

# DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

CHENNAI | WEDNESDAY 5 | AUGUST 2020

## WEATHER



**Max:** 34°C  
**Min:** 27°C  
**Rainfall:** 1.9 mm

## ASTROGUIDE

**Sarvari:** Aadi 21  
**Tithi:** Thuvithiyai  
**Star:** Avittam/ Sathayam  
**Rahukalam:** 12 noon to 1.30 pm  
**Yamagandam:** 7.30 am to 9 am

### PRAYERS

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

## CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+46,211)	(+821)
19,01,542	39,792

covid19india.org

### STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 5,063)  
TN:2,68,285 4,349

### WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,85,45,971

### DEATHS

6,99,831

COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES  
213

worldometers.info

## Sashidhar Jagdishan to head HDFC Bank

**Mumbai:** Mr Sashidhar Jagdishan, the 'Strategic Change Agent' at HDFC Bank, will succeed Aditya Puri as the Chief Executive Officer and MD of the country's largest private sector lender from late October. HDFC Bank on Tuesday said the appointment of Jagdishan has been approved by RBI for three years starting from October 27. Puri has led the bank since its founding more than 25 years ago and the appointment of the 55-year-old Jagdishan ends one of the most keenly watched successions in the Indian banking space.

## Sri Lankans to vote today

**Colombo:** Sri Lankans will vote in the twice-postponed parliamentary election on Wednesday with the powerful Rajapaksa family-run party expected to gain control of the assembly that could allow them to amend the Constitution to restore presidential powers. Over 16 million people are eligible to vote to elect 196 out of a total of 225 lawmakers for the next five years. Twenty-nine others will be named from a national list according to the number of votes received by each party. The counting would take place only on the following morning - a departure from the practice of counting the ballots from 8 pm on the election night.

## COUNTER POINT



**You have to vacate the bed for a VVIP!**

# China shock for IPL

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG 4

Barely two days after the BCCI issued a statement that 'Vivo IPL 2020' would be held from September 19 to November 10, the title sponsor has decided to pull out of the league much to the surprise of the Board officials. Vivo, a Chinese smartphone company, gives Rs 440 crore per sea-

son and its five-year contract with the BCCI was signed in 2018.

It's learnt that Vivo is concerned about negative publicity following the public outcry over Chinese brands.

Efforts are on by BCCI's top honchos to persuade Vivo to renew ties after a one-year break. With just about a month to go for the league to kickstart in the

UAE, it will be challenging for the Board to rope in an Indian company, especially when the economy is down owing to the pandemic.

Last month, the BCCI had announced that it would "review" sponsorship deals, taking note of the border skirmish that resulted in the martyrdom of Indian jawans. However, they had decided to continue with Vivo.

## Southern states record increase in Covid-19 cases

**Chennai, Aug 4:** Southern states, barring Tamil Nadu and Puducherry, saw their COVID-19 cases go up on Tuesday, a day after all of them witnessed a dip in the infections. Not only did Karnataka's numbers see a sharp spike, the state reported yet another highest single-day spike at 6,259. On Monday, Karnataka's infections slipped below the 5,000 single-day mark for the first time in 10 days.

Andhra Pradesh and Kerala also witnessed an upward graph of numbers on Tuesday, contrary to the fall in cases on Monday. Telangana too witnessed an increase in the number of coronavirus positive persons today.

Karnataka on Tuesday reported 6,259 COVID-19 cases and 110 fresh deaths, taking the total infection count to 1,45,830 and the toll to 2,704, the health department said.

## More deaths in TN districts

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
CHENNAI, AUG 4

Fatalities due to Covid-19 went up in the districts as the total toll stood at 108 against Chennai's 23 when fresh infections came down slightly to 5063 in the State and districts around Chennai continuing to report more new cases, besides some other districts.

Chennai had 108 cases, while adjoining Chengalpattu 245, Kanchipuram 220 and Thiruvallur 358 not only had high rates of infections but also a combined death toll of 20. The other districts where new infections were high were Coimbatore 228, Theni 291 and Virudhunagar 424.

The government had now developed facilities in the district and even taluk hospitals were equipped with basic facilities, including oxygen supply, Health Minister C Vijayabaskar said, adding that 2,08,784 cases had been cured all over Tamil

# CM orders treatment for worker

**Chennai, Aug 4:** A woman sanitation worker's hand was crushed when it got entangled in a machine while segregating waste and the government would bear the expenditure for her medical treatment, Chief Minister K Palaniswami said here

on Tuesday. P Bhagyalakshmi's right hand was crushed while separating degradable waste in a micro-fertiliser making machine days ago, he said and announced cash assistance of Rs 1 lakh from the Chief Minister's Public Relief Fund considering her

indigent family background.

Expressing grief, Palaniswami said he has ordered the Tirunelveli District Collector to provide intensive, specialty medical treatment to the woman, working for the Tirunelveli Corporation." — PTI

## CITY | 2

**Corona impact in TN receding: Health secy**



## WORLD | 5

**Two massive explosions rock Beirut**

## SPORT | 8

**Starc doesn't regret giving the IPL a miss**



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# Can't do work for US Fed on H-1B

**Washington, Aug 4:** In another huge blow to Indian IT professionals eyeing the US job market, President Donald Trump has 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 came over a month after the Trump administration on 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 H-1B visa, most sought-after among Indian IT professionals, is a non-immigrant visa that allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise. The technology companies depend on it to hire tens of thousands of employees each year from countries like India and China.

"Today I am signing an executive order to ensure that the federal government lives by a very simple rule, hire American," Trump told reporters in

### ► BIG BLOW FOR INDIAN TECHIES



**We are going to be discussing very shortly an immigration bill, which covers this and many other things.**  
— Donald Trump, US President

the Oval Office of the White House on Monday before signing the order against hiring H-1B visa holders for federal contracts.

Trump told reporters that his administration will not tolerate firing of hardworking Americans in the pursuit of cheap foreign labour. "As we speak, we're finalising the H-1B regulation so that no American workers are replaced ever again. H-1B should be used for top highly paid talent to create American jobs, not as inexpensive labour programmes and destroy American jobs," said Trump, who was surrounded across the Cabinet Room table with individuals campaigning against job outsourcing.

Prominent among them were Sara Blackwell, founder and president of Florida-based Protect US Workers organisation; Jonathan Hicks, a software engineer in the Tennessee Valley Authority; and Kevin Lynn, founder of Pennsylvania-based US Tech Workers.

Trump's order follows the federally-owned Tennessee Valley Authority's (TVA) announcement that it will outsource 20 per cent of its technology jobs to companies based in foreign countries. TVA's action could cause more than 200 highly-skilled American tech workers in Tennessee to lose their jobs to low-wage, foreign workers hired on temporary work visas, the president said. — PTI



**A historical and emotional day not only for me but for all Indians. Destiny made me perform a pivotal duty in the form of Ram Rath Yatra from Somnath to Ayodhya in 1990 which helped galvanise aspirations, energies and passions of its countless participants.**

— L.K. Advani, senior BJP leader who kickstarted the temple movement with his rath yatra.

► The Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, entrusted with temple building, had kicked up a big controversy by not issuing an early invitation to Murlidhar Joshi but later issued them last-minute telephonic invites.

► Plans are afoot to promote Ayodhya as a religious tourism destination by 2024 with plans for a new airport and railway station besides improved highways to get to the town believed to be the birthplace of Lord Rama.

## Ram temple bhoomi puja is for invitees only

# Ayodhya's big day is here

### RAM IS WITH EVERYONE: PRIYANKA

**DC CORRESPONDENT**  
NEW DELHI, AUG 4

Marking a significant shift towards the party's stand on Ram Temple, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday expressed hope that Wednesday's 'Bhumi Pujan' at Ayodhya will become an occasion for "national unity, fraternity and cultural congregation".



