

DECCAN Chronicle

THE LARGEST CIRCULATED ENGLISH DAILY IN SOUTH INDIA

COIMBATORE | TUESDAY 4 | AUGUST 2020

WEATHER



Max: 29°C
Min: 24°C
Rainfall: 4 mm

ASTROGUIDE

Sarvari: Aadi 20
Tithi: Prathamai
Star: Thiruvonam/ Avittam
Rahukalam:
3 pm to 4.30 pm
Yamagandam:
9 am to 10.30 am
PRAYERS
Fajar: 4.39 am
Zohar: 12.20 pm
Asar: 3.32 pm
Maghrib: 6.36 pm
Isha: 7.52 pm

CORONA COUNT

CASES	DEATHS
(+47,313)	(+804)
18,52,156	38,969

covid19india.org

STATE GOVERNMENT BULLETINS

(+ 5,609)
TN:2,63,222 4,241

WORLD CONFIRMED CASES

1,83,45,929
DEATHS
6,94,826
COUNTRIES, AREAS WITH CASES
213

worldometers.info

Complaint against Beela Rajesh

Chennai: The Central government has forwarded to the state government a complaint on commercial taxes department secretary Beela Rajesh's disproportionate assets for necessary action. An activist has sent in the complaint against Beela Rajesh, an IAS officer of 1997 batch, to the Centre on June 25, accusing her of amassing wealth disproportionate to her known sources of income and it has now been forwarded to the Chief Secretary. Some time back a vernacular magazine had carried a story about a huge bungalow that Beela Rajesh and her IPS officer husband Rajesh Das had built on the city outskirts.

Karti Chidambaram tests +ve for Covid

Chennai: Lok Sabha MP and son of senior Congress leader P. Chidambaram, Karti, on Monday said he has tested positive for Covid-19. "I have just tested positive for #Covid. My symptoms are mild and as per medical advice I am under home quarantine. I would urge all those who have recently been in contact with me to follow medical protocol," he said in a tweet.

COUNTER POINT



Be alert... now, political community spread of virus has started!

Missing Kashmir solider's kin appeal to militants for his release

DC CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, AUG. 3

The parents of the Territorial Army (TA) jawan who was abducted by suspected militants from a remote village of J&K's southern Kulgam district on Sunday appealed for his release on Mon-day saying they needed him "to stay alive".

The soldier, Shakir Manzoor, was reportedly abducted by gunmen after they intercepted his car while he was travelling through Damhal Hanjipora, a militancy-infected area of Kulgam,

on Sunday evening. Before taking him forcibly, the suspected militants reportedly torched his Maruti Brezza, police sources said.

The police said a massive search operation was soon launched to secure the release of Mr Shakir, a resident of Harmain village of neighbouring Shopian district. The police also said that he was on leave and was heading home for Eid when his car was intercepted by gunmen.

Mr Shakir's parents, while making a passionate appeal to his captors, said that he has to take care of his four sisters

and them. "We appeal to the abductors to please forgive him if he has committed a mistake and let him go for the sake of God. He is needed by us to stay alive," his father told reporters. He added, "We learnt that his vehicle was burnt and when we reached the spot we only found the damaged car, but no trace of him." One of his sisters said, "We appeal to the abductors to please let him go. We don't need anything, we have everything. Just let our brother go and return to us. He is needed by his aged parents and us."



STATE | 3

Pondy CM wishes BSY speedy recovery



NATION | 5

Thackeray unlikely to attend Ayodhya event

SPORT | 8

Trott is England batting coach



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Will never allow 3-language formula, asserts Edappadi

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Chief Minister Edappadi K. Palaniswami expressing pain and anguish over the three-language formula in the new National Education Policy and asserting that the State would continue with CN Annadurai's two-language policy on Monday did not satisfy a belligerent Opposition that wanted a total rejection of the NEP, pointing out more flaws in it.

After holding a discussion with ministers and officials concerned with the education departments and educationalists, the Chief Minister came out with a statement that categorically said that the government was firm in following the two-language system as per the aspirations of the people and political parties, including the AIADMK.

Urging the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take into consideration the sentiments of the people and reconsider the NEP and allow the States to implement its own policies in education, he said people had expressed their views on the issue through various agitations at different points of time.

Recalling the various protests against Hindi imposition in the State, Palaniswami said that former Chief ministers MG Ramachandran and J. Jayalalithaa were firm on it.

The three-language formula in the NEP is painful and saddening. The Prime Minister should reconsider the three-language policy"
Edappadi K. Palaniswami, CM

In 90 per cent of the schools affiliated to ICSE and CBSE the third language is Hindi. Similarly Kendriya Vidyalayas teach Hindi and even DMK MPs make recommendations for admission in the KVs," — ANS Prasad, BJP's state media president.



DMK president M.K. Stalin urged the Chief Minister to call for a Cabinet meeting and pass a resolution against the NEP implementation.



Founder of the Makkal Needhi Maiyam Kamal Haasan, in a tweet, welcomed the Chief Minister's stand but said that some other structures suggested in the NEP like National Assessment Centre, PARAKH, National Testing Agency and National Curriculum Framework would rob the states of their right and hence should be rejected.



He said that he had written to the Prime Minister in June, 2019, itself against the proposal in the NEP for introducing a three-language system in schools and that his government would defend Tamil people and Tamil language if there was any threat to them.

