came up with a COVID Control Room wing with the number 9490617440, to which interested people can reach out to, to donate their plasma.

With no vaccine or specific cure discovered by scientists against the virus yet, doctors have been trying plasma therapy that mostly yielded positive results. According to reports, the plasma extracted from recovered persons contains anti-bodies of the virus that have the potential to fight COVID19. Once transfused to a patient, these antibodies help him or her recover, believe many doctors.

With not many who had recovered from the virus coming forward to donate plasma, doctors, celebrities, and others have been making efforts to encourage these patients to do their bit to save lives.



Director Teja tests positive for COVID

Barely a week after acclaimed-filmmaker SS Rajamouli and his family revealed that they tested positive for COVID-19 with mild symptoms, filmmaker Teja, who has given hit films like *Nuvvu Nenu*, *Chitram*, and *Nijam*, has tested positive for the novel Coronavirus.

From what we could gather, the director has self-quarantined himself at home and has been following necessary precautions as per the doctor's advice. The director, who is currently shooting for a web series, developed symptoms recently and decided to get himself tested.

After testing positive and isolating himself, he requested people who came in contact with him in the last few days, to get checked immediately. There are speculations that some of his family members have also tested positive for the virus but there's no confirmation on that yet.

After he shared this news, fans of the beloved director expressed concern and wished him a speedy recovery.

Teja's last directorial venture, *Sita*, which featured Bellamkonda Srinivas and Kajal Aggarwal in the lead roles, garnered good response from both, the audiences and critics. He is said to



THERE ARE SPECULATIONS THAT SOME OF HIS FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE ALSO TESTED POSITIVE FOR THE VIRUS

be currently holding talks with some of the top actors of the industry for his upcoming film.



KGF: Chapter 2 to resume shoot on Aug 15

To all the fans awaiting news on the sequel to *KGF* called *KGF: Chapter 2*, here's some: The executive producer of the film has confirmed that the shoot of the film will resume from August 15 amid the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic. In his latest interaction with a newspaper, executive producer Karthik Gowda opened up about the shooting plans for *KGF: Chapter 2*, which is being directed by Prashant Neel, which stars actor Yash in the lead.

Karthik said that strict guidelines will be issued and followed on the sets of the film, and all technicians will be camped temporarily at a hotel near the set, with nobody being allowed to venture out until the shooting concludes.

The producer added that the team, which has completed 90 per cent of the shoot, is left with only some major fight sequences and a few scenes. Makers of the film are said to be coming up with a huge set at Minerva Mills, where the first part of the remaining schedule will take place. The first glimpse of Sanjay Dutt's character from the film was recently released, much to the excitement of

fans. The Khalnayak star will be seen playing the primary antagonist 'Adheera' which was only teased in the first part.

On Sanjay Dutt's character and having him on board, Yash told a leading daily that when *KGF: Chapter 1* was being filmed, they had their own inhibitions and restricted themselves. "But with this kind of success on our side, we are going all out to make the second part. We now know people are keenly looking forward to the second part and we can deliver it without any reservations. We've reserved the best for chapter 2," he had said. *KGF: Chapter 2* also stars Raveena Tandon essaying the role of former Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

RAKUL PREET SINGH misses being goofy on the sets

Actress Rakul Preet Singh wants to go back to work as she misses being goofy on the sets.

Rakul took to her Instagram stories, where she shared two clips of herself from her photo-shoots. In the first video, Rakul is seen wearing a black lacy dress paired with black boots and a bag.

On the clip, she wrote: "Miss being goofy on set".

In the other video, the actress is seen posing in a stunning midnight blue ruffled long gown. She completed her look with a messy bun and a beautiful diamond neck piece. "And then miss being poised and elegant," she wrote on the second clip.

Coming up for Rakul Preet is a rom-com co-starring Arjun Kapoor. She will also be seen in Kamal Haasan's ambitious upcoming film *Indian 2*, which co-stars Kajal Aggarwal and Siddharth.

‘His songs kept revolutionary tides alive’

Popular folk and revolutionary singer from UttarAndhra, Vangapandu Prasad Rao breathed his last in the wee hours of Tuesday.

Born in 1943 in Parvathipuram village of Pedabindapalli of Vizianagaram district, his death due to a heart attack brought about the end of an era in the Telugu states.

Better known as the 'Gaddar' of UttarAndhra, 77-year-old, in a span of three decades, wrote and crooned over 300 songs through which he empowered many, earning himself thousands of fans. His lyrics were powerful enough to stir a sense of revolution in any heart.

One of his most famous songs has to be *Yem Pillado Yeldam Vastava...* a part of which was used in Ram Charan's *Magadheera*. This forced Vangapandu to protest at Geetha Arts office for using his lines without his knowledge.

The revolutionary's death came as a shock to several writers of Srikakulam district including Nalli Dharma Rao who said that the rights of the downtrodden sections were protected and highlighted with his writings and songs. His songs not only "reflected the agony and aspirations of oppressed classes", but also kept the revolutionary tides alive in the Telugu state.

Born into a lower middle class family, Vangapandu has struggled to make ends meet. Coexistence with values is said to be ideal.

In the year 1972, along with Telangana Gaddar, Vangapandu established 'Jana Naatyamandali'. In 2017, the previous TDP government



has awarded him 'Kala Ratna' award.

Janasena party chief and Tollywood actor Pawan Kalyan expressed his condolences over the death of the singer. In a statement released later Tuesday afternoon, the statement said that he was an actor paid his tribute with a heavy heart. He said that was associated with the revolutionary singer for two decades. "When I worked with him for the Republic in 2009, I was fascinated by his thoughts on the downtrodden and backward classes. He was also one of the revolutionary leaders who wholeheartedly welcomed the emergence of Janasena. I still remember the time when he expressed his solidarity with me during

my visit to Uttaranchal as part of the campaign," the actor said in the statement.

Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy mourned the demise of Vangapandu and said he was saddened to learn the poet is no more. He said that Vangapandu was close to him and has led the North Andhra movement from the forefront with his inspirational songs. He conveyed his condolences to the bereaved family.

Deputy Chief Minister (Revenue) Dharma Krishna Das also condoled the demise of Vangapandu and described him as par excellence in folk lyrics.

TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu mourned the demise of Vangapandu Prasad Rao and said the revolutionary

writer and people's poet has inspired generations with folk songs, reflecting the agony and aspirations of oppressed classes. His demise has left a void in Telugu literary field, he said. Gaddar and other ballad singers also mourned the demise of the poet.