On Tuesday, Ms. Gandhi Vadra, General Secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, tweeted: "Simplicity, courage, restraint, sacrifice, commitment, are the essence of the name Deenbandhu Rama. Ram is with everyone, Ram is with everyone".

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.

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. — PTI

### CLAIMS INDIA REJECTS NEW PAK MAP

**Hours after Pakistan unveiled a new political map that laid claim to Indian territory in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh union territories as well as parts of the Indian state of Gujarat, India rejected it and termed it "an exercise in political absurdity".**

# A year after 370, Kashmir wakes up to curfew reality

**YUSUF JAMEEL | DC**  
SRINAGAR, AUG 4

The local police and Central armed police forces on Tuesday imposed a curfew in Jammu and Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar whereas strict security restrictions are in force elsewhere in the Kashmir Valley, a day before the first anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370 and bifurcation of the state. The security in the remaining parts of J&K including winter capital Jammu has been beefed up further, reports received here said.

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

Among them is PDP's Rouf Bhat who had

### TENSE VALLEY

● **Following criticism within J&K and outside the UT, the authorities late Tuesday evening said that curfew imposed in Srinagar the previous night has been lifted but restrictions as part of the lockdown aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 would continue. They, however, claimed that the curfew which was to remain in force till Wednesday evening was lifted "after assessing the situation which remained incident free" on Tuesday.**

announced at a press conference here on Monday that the party will observe August 5 as "black day" and that a protest demonstration will be held in Srinagar to mark the anniversary of the "unconstitutional measures" taken on this day last year.

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

He said that such an activity could also defeat the purpose of imposing lockdown to stem the spread of Coronavirus and, therefore, it was decided to clamp curfew and strict security restrictions in the entire district with immediate effect.

Mike-fitted police vans went round the City on Monday night itself announcing imposition of curfew and warning of "strict action under law" against those found violating the orders.

# DMK MLA meets BJP chief in Delhi

**G BABU JAYAKUMAR & D SEKAR | DC**  
CHENNAI, AUG 4

DMK MLA and party headquarters secretary Ku Ka Selvam called on the BJP chief J P Nadda at New Delhi on Tuesday, conveyed his greeting to the Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the Ram temple foundation laying to be held on Wednesday but denied having defected to the BJP.

Selvam's journey to Delhi along with BJP State president L Murugan and his accompanying BJP leader Muralidhar Rao to meet Nadda sparked speculations throughout Tuesday about the DMK veteran's defection to the BJP on the lines of the recent switchover of V P Duraisamy.

However, emerging out of the meeting with Nadda, Selvam categorically said that he had not joined the

BJP and urged the DMK to snap ties with the Congress, whose leader Rahul Gandhi was repeatedly finding fault with Narendra Modi.

Asked about his meeting with the BJP chief and also Muralidhar Rao, Selvam said the meetings were courtesy calls but urged DMK President M K



Ku. Ka. Selvam

Nungambakkam railway

Stalin to chastise the DMK members who spoke ill of Murugan and also hold inner party elections.

He claimed that he travelled to Delhi for meeting the Railway Minister Piyush Goel and ask for the installation of the second lift at the h e

station, which fell within his Thousand Lights Assembly constituency in Chennai.

To question if he had informed the DMK high command of his visit to Delhi, Selvam said there was no need for that since he was on a mission to seek help for his constituency. When asked what he would do if the DMK took action against him, he said he was ready to face any action. ■ P2



## SHORT TAKES

## CM's greetings for Ram temple

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami greeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his likely participation in the Bhoomi Pooja for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, which, he said, would help the Hindus realize their dream.

Congratulating the Centre for making all the arrangements for the construction of the temple after obtaining a favourable judgment from the Supreme Court, Palaniswami said the late J. Jayalalithaa had wanted the Ram temple to come up in Ayodhya.

Jayalalithaa had mentioned it in her speech at the National Integration Council on November 23, 1992, the Chief Minister said in a statement on Tuesday, conveying his wishes on behalf of the people of Tamil Nadu for the smooth conduct of the Bhoomi Pooja.

## 'Veda Nilayam acquisition can be challenged only in civil court'

Chennai, Aug. 4: The Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday informed the Madras High Court that any challenge against its acquisition of 'Veda Nilayam,' the residence of late Chief Minister Jayalalithaa can only be made before the civil court and not the High Court.

The submission was made by Advocate General Vijay Narayan while opposing a plea moved by J. Deepa, Jayalalithaa's legal heir in this regard.

The AG noted that Deepa had not challenged the acquisition order, but only the award and added that under Section 61 of the Land Acquisition Act, the principal judge of city civil court is the competent authority to hear such challenges.

Narayan also pointed out that the Supreme Court had made it clear that such acquisition cannot be challenged after the award of compensation.

The petitioner's counsel G. J. Baskar contended that such challenge can be made under Section 63 of the Act and that his client has challenged both the acquisition and the award order.

Justice N. Anand Venkatesh, who was hearing the case, said the petitioner can approach the High Court only when no remedy is available under any provision of the Act.

## Selvam doesn't want to lose his MLA seat

FROM P1

The grapevine, however, has it that Selvam was not ready to lose his MLA seat under the anti-defection Act and hence did not want to announce his defection. But expected the DMK party to expel him so that he could retain the seat till the end of the term.

Selvam was reportedly upset after the post of Chennai West district secretary in the DMK was given to a youngster Sitharasu when he had been a contender for it for a long time. Even when the previous incumbent of the post, the late J. Anbalagan, was nominated for it Selvam had aspired for it. It is said that it was the late party president M. Karunanidhi who pacified Selvam then.

So when Anbalagan passed away recently due to Covid-19, Selvam was hopeful of getting the post, the denial of which earned his wrath. So he wanted to switch over to the BJP but was not ready to give up his MLA seat before the completion of a full term.

## Big catch



When the waves of Bay of Bengal lash the Chennai littoral, these young boys of Srinivasapuram in Pattinampakkam (Foreshore Estate) spread out a piece of cloth – their mothers' abandoned saree – and trap small fishes. The children either release the fishes back into the sea or retain them, taking them home in small bottles. While the ornamental fishes are kept in personal aquariums, the edible ones are used in the day's cooking. If they manage to catch more than a handful, the enterprising kids sell them for a few rupees to the customers who visit the Marina for their morning walk.

— E.K. Sanjay

## Woman dies of coronavirus in Pondy, toll climbs to 57

Puducherry, Aug. 4: A 55-year-old woman died of Covid-19 at a hospital in Puducherry while 168 fresh cases were reported, pushing the aggregate in the union territory to 4,146.

A release from Director of Health and Family Welfare S. Mohan Kumar on Tuesday said the woman patient was admitted to JIPMER hospital here at 5.10 am on Monday with progressive onset of breathlessness and she had pulmonary embolism.

The woman died four hours later, the official said adding she had no co-morbidity.

The Director said the overall active cases in the Union Territory was 1,552 and the total number of people who tested positive for the virus were 4,146.

He said 96 patients were discharged during the last 24 hours ending 10 am, on Tuesday.

Of the 42,322 samples tested so far in the Union Territory, 37,719 came out negative and results of examination of the remaining samples were awaited.

The 168 new cases were identified after examination of 812 samples during last 24 hours showing 20.7 percent positivity.

The rate of fatality was 1.4 percent, he added.