While the founder of PMK, an electoral ally of the AIADMK, Dr S. Ramadoss welcomed the stand taken by the Chief Minister, the Opposition camp, led by DMK president MK Stalin urged the Chief Minister to call for a Cabinet meeting and pass a resolution against the implementation of the NEP.

In a letter to the Chief Minister, written by leaders of 11 political parties belonging to the Secular Liberal Alliance, the other flaws in the NEP were

pointed out. In higher education the autonomy of the universities and the rights of the States were sought to be taken away, the letter said.

The other charges included imposing Vedic culture in education, ignoring social justice but being silent on reservations, not concerned about women's education, attaching the autonomous Classical Tamil Research Institute to a university and saffronizing school education.

Founder of the Makkal Needhi Maiyam, Kamal Haasan, in a tweet, welcomed the Chief Minister's stand but said that some other structures suggested in the NEP like National Assessment Centre, PARAKH, National Testing Agency and National Curriculum Framework

would rob the States of their right and hence should be rejected.

Meanwhile, BJP's State media president ANS Prasad disputed Stalin's claim that the two-language policy was followed in the state. He said in private schools affiliated to the Central boards students were studying three languages.

In 90 per cent of the schools affiliated to ICSE and CBSE the third language was Hindi. Similarly Kendriya Vidyalayas teach Hindi and even DMK MPs make recommendations for admission in the KVs, he said. The State government should not prevent poor children from learning their mother tongue and other languages of their choice by not accepting the NEP.

— RECOVERIES SURGE TO 11.86 LAKH —

Covid-19: India's case tally crosses 18 lakh

New Delhi, Aug 3: India's Covid-19 tally crossed the 18-lakh mark on Monday, just a day after it went past 17 lakh, with 52,972 cases reported in a day, while the number of recoveries surged to over 11.86 lakh, according to the Union Health Ministry data.

The number of Covid-19 tests carried out in India has also crossed the 2 crore mark, according to the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR). The total coronavirus cases surged to 18,03,695, while the death toll due to Covid-19 climbed

to 38,135 with 771 people succumbing to the disease in a day, the data updated at 8 am showed.

However, according to a PTI tally compiled by the data provided by various governments, the COVID-19 case tally stands at 18,49,850 with 38,921 fatalities.

India's single-day spike of 52,972 reported Monday morning was more than the 24-hour case tally of the US and Brazil — the only two countries that have more cases than India, according to various global Covid-19 tracking websites. — PTI

Pak HC: India can appoint Jadhav lawyer

Islamabad, Aug. 3: The Islamabad high court on Monday ordered the Pakistan government to give "another chance" to India to appoint a lawyer for death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav, Pakistani media reports said.

Jadhav, the 50-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

India approached the International Court of Justice against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.

The Hague-based ICJ ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay.

On Monday, a two-member bench comprising IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb heard a petition filed by the Pakistan government to appoint a lawyer for Jadhav.

The Pakistan government, in the petition, asked the IHC to appoint a legal representative for Jadhav so that it can fulfil its responsibility to see to the implementation of the ICJ's decision.

It also claimed that Jadhav refused to file a review petition or an application to reconsider the verdict against him by the military court. "Now that the matter is in the high court, why not give India another chance," Justice Minallah was quoted as saying by Geo News.

The judge said that the Indian government or Jadhav may reconsider their decision pertaining to the review petition. — PTI

Single day highest deaths of 109 in TN on Monday

DC CORRESPONDENT CHENNAI, AUG. 3:

Fatalities due to Covid-19 continued to shoot in the State with 109 persons succumbing to the virus on Monday with most of them from the districts as the Chennai figure was just 20.

Similarly, of the 5,609 fresh infections in the State, Chennai had only 1,021 with districts seeing a high in new cases — Chengalpattu 331, Coimbatore 227, Kanchipuram 322,

Total fresh cases on Monday 5,609

Chennai 1,021

Kanyakumari 215, Ranipet 382, Theni 305, Thiruvallur 332, Thiruvannamalai 212, Thoothukudi 215 and Virudhunagar 348.

The reduction in the number of positive cases in Chennai was attributed to the measures

taken by the government and the Corporation at a review meeting at the Ripon Building, attended by a host of Ministers and officials.

It was decided that the same measures could be implemented in the districts to bring the spread of the virus under control.

For, in Chennai 1,01,951 persons tested positive and of them 87,604 have been cured of the disease and sent back home with only 12,190 still under treatment. ■ **P3**

R-value down in 3 metros but scientists advise caution

New Delhi, Aug 3: The R-value, or reproduction number, for Covid-19 has fallen below one in Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai, indicating a slowdown in the spread of the disease in three of India's biggest cities, according to a recent study.

As experts sound a note of caution against the temptation to lower the guard

and warn that any laxity could send the numbers spiralling, a modelling study published in the journal Statistics & Applications found the current R-value for Delhi is 0.66 while it is 0.81 for Mumbai and 0.86 for Chennai, lower than the national average of 1.16.

R-value is the number of people getting infected by

an already infected person on an average. Andhra Pradesh has the highest R-value of 1.48 in the entire country right now.

Explaining the Delhi figure of 0.66 to illustrate the concept, Sitabhra Sinha, professor of physics at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences (IMSc) in Chennai who led the study, said this means every

group of 100 infected persons in the city can currently pass on the infection to another 60 people on an average.