— PTI

The Director said the overall active cases in the Union Territory was 1,552 and the total number of people who tested positive for the virus were 4,146

## Corona impact in TN receding: Health secy

DC CORRESPONDENT  
TIRUCHY, AUG. 4

Lauding the government for taking effective steps to tackle Covid-19 while inspecting Corona care facilities at the Mahatma Gandhi memorial hospital (MGMH) here on Tuesday, health secretary J. Radhakrishnan, said, the bad impact of the Corona outbreak in the state is considerably diminishing, and the death rate will also be reduced step by step.

Accompanied by Collector S. Sivarasu and others, J. Radhakrishnan reviewed the treatment given to Corona patients there, and also the ongoing construction of an oxygen plant there.

Urging the public to follow lockdown norms and extend their cooperation to the government in its anti-corona activities, Radhakrishnan said that more than 50,000 RTPCR

tests and several fever camps were being conducted across the state, to identify and treat potential cases.

Radhakrishnan also pointed out that 95 per cent of Chennai public has taken to wearing facial masks, but in districts like Tiruchy and other places, such awareness is still lacking. He urged people to wear only drone masks, and avoid wearing those made of banyan cloth.

He said there are 10,000 bed facilities available in Tiruchy district, this apart 780 beds in corona care centre and 540 beds available in the private hospitals.

Pointing to the number of cases, Radhakrishnan said there were 1,118 positive cases in Tiruchy district, and 866 others in house quarantine.

As many as 28 lakh tests have been conducted in the state so far, he added.



## Villagers celebrate Ponnammal's 100th birthday as festival

P.A. JEBARAJ | DC  
CHENNAI, AUG 4

Ponnammal, affectionately called 'Maruthuvachi' by her villagers at Manapakkam in Kanchipuram district, got an amazing surprise on her 100th birthday on Sunday when the villagers celebrated the occasion as a village festival despite the Coronavirus lockdown.

Ponnammal expressed her pleasure over celebrating her centenary birthday with members of four generations and blessed the villagers for their efforts.

Her elated family expressed their gratitude for getting a chance to celebrate an important day amid the difficult Covid days. Family members say that no lifestyle diseases trouble this centenarian and still she is doing her activities herself and has a good memory

Her elated family expressed their gratitude for getting a chance to celebrate

an important day amid the difficult Covid days. Family members say that no lifestyle diseases trouble this centenarian and still she is doing her activities herself and has a good memory.

On the other hand, as the videos and photos of the celebration went viral, the public has raised concern over grand celebrations at the time of lockdown. Though the state government has made it clear that functions should be low-key to contain the spread of coronavirus, at least 100 people gathered at the function.

## Gold worth ₹82.3L seized at airport

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

Customs officials seized 1.48 kilogram gold worth ₹82.3 lakh at the Chennai airport. Two persons were arrested for smuggling gold.

On Tuesday, Khaleel Ahamed (24), who came from Dubai on an Air India evacuation flight, was held on suspicion. During search, a packet of gold paste which was kept

The passengers also confirmed they had handed over one packet each to them. On extraction gold weighing 1.2 kg valued at ₹66.73 lakh was seized. Both receivers were arrested

concealed inside his underwear was recovered. In all, 280 grams of gold valued at ₹15.60 lakh were seized from Khaleel.

In another gold case of gold smuggling, Air

Intelligence officers apprehended two persons outside the airport on Monday night who panicked after seeing the officers and started running away.

Five packets of gold in paste form were recovered from them.

They were identified as Kaja Mohideen (39) and S. Peer Mohideen (33), both from Chennai, and informed that the packets were handed over to them

by five passengers who had arrived from Sharjah by Air India flight AI-1984. The passengers also confirmed they had handed over one packet each to them. On extraction gold weighing 1.2 kg valued at ₹66.73 lakh was seized. Both receivers were arrested. Total 1.48 kg gold valued at ₹82.3 lakh was recovered and seized under the Customs Act 1962. Further investigation is under process.

## Boy drowns in quarry pond

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

A 15-year-old boy drowned in a stone quarry pond in Moovarasampettai near Palavanthangal on Tuesday.

Vijay, a class X student, went to the pond with his friends at around 1.30 pm on Tuesday. He reportedly did not know swimming, police said. While bathing, his friends lost sight of him. Locals were alerted and the boy was pulled out from the water.

He was rushed to a hospital nearby, where he was pronounced dead by drowning. A case has been registered by the Palavanthangal police.

The body was sent for post-mortem. Investigations are on.

## Burglary in two houses; gold jewels, cash stolen

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

Unidentified robbers broke into two houses on Chennai-Mamallapuram road and stole 20 sovereigns gold and ₹60,000 on Monday night.

The Thalamur police said the burglars broke into two houses on the Perumal Kovil 5th street in Sirucher.

The complainant, Krishnan (70), told police that he and his wife Amsa (60) had gone out on Monday night and returned home on Tuesday morning to find the lock of the main door broken. The police said the burglars had taken gold jewellery and cash from Krishnan's house.

On the same day, the

"We suspect that the burglars had conducted a recce of the area and found these two houses locked and planned to rob them," said a police officer

police also received another report of a house break-in in the same street. The house belonged to one Sudharshan, a techie. His house had been locked ever since the lockdown and he stayed at his another house in T.Nagar in the city. Police said the robbers did not find any valu-

ables in the house, but they caused damage to the furniture. Both the break-ins were done on the same night. "We suspect that the burglars had conducted a recce of the area and found these two houses locked and planned to rob them," said an officer.

Thalamur police have registered a case of house break-in against unidentified men and are probing the case further.

In another incident of burglary, robbers broke into Sri Ponnambalam Adigal Matt at Sembakkam village in Thirupurur on the same night and decamped with half kg silver ornaments and utensils and puja materials. Thirupurur police are investigating the case.

## Three flights bring back 371 Indians

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

Three flights brought back 371 Indians, stranded abroad due to coronavirus pandemic, into the country.

An Air India flight from Sharjah with 157 passengers landed at the airport on Monday evening. Passengers were screened and quarantined.

An Air India Express flight from Dubai landed with 180 passengers in the early hours of Tuesday. After completion of Immigration and customs procedure, the passengers were classified and sent to a government facility at Saveetha University on the city outskirts and hotels in Chennai for quarantine.

According to the airport sources, a private flight flew in 34 Indian employees and their families stranded in Sri Lanka. The flight arranged by the workers' employers landed here on Tuesday. The passengers will undergo a medical checkup and a 14-day mandatory quarantine.

After completion of Immigration and customs procedure, the passengers were classified and sent to a government facility at Saveetha University on the city outskirts and hotels in Chennai for quarantine

## DMK MLA seeks districtwise coronavirus data

DC CORRESPONDENT  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

A DMK MLA has approached the Madras high court to direct the state government to release on a daily basis a standardized pattern of district wise along with reconcilable state level data commencing from March 9, 2020, till the end of pandemic, (inclusive of the number of Covid-19 sufferers, the death statistics, the rehabilitated patients (in private and government hospitals), data on hospital bed and other facil-



ities for both private and government hospitals in a simple yet detailed lay out, through the district collec-

tors for easy access by the citizens.

A division bench comprising Justices M.M. Sundresh and R. Hemalatha before whom the PIL filed by DMK MLA Palanivel Thiagarajan came up for hearing ordered notice to the state government and posted after three weeks, further hearing of the case.

According to petitioner, this PIL is occasioned due to twin broad reasons, viz., he has firsthand knowledge of the inconsistency in the data released by the government and the insufficient

information will not lead to an expected positive outcome for Covid-19 crisis management. In other words, the inadequate data or information can result in wrong analysis and projection of trends and patterns, and any measure taken to control may not produce the desired outcome and results. This might perpetuate the crisis that will only affect the public at large costing their lives and livelihood, he added.

He said the medical advancement has not yet reached the desired levels to

find a cure for the pandemic. The countries that have controlled it successfully had employed the simple process of social distancing and keeping the affected securely. The loss of life, after the implementation of such measures was less. This has not been done in this state as the people have not been made aware of the facts. Due to non-availability of a vaccine, which was not expected in the foreseeable future, we have to rely largely on pharmaceutical methods to control the spread of the disease. The

two main strategies were mitigation and suppression. While mitigation deals with reducing peak health care demands and protecting those most at risk, suppression aims at reversing epidemic growth and reducing case numbers. The important factors involved in these strategies were case isolation, home quarantine and social measures such as social distancing, wearing masks and personal hygiene. Accurate and timely information was required not only for case isolation but to also educate the pub-

lic so that they willingly maintain quarantines and practice social measures in order to suppress the spread of the disease, he added.

He said there were six major areas of concern in how the government was handling the crisis. They were: 1) inconsistent data and reluctance to publish district wise data on daily testing 2) no information on doctors/nurses to bed ratio and inadequate oxygen line abled beds at hospitals 3) non-compliance of various guidelines in treating and disposing Covid-19 bio-med-

ical waste 4) no proper documentation of death due to Covid-19 and suspected Covid-19 as postulated by ICMR 5) lack of transparency and non-accountability in the purchase and quality assessment of hand sanitizers, PPE kits, testing kits, ventilators and medicines and 6) discharging patients without testing for negative. As the government was expected to be transparent and accountable for its actions, it was only legitimate that it provides the relevant data as sought in this petition, he added.



## OTHER STORIES

## 'Chennai has issued 1,70,000 passes'

From P1

Vijaybaskar said it was wrong information and that the IMA that is quoted in the tweet had already denied giving that figure. Legal action would be initiated against those spreading rumours and creating panic, he said.

Revenue Minister R B Udhayakumar, who was overseeing Covid-19 control activities in Ennore, said that the spread of the disease had been brought under control and that of the tests that were being done nowadays only 10 percent of the people were positive.

A facility to isolate Coronavirus cases with 6,000 beds was being developed at Athipet, Corporation Commissioner G Prakash said after a meeting with sanitary and conservancy staff. He said Chennai's positivity rate had already come down nine per cent and it was likely to go down further.

On e-passes, he said Chennai had issued 1,70,000 passes and more number of passes would be issued in the coming days as Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami had asked them to be more liberal in future.

Even if guest workers returned to Chennai from other states to take up jobs, they were unlikely to spread the virus among the local people since they would be isolated and kept under surveillance with a help of a 20,000 strong force, Prakash said.

## Concern over dengue as rain starts

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG. 4

The corporation is gearing up to face any eventuality in the wake of a dengue outbreak and has started precautions for it, now that the rainy season has started.

Awareness programmes had been launched to ensure that people did not allow water stagnation in their premises or in their homes that become a hotbed for mosquito breeding, corporation commissioner G. Prakash said after a meeting with sanitary and conservancy staff at Ripon Buildings.

He said owners of vacant lands were responsible for keeping their property dry with no water logging and added that Corporation staff would inspect such premises and levy fines on those owners who allow water to stagnate inside the compounds.

However, he said that there had been only one case of dengue this year with a three-month-old child getting the disease in the 12th zone. The campaign and the efforts to keep Chennai dengue free would go on till October, he said.

On disposal of Covid-19 waste, the commissioner said the corporation staff had done a remarkable job. The waste collected from containment zones and from infected areas, weighing about 350 tonnes, were incinerated at a temperature of 1000 degrees Celsius in a facility at Manali.

Another set of waste from hospitals and care centres was disposed of through scientific methods near Gummidipoondi, he said.

**On disposal of Covid-19 waste, the commissioner said the corporation staff had done a remarkable job. The waste collected from containment zones and from infected areas, weighing about 350 tonnes, were incinerated at a temperature of 1000 degrees Celsius in a facility at Manali**



Poorna Sundari, differently abled, poses with her parents in Madurai after clearing the Union Public Service Commission exam on Tuesday. —K.Manikandan

## Traders federation threaten to go on strike on Monday

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG. 4

The Federation of Tamil Nadu Traders' Associations called for a strike on August 10 (Monday), to demand the immediate opening of the Koyambedu market, closed in the first week of May after it was found that the sprawling premises had been a source of coronavirus infection.

Office-bearers of the federation held a meeting in Chennai on Tuesday to discuss the closure of the market that had caused hardship to thousands of traders dealing in vegetables, fruits and flowers, besides leading to tonnes of perishable goods going to waste every day.

Federation president A. M. Vikrama Raja said that all vegetable, fruit and

**Federation president A. M. Vikrama Raja said that all vegetable, fruit and flower markets in the state would be closed on Monday and that they would intensify the agitation by going for an indefinite strike in the event of the government not acceding to their demand.**

flower markets in the state would be closed on Monday and that they would intensify the agitation by going for an indefinite strike in the event of the government not acceding to their demand.

If traders in markets all over the State heeded to the call for the strike on a Monday, members of the public would be severely affected as the preceding

day would be a day of complete lockdown. People would have to stock up on vegetables and fruits for two days on Saturday itself.

Alleging that the government was making no efforts to reopen the market even after he had, along with other office-bearers of the Federation, met Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam at the secretariat and presented a memorandum, he said he failed to understand as to why there was such an inordinate delay in opening the market even after the traders gave an assurance that they would follow safety norms and adhere to social distancing rules without fail.

It had also been explained to the government that the alternative

market site at Thirumazhisai was not a suitable venue and tonnes of goods were going waste.

Besides the Koyambedu market, many other smaller markets across the State were closed and traders asked to shift to other venues following the outbreak of the pandemic. Vikrama Raja wanted all of them to be reopened for the traders and consumers now that the threat from the coronavirus spread has come down.

Meanwhile, minister for food and civil supplies R. Kamaraj, who inspected the Koyambedu market, told the media that the Chief Minister, Edappadi K. Palaniswami would take a call on reopening the market after the Covid-19 infections go down.

## Nainar Nagendran undecided on next move

ARULOLI M | DC TIRUNELVELI, AUG. 4

BJP state vice-president, Nainar Nagendran, is yet undecided as he has not received any strong signal either from his parent party, the AIADMK or from the DMK, and hence, retracted his earlier statement expressing his disillusionment with his party high command, for not giving him due importance.

The former AIADMK stalwart in the district, Nainar Nagendran, who left AIADMK to join the BJP with great expectations, was however made one of the three party vice-presidents. Projected himself to have a strong backing of the Makkulathor community here, Nainar Nagendran like P T Arasakumar, one of his BJP colleagues who switched over to the DMK December last, believed that his community influence would secure him high ranks in the BJP.

It was with this objective that Nainar Nagendran chose one of the Makkulathor dominated Ramanathapuram constituency in the 2019 LS election. Though he strived hard, he lost it, but polled a decent number of around 3.5 lakh votes. T T V Dhinakaran's AMMK, however, is believed to have played the spoilsport against him in splitting the community vote bank.

## Awareness by kids



Children dressed up as freedom fighters create coronavirus awareness among public at Aynavaram on Tuesday. — DC

## Hearing on suit seeking ₹1cr from Stalin advanced to Aug. 13

**Chennai, Aug. 4:** The Madras high court on Tuesday advanced to August 13 the hearing of a suit moved by Tamil Nadu assembly deputy speaker Pollachi V Jayaraman seeking ₹1 crore as damages from DMK president M.K. Stalin following an additional application filed by the petitioner.