"Continuation of such a low value of R in a community implies that the current wave of the pandemic is on the decline and could be brought under control in the near future with continued containment mea-

sures," said Dibyendu Nandi, professor of physics at Kolkata's Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER).

"Typically an effective reproduction number, i.e., R-value lower than one implies that an infected person, on average, is spreading the infection to at most one person," he explained. — PTI

Rajput case: Mumbai-Bihar cops' tussle grows

NAYEAR AZAD | DC PATNA, AUG.3

The tussle between Bihar and Maharashtra police over the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput intensified on Monday after an IPS officer from Patna Vinay Tiwary was directed to stay under home quarantine by the BMC authorities.

Reacting over the incident Bihar CM Nitish Kumar said, "Whatever happened to the officer was unfortunate. Our DGP will speak with the authorities in Mumbai".

When asked whether he would speak with



Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray regarding the alleged mistreatment of Bihar cadre IPS officer in Mumbai, Nitish Kumar said that "this is not a political issue for us. We are aware of our legal responsibilities.

Bihar DGP would be discussing the issue with authorities in Mumbai".

The alleged mistreatment of the Bihar police team in Mumbai also snowballed into a political controversy. Political leaders across the party line on Monday raised the issue in the state assembly and urged Bihar CM Nitish Kumar to recommend a CBI probe into the death of Sushant Singh Rajput.

The demand was first raised by Neeraj Singh Bablu, a BJP MLA and Sushant Singh Rajput's cousin.

"It is evident that the Maharashtra government is

trying to create hurdles in the way of Bihar police who has been sent to investigate the case. Forcing an IPS officer to stay under home quarantine hours after he arrived in Mumbai to lead the probe also raises serious doubts", BJP MLA and Sushant Singh Rajput's cousin said.

Neeraj Singh's demand for CBI probe was supported by the leader of the opposition Tejashwi Yadav who said that "the RJD was the first party to make the demand. I have also requested the state government that the upcoming film city in Rajgir should be named after Sushant Singh Rajput".

SHORT TAKES

House of retired govt employee burgled

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 3

The house of a 62-year-old retired government employee was burgled by unidentified people and 25 sovereign gold ornaments were stolen in Perungalathur, police said on Monday.

According to Rangarajan, who worked in the health department of the Tamil Nadu government, the incident took place when he and his family had gone to their relative's house in Sriperumpudur on Saturday. When they returned home on Monday morning, the main grill gate of the house was broken. He got suspicious and rushed inside to find the whole house ransacked.

The accused decamped with cash and 25 sovereign gold jewels and one-kilogram silver ornaments. The family alerted the police. A forensic team took fingerprints from the house. A case has been registered at the Peerankaranai police station and further investigation is under way, a senior police officer said. They are scrutinizing the CCTV cameras to identify the miscreants.

Two flights bring back 255 Indians

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 3

Two flights from the USA and Abu Dhabi brought back 255 Indians to Chennai. A flight from Chicago landed at the Chennai airport on Sunday night with 76 passengers. Passengers were screened and quarantined at Chennai hotels at their own cost.

An evacuation flight from Abu Dhabi brought back 179 passengers on Monday morning. After completion of Immigration and customs procedure, the passengers were classified and sent to a government facility at the Saveetha University in the city outskirts and hotels in Chennai for quarantine, as per the government guidelines.

Patient monitoring device developed

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 3

The IIT-Madras' Healthcare Technology Innovation Centre (HTIC) and Helyxon, a healthcare startup in IIT-M Research Park, have developed a remote patient monitoring device for Covid-19. The device, a first-of-its-kind in the market, can monitor four critical parameters including temperature, oxygen saturation, respiratory rate and heartbeat rate.

The device has already reached over 2,000 patients in public and private hospitals and at homes, with another 5,000 devices in the pipeline. Production is being scaled up to meet the growing demand.

Cost of the device ranges from Rs 2,500 to Rs 10,000 depending on the configuration and parameters. The device is completely self-contained, portable, wireless and can be clipped on to a patient's finger and data is streamed to a mobile phone or central monitoring system. The temperature is measured at the armpit and blood oxygen level and other parameters at the finger itself. The device is reusable and has a lifetime of over a year.

Prof. Mohanasankar Sivaprakasam, head, HTIC, said that there were several attempts to reposition consumer type devices like wrist bands and wearables as medical devices. "But doctors and hospitals are clear that they can only accept devices with accuracy on par with dedicated patient monitors since these are the patient's vital physiological parameters. It was a big learning and a critical input for us", he said.

Manja menace turns near-fatal in Chennai

SINDHYA SAMUEL | DC
CHENNAI, AUG 3

Despite the earnest efforts by the police, manja menace continues to haunt people, mostly ones walking or riding a bike, leaving them injured or even killed. On Sunday the kite string slashed the throat of yet another biker, a police constable who was riding a bike with his wife on Padi flyover.

The 42-year-old traffic police constable, Jayakumar, and his wife fell down from the bike after the thread slit his neck.

Following the incident, city Police Commissioner Mahesh Kumar Aggarwal transferred Villivakkam inspector S. Rajesh Babu to the control room for failing to crack down on manja kite flying in his

16 HURT DURING LOCKDOWN

Kite-flying as a lockdown hobby seems to have found quite a few takers in the city. At the same time, the banned deadly sport injured at least 16 persons in the city during the lockdown alone. In the light of these incidents, then city police commissioner A.K. Vishwanathan issued an internal circular to detain the offenders under the Goondas Act. Chennai police even used binoculars and drones to locate illegal kite flying in the city. However, these incidents continue to occur.

jurisdiction.