The petitioner alleged that Stalin's statements reportedly linking him with the 'Pollachi sexual assault case' had damaged his reputation. Besides Stalin, the suit for damages was moved against private Tamil news television channel Kalaigarn TV, Tamil magazines Nakkheeran, and Junior Vikatan for allegedly publishing new reports linking Jayaraman with the case.

When the plea came up, Justice P T Asha cited an additional application moved by Jayaraman seeking interim injunction against Nakkheeran.



In the application, counsel for Jayaraman submitted that though the suit filed was taken up for hearing on July 20 and the defendants were ordered to file their counter, Nakkheeran uploaded one more video on July 24 levelling similar allegations against the deputy speaker.

Therefore, he wanted the court to grant an interim injunction against the defendants restraining them from making any such allegation.

Recording the develop-

ment, Justice Asha said "In view of the subsequent events after filing of this suit this court treats the additional application as a memo for advance hearing."

Therefore, the hearing originally scheduled on August 18 is advanced to August 13 for arguments on additional application.

Besides the damages, Jayaraman also wanted the court to permanently restrain Stalin and the respondent media from making/publishing "false and defamatory statements" against him in any manner.

The issue pertains to a sexual harassment complaint filed by a 19-year-old girl from Pollachi in February 2019 against four people. A subsequent probe by police brought to light several series of such sexual offences committed by the group in the locality. —PTI

## DMK worker dies in mishap

DC CORRESPONDENT PUDUOKOTTAI, AUG. 4

A 27-year-old DMK functionary was killed and three others injured in a road accident in which two motor-cycles collided head on at Kalakkudithope area near

Manalmelgudi in the district late on Monday night.

Police identified the deceased as M Aravind, Manalmelgudi panchayat union DMK youth wing leader and his friend Tamilarasan of

Kidangivayal, who were proceeding to Koothangudi from Nagudi on a two-wheeler, while two others M Muneeswaran and B Dinesh came in another two wheeler in the opposite direction, when the mishap occurred.

## Southern Railway hosts webinar

DC CORRESPONDENT COIMBATORE, AUG. 4

Minister of State for Railways, Suresh Angadi, inaugurated and chaired an international webinar on 'Challenges and Solutions in adopting emerging Technologies in Railway Signaling and Telecommunications', under the aegis of IRSTE (Institute of Railway Signal & Telecommunication) Southern Railway chapter.

'Rail Mitra - A Covid Warrior', a 'solid state automatic signaling system' developed by the S&T workshop at Podanur here, new installations of Siemens EI (Electronic Interlocking) System & Online Examination Module in S&T Training Centre at Podanur, high availability short-haul circuit with SDH (Synchronous Digital Hierarchy) in the Salem - Omalur section and implementation of IP/MPLS (Internet Protocol/ Multiprotocol Label Switching) in Arakkonam - Tiruttani section, laying of OFC cable using 'Blown Fiber Technology' for the first time in Indian Railways, was some of the topics discussed in the webinar.

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## HC imposes exemplary cost of ₹25K on forest officer

J. STALIN | DC CHENNAI, AUG 4

Pointing out that a forest officer himself has requested for his transfer to Chennai only on May 27, 2020 and thereupon, after consideration, the transfer order was passed by the authorities on July 4, 2020, the officer ostensibly, in order to serve his own illegitimate ends, has chosen to challenge the order of transfer as if it suffers from legal infirmity and grave illegality, the Madras high court has dismissed his petition and imposed a cost of Rs 25,000 on him for wasting the vital time of the court, particularly in a curtailed functioning due to Covid-19 situation.

Dismissing the petition filed by S.Suresh Kumar, Justice V.Parthiban said this court is constrained to impose an exemplary cost on the petitioner while dismissing the petition. Accordingly, the petition stands dismissed as devoid of any substance and merits with costs of Rs 25,000 to be payable by the petitioner within two weeks. The costs shall be deposited in favour of the Cancer Institute (WIA), Adyar, Chennai. Although this court was initially inclined to direct the authorities to initiate disciplinary action against the petitioner for challenging the transfer order, in view of the above narra-

tive, it refrains from doing so, as a matter of grace, the judge added.

The case of the petitioner was that he was initially appointed as Junior Assistant in the Forest Department in 1999 and later was promoted as Assistant in 2005 and thereafter as Superintendent on October 1, 2015. According to him, he has rendered unblemished service and earned appreciation of his superiors. While so, he was subjected to periodical transfers in his career. The grievance of the petitioner in this petition was that by impugned proceedings dated July 4, 2010, he was transferred from the Office of the Wildlife Warden Megamalai Wildlife Sanctuary, Theni, to the Officer of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (Head of Forest Force), Chennai and in his place, one R.Murugadevan has been accommodated.

After it was brought to the notice of the court that the petitioner himself has requested for his transfer, the judge directed the government advocate to produce the hard copy of the request letter of the petitioner.

After going the request letter, the judge said when the matter was taken up for hearing, the government advocate produced the letter of request written by the petitioner to the



authorities, fervently and passionately requesting his transfer to Chennai for the welfare of his two daughters' education and their career progress. In spite of the fact that the petitioner himself was responsible for the present impugned proceedings, the counsel for the petitioner exhibited needless tenacity in pursuing the matter vigorously by consuming the precious judicial time of this court. Despite warning from this court that it was not open to the petitioner to challenge the transfer order, which was entirely passed on consideration of his request and to the place of his choice, the counsel insisted on exhausting his submissions centering on two grounds, viz, the latest G.O issued by the government dated May 21, 2020 which provides for free-

**According to counsel, for mutual consent, different procedure was to be adopted. "It is rather strange that the counsel was not willing to acknowledge the fact of the petitioner's request for transfer to Chennai even for a moment and kept attacking the impugned proceedings as if the petitioner was visited with the transfer suddenly and unjustly"**

ing of general transfers in view of pandemic situation and in case of dire necessity only, the government can resort to transfer and in this case, the transfer was by the authorities who was not competent authority as per the latest G.O. The other ground was that R.Murugadevan has been accommodated in his place as if it was a mutual request. According to counsel, for mutual consent, different procedure was to be adopted. "It is rather strange that the counsel was not willing to acknowledge the fact of the petitioner's request for transfer to Chennai even for a moment and kept attacking the impugned

proceedings as if the petitioner was visited with the transfer suddenly and unjustly. By his truculent and disputatious conduct, the counsel needlessly has eaten the vital time of this court, particularly in a curtailed functioning due to Covid-19 situation. More so, the conduct of the petitioner which is reflected through his counsel appears to be unwholesome to say the least and needs to be deprecated", the judge added.

The judge said the grounds raised in the petition questioning the order of transfer in the teeth of above facts, was a brazen attempt to hoodwink this court and casting a slight on the judicial review of this court, which the petitioner has taken for granted. "Therefore, this court is of the view that the petitioner has to suffer necessary consequences for being outrageously indiscreet trifling with the constitutional Court's jurisdiction in order to serve his own ends. Besides, the counsel's persistent submission in regard to the latest G.O and questioning the mutual transfer procedure in the facts and circumstances of the case is too strange and baffling and is devoid of any sense. In any event, to sum up, it was quite appalling that the Court's time was consumed on unjust, mala fide and mischievous litigation", the judge added.



SHORT TAKES

TRIALS OF TWO VACCINES ARE ON IN INDIA: ICMR

VINEETA PANDEY IDC  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 5

Underlining that novel coronavirus is spreading at a “devastating pace” and there is an urgent need for a vaccine, chief of Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) Dr Balram Bhargava said on Tuesday that as of now no specific drug or vaccine is available. He added that three vaccines are at different stages of clinical trials in India, out of which two are progressing well, while the third – Oxford vaccine – is to start by next week.