According to the police, Jayakumar and his wife Maheshwari, a head constable with the Crime Branch of the Chennai police, were returning from a relative's house

when the incident happened. At around 4 pm on Sunday, when they were riding on the Padi Flyover, a stray manja thread slit the throat of Jayakumar. He subsequently lost control of the bike and both of

them fell on the road.

Police sources said Maheshwari suffered injuries to her hands and legs, while she found Jayakumar lying motionless with blood gushing out of his throat and the manja thread ringed to his neck. He was rushed to the ICF hospital, where he is undergoing treatment.

In July 2017, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) banned the use of 'Chinese' kite strings, made of nylon or any synthetic material, which is non-biodegradable. They directed all the state governments to prohibit the "manufacture, sale, storage, purchase and use" of synthetic manja or nylon threads and all other synthetic strings used for flying kites.

HEAVY RAINS, WINDS LASH NILGIRIS

B RAVICHANDRAN | DC
OOTY, AUG 3

Avalanche and Devala in the Nilgiris recorded more than 100 mm rainfall on Monday as intermittent heavy showers continued to lash the central and western Nilgiris over the past two days. Incidents of uprooted trees and continuous strong winds are keeping the hills under a grip of fear as the SW monsoon intensified suddenly.

The SW monsoon rains which began to intensify here from Saturday night, continued throughout Sunday and Monday. Showers have been particularly heavy in the central and western Nilgiris comprising Ooty, Kundah, Gudalur and Pandalur taluks. While Avalanche near Ooty recorded 103 mm of rains in 24 hours, ending Monday by 8 am, Devala near Gudalur, known to receive heavy rains during the SW monsoon, recorded 145 mm by Monday morning.

Gusty winds, especially in the Gudalur and Pandalur taluks bordering Kerala, made things worse as the winds uprooted trees on the Gudalur-O'Valley road, on Sunday evening. Disaster management teams are in a state of high alert in all taluks.

Though the rain is helpful to fill major reservoirs like Upper Bhavani, Avalanche, Emerald, Glenmorgan, Pykara and Parson's Valley, if it continues heavily for some more time, it may wreak havoc to the hill vegetable fields in low-lying areas.

Fishermen upset over new fishing bill

M. ARULOLI | DC
TIRUNELVELI, AUG 3

Traditional fishermen in the southern coastal districts of Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi and Kanyakumari, expressed apprehension that the marine fishing regulation and management bill 2020, if enacted into an Act would deprive the livelihood of around a lakh traditional fishermen and small fish vendors.

Stating that the jurisdiction of territorial waters is under its control, the Centre is alleged to deprive the state fisheries department its power, said Dr S J Gayes, president, Thoothukudi district country craft fishermen welfare association. Gayes said, according to the bill, fishing vessels without licence under the Merchant Shipping Act 1958, cannot go fishing beyond 12 nautical miles from

the shore. This would throw traditional fishermen out of the trade.

"In that sense, this bill is against Article 21 of the Constitution that guarantees the right to life and personal liberty," added Gayes.

The 'marine fishing regulation and management bill 2020' also looks to be detrimental for the deep sea mechanised fishing industry, say Kanyakumari district

fishermen. General secretary, South Asian Fishermen Fraternity, Churchill, said that mechanised fishing boats also could not do fishing in the exclusive economic zones extending up to 200 nautical miles from the territorial sea from the 12 nautical miles from the shore, without registering themselves with the Marine Mercantile department under the Marine Shipping Act.

Dr Sr. Biji Cyriac, superior of Fatima College convent, receiving the first copy of FCAA newsletter from Dr Sr G. Celine Sahaya Mary, principal, Fatima College, released on the occasion. FCAA president Dr S. J. Kala (second from right) also seen.

Thread of love and bondage



(Above) Raksha Bandhan celebrated in Sowcarpet on Monday.

Students go through the textbooks distributed in their school in the city.

—DC



Plea in HC to provide food, shelter to mentally disabled

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 3

A Public Interest Litigation has been filed in the Madras high court to direct the authorities to provide adequate food and shelter to the dying destitute and mentally disabled persons, who are living and stranded on the road sides and pavements in the State of Tamil Nadu and shift them to government homes after conducting Covid-19 test to them.

A division bench comprising Justices M.M.Sundresh and R.Hemalatha, before whom the PIL filed by advocate M.Karpagam came up for hearing, adjourned it to August 18, 2020, for submission of status report.

The bench also directed the State Commissioner for Persons with Differently-abled to depute state level officers to find out and make an assessment of all the mentally stranded persons on the streets and accordingly, rehabilitate and accommodate them in the government run institutions. According to Karpagam,

recently he came across many homeless dying destitute on the roads and pavements and most of whom were mentally affected differently-abled persons.

These people in this period of lock down and quarantine for the pandemic due to Covid-19 were left hapless on the road sides without proper food, clothing or shelter. These mentally disabled were most vulnerable to get infected.

Recently, the National Human Rights Commission had suo motu took cognizance of the plight of these mentally disabled persons and reprimanded the State governments to form adequate schemes and plans to take proper care of these people ensuring their right to food and shelter, he pointed out.

He said the World Health Organization have also time and again issued a series of guidelines to the member states to protect the vulnerable from the pandemic, as even if one person was infected, it will start to spread the virus to others.

These persons live in such pathetic conditions. They were not safeguarded against the virus by the State with adequate sanitizing facilities like mask or hand sanitisers. These people were also prone to death due to starvations and extreme conditions of weather

He personally saw such a scenario of their pathetic condition with no one to attend or take care. Even no old age home or any institution will come forward to rehabilitate them at this juncture except the state, he added. He said the Tamil Nadu government has grossly failed to protect the constitutional right to life of these mentally disabled persons and dying destitute on the streets and pavements especially at the time of emergency and pandemic risk.

The abandoned disabled people, especially when they have suffered from insanity, were more prone to community transmission of virus as they lack awareness and hygiene. Hence, they ought to be shifted to shelter homes, he added.



In an effort to destroy mosquito larvae in stagnant rainwater and stem the spread of Covid-19 following rains, Vellore corporation staff, led by municipal health officer Chithrasena and health officer Balamurugan, disperse oil balls in open water stagnant areas, across the city.

—K., Senthil Nathan

In a first, Fatima College organises week-long virtual alumnae meet

B. VIJAYALAKSHMI | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 3

In a first, alumnae of Fatima College, Madurai, met virtually and took part in a week-long fete comprising interesting and engaging programmes.

Due to Covid-19, Fatima College Alumnae Association (FCAA) organised its first online annual alumnae meet from July 20-26. Over 800 alumnae from various parts of the country and the US took part in the gala digital event.

Speaking to DC, Dr S. J. Kala, president of FCAA, says, "The annual alumnae meet usually held on the second Saturday of July every

● The alumnae chapters created in different parts of the country and abroad helped in making this online transition smooth

year took a digital makeover this year. We had created several FCAA chapters in different parts of the country and abroad. With the help of WhatsApp groups formed for each chapter, we were able to digitally connect and interact with all alumnae and organise this event for a week."

Dr Sr. G. Celine Sahaya Mary, principal, Fatima College, who offered her felicitations to participants

on the first day of the online event, says, "It was a joyous moment for us to connect with all our alumnae in different parts of the world."

Dr Sr. Francisca Flora, secretary of the college, gave a special message and blessed the participants.

New FCAA chapters were created in Theni and Kodaikanal during this programme. The event evoked an overwhelming response and an alumna from Vietnam got the programme link and took part in it. Alumnae from FCCA chapters in Bangalore, Coimbatore, Chennai, Ramnad, Devakottai, East Coast and West Coast (US) wowed the viewers with

their interesting line-up of programmes.

Alumnae reminisced fondly of the days they spent in Fatima College through videos and old photographs, while some of them rendered exquisite dance and veena recitals. They also spoke on emotional intelligence and women empowerment. In some chapters, special invitees spoke on healthy lifestyle and Covid precautionary measures.

The alumnae of FCAA US East Coast chapter impressed the netizens by beginning their show with *Tamil Thai Vaazhthu*. The FCAA US West Coast chapter bagged the best performance award.



Dr Sr. Biji Cyriac, superior of Fatima College convent, receiving the first copy of FCAA newsletter from Dr Sr G. Celine Sahaya Mary, principal, Fatima College, released on the occasion. FCAA president Dr S. J. Kala (second from right) also seen.

SHORT TAKES

No 'At Home Reception' for I-Day

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG 3

Governor Banwarilal Purohit has decided not to host the "At Home Reception" at Raj Bhavan on the occasion of Independence Day in view of Covid-19 pandemic.

According to a Raj Bhavan press release, doctors from Kauvery hospital carried out a health check up on the Governor, who has tested positive for coronavirus, on Monday.

They found him to be stable and are monitoring his health condition round the clock, the press release added.

In step with NEP, says NIT(T)

R. VALAYAPATHY | DC
TIRUCHY, AUG 3

The National Institute of Technology – Tiruchirappalli (NIT-T), has already aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) in being 'Locally relevant and Globally Competitive', that envisages technology development for the local community.

An NIT-T release said here on Monday that they recently introduced a MA programme in English literature as the first step in removing unnecessary separations between arts, science and technology. NEP removes the hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams, in order to move towards a higher educational system consisting of large, multidisciplinary universities and colleges, it added.

Strengthening the higher education sector is vital to improve creativity. This has been well addressed in NEP 2020 with the following highlights. Bachelor's degree will be of four years with multiple exit options. Certification will be provided if exited after a year. A diploma would be awarded if exited after two years and a degree after completion of four years, the release said.

The curriculum will kindle the interest in students to focus on learning rather than earning a degree. By 2040, all higher education institutions (HEIs) shall aim to become multidisciplinary institutions and shall aim to create vibrant multidisciplinary communities. Universities and colleges will thus be required to set up high-quality support centres and will be given adequate funds and academic resources to carry this out effectively. The aim will be to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3 per cent (2018) to 50 per cent by 2035, the release added.

Mayiladuthurai MP tests corona +ve

DC CORRESPONDENT
THANJAVUR, AUG 3

Mayiladuthurai MP S Ramalingam tested positive for corona on Monday. Recently, he underwent by-pass surgery at a private hospital in Chennai, and was decided to shift him to the same hospital here. Following this, he was sent to the Thanjavur medical college hospital. Corona tests were conducted on his relatives and friends who visited him. Revenue officials undertook sanitising measures at his house and surroundings at Srinivasanallur near Kumbakonam.