“Need of the vaccine is great and urgent as the pandemic is progressing rapidly at a devastating pace and developing the vaccine takes time,” he said.

Globally, 141 vaccine candidates are being studied out of which 26 are in different stages of clinical trials. He did not say how long it will take for these vaccines to be available for use, but said that the development of vaccines “takes time, not only in the science aspect, but also from social, cultural, and regulatory aspects.”

Till Tuesday, India had recorded 18,55,745 cases of Covid-19 with 52,050 new detections. There have been 38,938 deaths in all, out of which 803 were in the last 24 hours. Health secretary Rajesh Bhushan said the virus has spread into new areas but 82 per cent of all cases remain limited to 10 states.

BHUSHAN REFUSES TO TENDER APOLOGY

PARMOD KUMAR | DC  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

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

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

Justice Kapadia went on to become Chief Justice of India.

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

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

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

75-YEAR-OLD WOMAN RAPED IN KERALA

GILVESTER ASSARY | DC  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, AUG. 4

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

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

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

# Ayodhya awaits a new beginning today

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- PTI



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

## Sena: Covid will now disappear

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

An editorial in the party mouthpiece *Saamana* took a dig at the August 5 ceremony being held amid rising cases of coronavirus in the country. “There is no other golden moment like the one when Prime Minister Modi performs the bhoomi puja at Ayodhya,” the Sena said.

“Coronavirus is there, but will disappear with Lord Ram’s blessings,” it added.

Advani and Joshi, key leaders associated with the Ram temple construction campaign, will witness the ceremony via video conferencing from Delhi, the editorial noted. They were advised not to attend the ceremony in view of their age and the outbreak of Covid-19 in Ayodhya, it said.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- PTI

## K’TAKA SCHOLAR WHO SUGGESTED DATE GETS THREAT CALLS

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

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

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

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

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

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

- PTI

## Advani believes temple will usher in ‘Ram Rajya’

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG 4

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

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

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

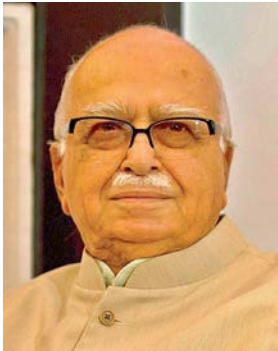
He expressed his gratitude to saints, leaders and people in India and the world over who made “valuable contributions and sacrifices in the Ramjanambhoomi movement.

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

MANMOHAN VAIDYA, SR. RSS FUNCTIONARY

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

K. N. GOVINDACHARYA, EX-RSS IDEOLOGUE



L. K. Advani

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

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

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

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

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI | DC  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

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

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

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

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

But strangely, while the demand for a plebiscite will continue on the part of Islamabad, Pakistan has gone ahead and

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

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

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

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

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

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

In a statement, the MEA

## Corps commander-level talks on border fail to solve impasse

DC CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI, AUG. 4

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

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

There have been series of

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

Chinese are occupying finger 5 area in the Pangong Tso and are still continuing to hold the ridges in the finger 4 area. During the initial phase of disengagement, Chinese troops had vacated the banks of Pangong Tso lake in finger 4 area on

## PRIEST OF RAVAN TEMPLE SAYS HE WILL DISTRIBUTE SWEETS TODAY

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

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

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

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

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

According to local folklore, Bistrakh is the birthplace of Ravan and, “we call it the Ravan Janambhoomi,” the priest said.

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

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

The temple in Bistrakh has idols of Lord Shiva, Parvati and Kubera.

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

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

- PTI

said, “We have seen a so-called ‘political map’ of Pakistan that has been released by Prime Minister Imran Khan. This is an exercise in political absurdity, laying untenable claims to territories in the Indian State of Gujarat and our Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and of Ladakh. These ridiculous asser-

tions have neither legal validity nor international credibility. In fact, this new effort only confirms reality of Pakistan’s obsession with territorial aggrandisement supported by cross-border terrorism.”

According to Pakistani media reports, Imran Khan — while addressing the country along with his

Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi — said that the new map would now be the “official map” of Pakistan after being approved by the Pakistani federal cabinet and would be the one used in schools and colleges.

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



TARZAN PADDED STEADILY, SEARCHING THE AZULE LAGOON - AND SOON A LOG MARKER APPEARED!

HE QUICKLY MADE FAST TO THE MARKER LINE, THEN AFTER PILING HIS LIMBS WITH AIR, DROVE OVERBOARD.

THE APP-MAN SWAM DOWN, DEEP INTO THE SHADY WATERS -- AND NOW, TENSE WITH EXCITEMENT, HE NEARED THE ROTTEN SHIP!



# DECCAN Chronicle

5 AUGUST 2020

## Repression, mistrust rule Valley 1 yr later

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

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

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

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

## What’s special about NEP?

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

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

In fact, every education policy — collectively they enabled the state to already achieve a gross enrolment ratio of 49.3 per cent in higher education — has been shaped by politics. Many a custom that prevented subaltern communities from pursuing higher education was removed through government orders and moves to deny opportunities for the marginalised people were fought through political action.

That a proposal by C. Rajagopalachari in 1953 to introduce a “hereditary education policy” cost him his premiership and his successor K. Kamaraj earned the sobriquet “Father of Education (*Kalvi Thanthai*)” for opening more schools is an example of people’s awareness on education and their expectations from political leaders. Earlier, Rajagopalachari had lost his premiership when he tried to introduce Hindi in secondary schools in 1937, triggering the first anti-Hindi agitation in the state. So politicians of the day, too, cannot ignore the popular perception that learning Hindi in school does not help much. Also people wonder what’s so great about the NEP that only aspires to achieve a GER of 50 per cent in 2035 when Tamil Nadu is just short of 0.7 per cent now.

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ADITYA SINHA

Editor

R. MOHAN

Resident Editor

K. SUBHAKAR

Printer & Publisher

DECCAN CHRONICLE offices are located at:  
**Chennai:** SP 3 Developed Plot, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai 600032. Phones: (044) 22254747, 22254748.  
**Coinbatore:** 77 Vivekananda Road, Ramnagar, Coimbatore 641009. Phone: (0422) 2231255, 2231256  
**Hyderabad:** 36, Sarojini Devi Road, Secunderabad 500 003. Phone: (040) 27803930-4, Fax: (040) 27805256.  
**Bengaluru:** 5th Floor, BMTC Commercial Complex, 80 Ft. Road, Koramangala, Bangalore-560095. Ph: 08043460500; Fax: 080-22960551/52/55  
**Visakhapatnam:** Survey No. 1/3A Beach Road, Near Kailasagiri Ropeway, Sector-9 MVP Colony, Visakhapatnam - 530 017. Phones: (0891) 2552333/2552334, Fax: (0891) 2755285  
**Vijayawada:** No. C 3 & 4, Patamata, Industrial Estate, Auto Nagar, Vijayawada (A.P.). Phones: (0866) 2555284/ 2555287, Fax: (0866) 2555234  
**Rajahmundry:** Vemagiri, Dhawleswaram Rd, Rajahmundry 533125. Phones: (0883) 2417208, 2417618  
**Anantapur:** Thapovan Colony, Bangalore Bye-Pass Road, Anantapur 515004. Phones: (08554) 276903, Fax: 08554-276904  
**Nellore:** Survey No. 527/2, Burranpur Village, Venkatchalam (M), Chemudugunta Panchayat, Nellore. Phone: (0861) 2348581/ 82, Telefax (0861) 2348580  
**Karimnagar:** Survey No. 1341, Vavilalappally Colony, Jagityala Road, Karimnagar 505 001. Phone: (0878 ) 2228908; Telefax (0878) 2220433  
**Kochi:** No. 3-B, 3rd Floor, DD TRADE TOWER, Kaloor-Kadavanthara Road, Ernakulam, Ph: 0484-4039408  
**Kozhikode:** No 6/1002 E, First Floor City Mall, Opp. YMCA Kannur Road, Kozhikode - 673 001  
**Thiruvananthapuram:** St Joseph Press Thycad post, Cotton Hills, Thiruvananthapuram-14, Ph: 0471-2735105/67, Fax: 0471-4016112 Gram: CHRONICLE Postal registration no: No. H/SD-348/2006-Oss