■ Not enough space in Madhavaram market

City flower vendors face a thorny future

T. SUDHEESH | DC
CHENNAI, AUG. 3

With the Koyambedu market complex remaining shut since April 27 after it emerged as a Covid-19 cluster, the flower vendors continue to struggle to make a living without a proper marketplace to do business.

After the market complex was shut, the Chennai Metro Development Authority (CMDA), which administers the Asia's largest market, had shifted the vegetable market to Tirumazhisai in Tiruvallur district and the fruits market to Madavaram in the city.

But the CMDA failed to provide a proper market space for flower vendors who were earning income from the Koyambedu market for decades.

An office-bearer of the Koyambedu Wholesale Flower Merchants Welfare Association said that space was allotted for just 30 vendors in Madavaram despite 470 flower shops at the market. As a result, the flower vendors started to sell on

■ "Some of them have also opened markets at Maduravoyal. The flower market was decentralised in order to maintain social distancing," said officials

the streets of Chennai in small vans. "We had requested the government to provide us the vacant open space outside the Koyambedu market complex for business as we require less space to do business compared to vegetable and fruit markets. But the government did not pay heed to our request till now."

Recently, after the traders made an appeal to the owner, the parking space of the Rohini theatre in Koyambedu was opened for at least 22 flower vendors. "We have set up the market at our own expense maintaining social distancing and periodic disinfecting activities," he said. He urged the government to take steps to allot a proper marketplace soon.

"The flower market, which used to get at least 30 truckloads of flower in the post-pandemic era, has now ended up in just 5-10 lorries- each lorry with five tonnes," he added.

Radha, who sold flowers at Koyambedu market, is now selling flowers in the streets since the complex was closed. "I didn't go to Madavaram as it is too far from here. Most of the flower vendors have chosen to sell the flowers in the streets along with their children. If we had a proper market space, we could have earned better", she said.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister O. Panneerselvam last month had announced the setting up of a committee to explore reopening of Koyambedu market. CMDA officials said that they had given approval to a few vendors to sell flowers at Parry's corner. "Some of them have also opened markets at Maduravoyal. The flower market was decentralised in order to maintain social distancing," said officials.

Eat well, stay healthy



Volunteers distributing eggs and other nutritious items to people in the city on Monday.

— DC

HC seeks report on illegal guns

Chennai, Aug. 3: The Madras high court on Monday voiced concern that gun culture was finding its way into Tamil Nadu and sought a report from the state government on steps taken to control the trend.

A bench of Justices N Kirubakaran and V M Velumani, hearing a related matter through virtual hearing, said the country

was facing a lot of threats not only from outside but also from inside with Naxalites, ULFA and ISIS were waging war using illegal weapons.

Impleading suo motu (on its own) the state Director General of Police, home secretary and the city police commissioner as party respondents, it directed them to file a detailed report on the

steps taken to prevent illegal guns.

Posing a set of questions, the bench sought details on the number of people detained under the Goondas Act for committing offences like dacoity, robbery and other heinous crimes using illegal firearms and number of people arrested for selling them. Seeking information on the number of gun

licenses granted in the state, the court directed them to file the report in two weeks. It said such unlicensed guns were supplied from states, including Jharkhand and Bihar, and goondas and contract killers were getting access to them. If this gun culture is not contained and dealt with an iron hand, people's life will not be safe, it said.

— PTI

Bribe: Two hosp workers face action

ZAKEER HUSSAIN | DC
SALEM, AUG 3

The hospital administration has initiated action on two employees at the maternity ward in the Salem government hospital, for allegedly taking bribe from the family of a pregnant woman.

A pregnant woman from Kallakurichi district was admitted to the maternity ward here last week for delivery, and she delivered a baby girl last Sunday through C-section.

Video clips of the women hospital staff being paid money to take the pregnant woman in a wheelchair, on a stretcher, and later taking food into the delivery room, went viral on social media. It is also alleged

that the ward boy and the security personnel at the hospital had demanded between Rs 500 to Rs700 from the woman's family.

On information, deancum-chief physician, Salem government hospital, Dr Balaji Nathan and Superintendent, Salem government hospital, Dr Danapal, investigated the complaint.

Investigations revealed that two persons, a contract employee and another woman outsourced employee, had received bribes. Both were warned of dismissal action.

A letter has been forwarded to the concerned employment agent recommending dismissal action against the woman employee involved in the crime, Dr Balaji Nathan added.

Two burglaries in Tiruchy

DC CORRESPONDENT
TIRUCHY, AUG 3

Police secured an employee of a real estate business here for allegedly stealing ₹78 lakh from the business man's house, while he was away at Chennai for the last few days.

Police said, the businessman Sivasakthi (46), returned from Chennai on Sunday and played the CCTV camera installed at the house and was shocked to find the company employee Chellamuthu (43), opening the locked house and the cash safety locker, and made away with Rs 78 lakh from the locker and fled.

Based on Sivasakthi's complaint, Thillai Nagar police secured Subramnaiyan and recovered ₹ 54 lakhs from him, and are investigating.

On interrogation, Chellamuthu confessed to the crime, police said. In another incident, unidentified miscreants gained entry into a timber merchant's house when the occupants were fast asleep in the first floor, and made away with ₹3.80 lakh and a gold chain weighing two sovereigns, by breaking open the steel almirah in which valuables were kept.

Palakkarai police registered a case, and are investigating.



MNM leader Kamal Haasan interacting with Puducherry secretaries online.

— DC

MNM seeks to strengthen its hold on Puducherry

DCCORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 3

In a bid to place Puducherry on the map of development in various fields, to enhance the quality of life of people of Puducherry and to make Makkal Needhi Maiam an integral part of Puducherry by becoming the ruling party, MNK president Kamal Haasan has named new members in various verticals of operations in the party. According to a press

release, Makkal Needhi Maiam president Kamal Haasan recently held an online discussion with state secretaries of Puducherry Makkal Needhi Maiam.

During the discussion, MAS Subramanian, the state executive committee chairman, outlined the current status of the political dynamics in Puducherry, and also placed on record the role of Makkal Needhi Maiam in such a situation. Kamal Haasan highlighted the

importance of appointing active heads in the various positions in the party structure.

He emphasised on the importance of holding the fort in Puducherry without any lags and stressed on the need to strengthen the party further.

The vice president of Makkal Needhi Maiam Dr R Mahendran, treasurer Chandrasekaran and general secretary Arunachalam also took part in the online conference.

76 isolation zones in Thanjavur dt: Collector

G. SRINIVASAN | DC
THANJAVUR, AUG 3

There are 76 containment zones in the district and people are strictly prohibited from coming out in these zones, said Collector M Govinda Rao, at Kumbakonam, on Monday. However, essential commodities and services are being provided

to them at their doorstep by officials.

Inspecting the corona preventive measures in Kumbakonam, Rao inspected the vegetable market on the by-pass road and the corona care centre at Annai College. He said that 23 persons have been permitted in the district to remain in house quarantine.

4 die, 178 new cases in Pondy

Puducherry, Aug 3: Four persons succumbed to coronavirus in Puducherry taking the death toll to 56 while 178 fresh cases were reported on Monday. The 178 new cases took the overall tally in the union territory to 3,982 of which 1,515 (including 273 in home isolation) were active, Health Minister Malladi Krishna Rao said at a virtual press conference. He further said as many as 2,411 patients had been treated and discharged so far. On the deaths reported in the last 24 hours ending 10 am today, the Minister said a 71-year old male patient died at centrally-administered JIPMER, while three other patients (two women in the age group of 52 and 60 years and one male patient aged 55) succumbed at the government-run Indira Gandhi Medical College Hospital. All the four patients had

Pondy CM wishes BSY speedy recovery

Puducherry : Senior Congress leader and Puducherry Chief Minister V Narayanasamy on Monday wished the Karnataka Chief Minister B. S. Yediyurappa speedy recovery from

Covid19. In his twitter handle, Narayanasamy said he wished Yediyurappa, who has tested positive for the infection, gets well and prayed for his speedy recovery.

— PTI

co-morbidities and died on Sunday, he added. Also, he said the 178 new cases were identified after examining 782 samples in 24 hours, showing a positivity rate of 22.8 per cent. The Minister said that 102 patients were treated and discharged. The Department of Health and Family Welfare has so far tested 41,540 samples and found 36,894 of them to be negative. Results of examination of remaining samples were awaited. The rate of fatality in

Puducherry was 1.4 per cent, the Minister said. While 125 of the 178 new cases were being treated in hospitals in Puducherry, nine were in the government GH in Karaikal followed by 42 in the GH in Yanam and the remaining two were undergoing treatment at the GH in Mahe. Yanam region, an enclave of Puducherry in Andhra Pradesh's East Godavari district, had a total of 151 active cases.

— PTI

HC: Why is TN govt opposing parole application by Rajiv case life convict

Chennai, Aug 3: Madras High Court on Monday wondered why the Tamil Nadu government was vehemently opposing the parole application moved by Rajiv Gandhi assassination case life convict A G Perarivalan, while the cabinet has recommended release of all seven convicts in the case.

"Your cabinet has recommended his release in toto. Then why are you opposing his application for parole for one month. Do not oppose for the sake of opposing, a division bench, comprising Justices N Kirubakaran and V M Velumani said to Public Prosecutor A Natarajan.

The PP explained that he is not opposing for the sake of doing so, but but the applicant must have valid reasons to seek parole.

"Only last year he was out on leave. As per prison rules, a prisoner becomes eligible for next parole only after three years.

Moreover, the prison doctor has made it very clear in his report that though the prisoner suffered a series of illnesses, he is currently under medication for the same and he is stable," Natarajan said. Senior counsel Shanmugasundaram for the petitioner pointed out that there is a provision in the prison rules under which the state can exempt a prisoner from such conditions and grant parole.

"There are such exemptions, but the same cannot be granted on medical grounds", Natarajan added.

Refusing to accept the contention, the bench said that if

rules prohibit leave on medical grounds, then such rules have become redundant.

"It has to be updated. Do you mean to say illnesses are not extraordinary situations?", the bench asked.

The court then directed the state and the petitioner to file an affidavit on the current status of the Multi-Disciplinary Monitoring Agency probing the larger conspiracy behind the Rajiv Gandhi assassination and the interim orders of the Supreme Court in connection with the matter.

The bench then adjourned the hearing to August 12.

On July 29, the Tamil Nadu government had informed the court that the Governor is awaiting the final report of MDMA to take a decision on the recommendation made

by the cabinet to release all the seven life convicts of the case.