Subhani



## Men in The Castle and J&K’s metamorphosis



V. Sudarshan

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

The real story, however, is quite the opposite. The only politicians who have a free but security-enveloped run of Jammu and Kashmir are the Central ministers, politicians from New Delhi, some of whose official portfolios are much longer than their names but mean little in the new Jammu and Kashmir. Not the local politicians, even the more mildly offensive in the eyes of New Delhi like Saifuddin Soz, who just the other day impotently peered through concertina wiring to wiggle his finger to demonstrate the complete freedom of his movement. And yes, New Delhi, hereinafter to be referred to as “The Castle”, now controls Jammu and Kashmir in exactly the same way as Pakistan controls Occupied Kashmir,

from Islamabad, through nameless bureaucrats, seemingly eliminating the need for elected representatives. Kafka’s novel is set in unending winter and most scenes are dark. *The Castle* bureaucracy unreachable and the protagonist, eerily, is a mysterious character identified simply as “K”, an outsider seeking acceptance. With Kafkaesque efficiency, our bureaucrats in *The Castle* have managed not to hold elections, even to panchayats. This of course underscores the absurd importance of having grievance boxes in every panchayat in Jammu and Kashmir. To prompt a wink-wink reaction from Washington, the Chinese might be well advised take a few pages of this silver-lined playbook’s refinement of democracy and upholding of human rights, to apply to the Uighurs, for instance.

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

Internally, in terms of

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

Kafka died leaving his last novel hanging mid-sentence, unfinished. Several endings thus become plausible. The parallels are uncanny elsewhere as well outside the artificial microcosm of Kashmir, where the larger plots have begun writing themselves, somewhat to our chagrin. From the East to the West our recent neighbourhood initiative, which began with Prime Minister Narendra

Modi’s impromptu inviting of all the leaders to his swearing-in in May 2014, seems to have arrived at a critical and enigmatic phase. The drawbridge is going up, a moat of self-imposed absurdity completes the separation. In Bangladesh,

which we helped liberate, our envoy continues to find difficulty getting an audience with Sheikh Hasina amid protests against our Prime Minister for pushing both the NRC and the CAA, both inimical to Bangladesh, and capable of driving Bangladesh firmly into the Chinese embrace. It is a squabble a day scene with Nepal now. As we get turfed out of Afghanistan and diplomatically booted out of Iran, there is more likely than not a congruence of both tactical and strategic intent involving a range of countries, especially in the Muslim world, more aligned with the Chinese and Pakistanis, than with New Delhi. Just because most of the Gulf and Arab nations have not spoken up about the depredations around these contentious issues does not mean they do not have a clear view or are not watching with concern the goings-on. Any reprieve that we may have got through Covid-19 on the CAA, and even on Kashmir, is temporary and illusory. The EU remains phlegmatic and focused on its key goals where the lack of various freedoms in Kashmir are concerned. It is not going to change its mind or vote. Joe Biden, should he come up trumps, has already been conferred the Hilal-e-Pakistan for his yeoman service for promoting friendship with Pakistan. One year after August 5, 2019, the intransigent military arrival of the Chinese in our part of Ladakh, however helplessly the folks in *The Castle* spin it with Rafales and so on, is the clearest indication that the world as we wished to know it is no longer the same. At the centre of the faultlines of that new world is a word beginning with K. Which ending do you think waits to write itself for our K?

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

### LETTERS

#### LANGUAGE ISSUE

It refers to the news, *Will never allow 3-language formula*, asserts Edappadi. Recalling the anti-Hindi agitation in 1965 Tamil Nadu CM Edappadi K. Palaniswami has vehemently opposed the 3-language formula in Tamil Nadu as announced in the New Education Policy. While learning new languages is indeed beneficial, compulsory learning should be restricted to one’s own language. When Southern states opposed the imposition of Hindi, the then Prime Minister Nehru assured that English would continue as the official language till they accept Hindi. So making English a supportive language is indeed a viable option. But making multiple languages compulsory is detrimental to both the social and human capital of the country.

**P. Victor Selvaraj**  
Palayamkottai

#### HYPOCRITES ALL

**THIS REFERS** to your editorial *Not the model patient*. After testing positive for Covid-19, Home Minister Amit Shah has taken a wise decision by getting himself admitted to Medanta Hospital in Gurgaon. Obviously, he is aware of the conditions prevailing in government hospitals. Probably, he became all the more cautious after learning about the tragic death of a 3-year-old boy in Aluva in Kerala. The child, who had accidentally swallowed a coin, could not be saved by any of the three government hospitals he was taken for treatment to, because they didn’t have adequate facilities. In fact, a doctor there had even gone to the extent of advising the child to be fed a good amount of rice and banana to facilitate easy passage of the coin through the digestive tract. You only live twice — once, soon after you’re born, and second, just before getting admitted to a government hospital!

**P.G. Menon**  
Chennai

Vijay Sai Reddy

## Rafales to boost India’s bargain strength with China, Pakistan

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

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

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

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

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

Out of the 36 Rafale aircraft, 30 will be

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

come with one of the most advanced Meteor air-to-air missiles.

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

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

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

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

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



## quick BITES

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

\* As of 9:30 PM IST

## Sun launches favipiravir at ₹35 per tablet

Sun Pharmaceutical Industries said it has launched antiviral drug favipiravir under the brand name 'FluGuard' for the treatment of mild to moderate cases of Covid-19, at Rs 35 per tablet in India. The stocks of FluGuard will be available in the market from this week, Sun said in a regulatory filing. Favipiravir is the only oral anti-viral treatment approved in India for the treatment of patients with mild to moderate Covid-19, it added.

## Adani, Suraksha, Sunteck submit EOI for HDIL



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

## GCPL Q1 net profit down 3% to ₹395 crore

Godrej Consumer Products Ltd (GCPL) reported a 3.12 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 394.88 crore in the first quarter ended June 2020 due to pandemic related disruptions in the market. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 407.60 crore in April-June quarter a year ago. Net sales were marginally lower at Rs 2,311.17 crore as against Rs 2,330.59 crore. Total expenses declined 2.16 per cent.

## Cipla India biz CEO, 2 other execs leave firm

Drug firm Cipla has witnessed three senior-level exits, including that of executive vice-president and CEO for India business Nikhil Chopra. The other two executives are Nikhil Lalwani, head of India prescription business, and Kunal Khanna, cluster head of chronic and emerging business development and portfolio. "They have served significant tenures in Cipla; we deeply value their contribution," Cipla said.

## Reserve Bank clears appointment Insider Jagdishan to head HDFC Bk

**FALAKNAAZ SYED**  
MUMBAI, AUG. 4

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

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

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

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

"A meeting of the board of directors of the bank will be convened in due course inter alia to approve the appointment of Mr. Sashidhar Jagdishan as the Managing Director & CEO of the bank, in place of Mr. Aditya Puri, who is due to



Sashidhar Jagdishan

retire as Managing Director of the bank on October 26, 2020," said HDFC Bank in a statement.

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

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

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

"He understands the bank's ethos, culture

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

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

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

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

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

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

**New Delhi, Aug. 4:**

The government on Tuesday said any entity with a net worth of at least Rs 500 crore is eligible for obtaining the liberalised licence to sell petrol and diesel to retail and bulk consumers.

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

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

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

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

## Mkt rebounds on short covering

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD**  
MUMBAI, AUG. 4

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

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

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

Reliance Industries gained 7.10 per cent after a sharp fall in previous ses-



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

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

The BSE Mid-cap index gained 1.02 per cent and

the BSE Small-cap Index gained 1.23 per cent.

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

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

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

## Coal mining: Neighbours need govt nod

**SANGEETHA G**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

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

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

According to this Press Note, "an entity of a country, which shares a land border with India or where the beneficial owner of an

investment into India is situated in or is a citizen of any such country, can invest only under the government route". The Press Note was issued in April as the government wanted to curb opportunistic acquisitions and takeovers of domestic companies by investors from neighbouring countries in the backdrop of the pandemic.

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

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

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

## Indicators till June make FinMin hopeful of recovery

**SANGEETHA G**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

The worst seems to be over, though the risk of rising Covid-19 cases still linger, finds the finance ministry after considering the economic indicators till June. The ministry expects that the agriculture sector will cushion the coronavirus-hit economy this fiscal.

"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," the Macroeconomic Report for July, released by the Economic Affairs Department said.

It further noted that the rise in Covid-19 cases and subsequent intermittent lockdowns make the recovery prospects fragile and called for constant and dynamic monitoring.

While economic indicators showed recovery in



June, sequential recovery has been interrupted in July. The IHS Markit India Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for manufacturing went down from 47.2 in June to 46 in July. Rural jobs too indicated a sequential decline in July.

"The high-frequency indicators have slowed down in July after showing month-on-month recovery. Unlike the V-shaped recovery that everyone was expecting, it seems it could probably be an L-shaped recovery," said Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services.

According to her, probably the pent-up demand had helped the recovery in May and June, but was exhausted in July. While

the demonetisation and introduction of GST had hit the bottom of the pyramid, the pandemic has hit the salaried middle-class as their income levels are not improving due to job loss and salary cuts.

However, the finance ministry hopes agriculture will reduce the shock of the pandemic on the 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," the report said.

"Since September, 2019, the terms of trade have moved in favour of agriculture and have 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.

## Organised electrical players gain in Q1

**SANGEETHA G**  
CHENNAI, AUG. 4

While the consumer electrical sector witnessed a revenue decline in the June quarter, organised players have gained market share from unorganised players due to some of their inherent strengths.

With the lockdown disrupting supply chains across the industry, the impact of material shortage was felt more by the unorganised players, finds Motilal Oswal Research. "We believe organised players have gained market share," it said.

While Havells saw market share gains in domestic switchgears and small appliances, Crompton consolidated its position in fans, with gains in bulbs and battens too. V-Guard also reported market share gains in cables and wires.

"Supply chains and migrant labour related issues have disturbed supply chains of unorganised players. It has hit organized players like us less. Most branded companies in the wire space have seen their market shares

improving in May and June," said Mithun Chittilappilly, MD of V-Guard Industries.

While all the consumer electrical companies have seen a revenue decline in the vicinity of 45 per cent in the June quarter, Unlock 1.0 helped healthy sales recovery for organised players in June.

These companies were also providing support to dealers during lockdown times. Havells' working capital requirement went up in Q1 owing to the support it provided to dealers and creditors. Working capital position improved for Crompton, V-Guard and Orient at the end of Q1 against the March quarter.

Organised players were also able to maintain cash positions. Havells and Crompton raised commercial papers and non-convertible debentures in order to bolster cash positions and take advantage of lower interest rates.

Despite drop in demand, companies did not resort to downtrading. According to Havells, electrical products have a good scope of premiumisation.

## India has 21 unicorns, but diaspora got 40 more

**Mumbai, Aug. 4:** India is home to 21 unicorns—or startups with over \$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. It found that three Chinese investors have backed 11 of the Indian unicorns.

With the 21 unicorns collectively valued at \$73.2 billion, India is the fourth biggest in terms of unicorns, behind the US, China and the UK, going by 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 \$99.6 billion, led by the fintech Robinhood at \$8.5 billion.

Of the 61 unicorns founded by Indians, a massive two-thirds are based outside India, predominantly in the Silicon Valley of 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 recognised 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.

A third of the 21 Indian unicorns, which include Paytm, Oyo Rooms, Byju's and Ola Cabs, are in the e-commerce sector and Bengaluru is the unicorn capital of India being home to 8 such enterprises, it said. The youngest Indian unicorn is the 2017-founded Ola Electric, followed by Udaan and Swiggy. —PTI



## SHORT TAKES

## Red card for coughing on field

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— AP

## World Cup winner Iker calls it a day

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Brazil football sides ignore rules

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

Defending Sao Paulo state champion Corinthians refused on Monday to be tested again, while archrival Palmeiras was criticised for releasing players and staffers to go home after matches.

The first leg of the state final is on Wednesday, and the second on Saturday. The Covid-19 protocols of the Sao Paulo soccer body are the same ones being applied to the Brazilian championship starting next weekend.

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

— AP

## NEP GETS THUMBS UP FROM SPORTZ VILLAGE

**Chennai:** Sportz Village, India's largest youth sports platform, is in support of "the emphasis on holistic development of children" in the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020 announced by the cabinet. Saumil Majmudar, co-founder, CEO and managing director of Sportz Village, said children will benefit from the focus on balanced and all-round development from an early age.

"The new National Education Policy is a welcome change at a time when the health, happiness and immunity of children are becoming increasingly important due to the pandemic," he said.

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# Lines drawn for IPL Tests, quarantine, bio-bubble part of plan

New Delhi, Aug. 4:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The players and support staff will be tested on Day 1, Day 3 and Day 6 of their quarantine in the UAE and after clearing that, they will be tested every fifth day during the 53-day event.

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



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

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

● The players and support staff will be tested on Day 1, Day 3 and Day 6 of their quarantine in the UAE.

● Teams have been told to not fly out before August 20. Families will not be allowed to meet anyone outside bio-bubble.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Not sorry to miss league, says Starc

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

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

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

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

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

— MITCHELL STARC

Australian cricketer on giving the league a miss this year

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

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

— PTI

## WINDIES TOUR OF AUSTRALIA POSTPONED

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

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

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

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

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

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

— PTI

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

## Rooftop tennis? Roger that!



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

### WOMEN'S | TENNIS

## Pliskova makes winning return

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

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

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

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

Vekic sealed a place in the second round on her second match point. Vekic will next face Italian teenager Elisabetta Cocciaretto, who beat Polona Herczeg of Slovenia 7-6 (1), 6-3 for her first victory over a player ranked in the top 50.

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

● After a five-month hiatus, the women's tour-level tennis resumed at the Palermo Ladies Open with strict protocols in places post the Pandemic.

● The players had to handle their own set of towels, not allowed to shower and are no shake hands with their opponents amidst other rules in the tournament.

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

The Italian next faces Kristina Pliskova who upset third-seeded Maria Sakkari 6-4, 6-4.

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

— AP



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

## LIED TO CAS TO REDUCE BAN, ADMITS PUERTA

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

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

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

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

— AP

## Ali confident of Babar show

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Pakistan captain Azhar Ali looks on during a nets session at the Old Trafford in Manchester, England, on Tuesday.

— AP

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

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

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

The two batsmen have

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

ENG DELAY DECISION ON STOKES FOR OPENER

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

Stokes' quad injury

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

— AZHAR ALI  
Pakistan captain on star batsman Babar Azam

Live on TV  
FIRST TEST

England vs Pakistan  
from 3.30 pm  
on Sony Six

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

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

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

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

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

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