The issue pertains to a plea moved by T Arputham mother of life convict A G Perarivalan, who requested a direction from the court to grant 90 days parole to her son, who needs immediate medical attention in view of various ailments.

Besides Nalini Sriharan and her husband, the others convicted in the Rajiv case are A G Perarivalan, Santhan, Jayakumar, Ravichandran and Robert Pyas.

All are serving life imprisonment for their role in the assassination of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on May 21, 1991 by an LTTE suicide-bomber at nearby Sriperumbudur.

—PTI

BJP STAGES DEMO OVER YOUTUBE POST

Thanjavur : Members of the BJP youth wing staged a demonstration before the Swaminatha swamy temple at Swamimalai near Kumbakonam on Monday, demanding action against those who denigrated Kandha Sashti Kavasaam on YouTube. Thanjavur north district youth wing secretary, Hariakesh, led the agitation. Kantha Sashti Kavasaam books were distributed to people and stickers with slogans 'Veeravel vetrivel' pasted in houses.

SHORT TAKES

IMD ISSUES RED ALERT FOR MUMBAI

DC CORRESPONDENT
MUMBAI, AUG. 3

The India Meteorological Department has issued a red alert for Mumbai, Thane, Pune, Raigad and Ratnagiri districts in Maharashtra for Tuesday after upgrading its earlier rain forecast from “heavy-very heavy” to “extremely heavy”.

An IMD official informed that the rest of Maharashtra was very likely to get rain and thundershowers in isolated places during this period. He said the “extremely heavy” forecast means Mumbai, Raigad, Thane, Pune and Ratnagiri may get more than 204.5 millimetres of rain in a period of 24 hours.

“Mumbai, Thane, Pune would receive extremely heavy rainfall in isolated places on Tuesday and Wednesday. Raigad has a similar forecast between Monday and Wednesday,” he said, adding that the probability of the forecast is very likely, which means 51 per cent to 75 per cent of actualisation.

Neighbouring Palghar district would get heavy to very heavy rains at a few places on Tuesday and the intensity would increase on Wednesday, the IMD said.

SHIVRAJ SINGH CHOUHAN TESTS POSITIVE AGAIN

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY | DC
BHOPLA, AUG 3

Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan's samples tested positive again on Monday making him extend his stay in the hospital here where he was admitted on July 25 for treatment of Covid-19. A health bulletin where he has been admitted, said, “CM's RT-PCR test for SARS-Cov-2 on the 9th day was positive. His medical parameters are normal”.

Earlier on Sunday, Mr Chouhan tweeted that he was healthy and not showing any symptoms of infection. He would be discharged from the hospital if his latest samples tested negative.

State home minister Narottam Mishra also confirmed that Mr Chouhan would stay in hospital for now. Mr Chouhan would chair Tuesday's virtual cabinet meeting from the hospital, he added. Madhya Pradesh has reported 33,535 coronavirus positive cases and 886 deaths so far.

ALL SHOPS TO REMAIN OPEN IN MUMBAI

Mumbai, Aug. 3: In a major relief for Mumbaiikars, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Monday said all shops in the city will be allowed to remain open all days from Wednesday irrespective of the odd-even rule.

Under the rule, shops on one side of the road used to remain open on one day, while those on the other side used to function the next day.

In a circular issued under the Mission Begin Again, the civic body also allowed the counter sale of liquor in Mumbai with proper social distancing norms.

“It is further directed that all shops shall remain open on all days on all sides of roads irrespective of odd and even (rule),” the circular said.

The relaxation came amid indications that the number of new Covid-19 cases in Mumbai is more or less stabilising for the last few days.

On Monday, Mumbai added 970 new cases, taking the cumulative count to 1,17,406.

The BMC said all essential shops which were allowed to remain open earlier shall continue to do so whereas all non-essential markets, market areas and shops will remain open from 9 am to 7 pm, the BMC said.

Malls and market places will be allowed to work from 9 am to 7 pm from Wednesday. However, theatres, food courts/restaurants will continue to remain shut.

“Kitchen of restaurants and food courts will be allowed to operate in malls wherein only home delivery through aggregators will be allowed,” the BMC said. Apart from allowing sale of liquor at shop counters, the BMC said home delivery of booze is allowed with strict compliance with norms. The corporation warned filing of criminal cases against owners of shops and persons found violating its directives. *PTI*

Spl dress with nine gems for Lord Ram

Clothes are made using soft material such as ‘makhmal’ as they are for Ram Lalla who is a child

Ayodhya, Aug. 3: For the past three and a half decades, brothers Shankarlal and Bhagwatlal ‘Pahaadhi’ have been stitching clothes for Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. Their dedication will manifest in the splendid dress they have meticulously crafted for the deity to wear on August 5, during the bhoomi puja ceremony of the Ram temple.

Operating from their shop named after their late father Babulal and located in the city's Badhi Kutiyaa area, the brothers stitch clothes for only deities and seers.

“My father late Babulal started stitching the clothes of Ram Lalla in 1985. He used to carry our sewing machine to the Ramjanmabhoomi and stitch the clothes with me and my elder brother in tow,” Shankarlal, 54, said on Monday.

“The three of us used to make the clothes of Lord Ram. The dresses were made and stitched virtually in front of the deity. Since then, our work is continuing,” he said.

Shankarlal said that for Wednesday, the day of bhoomi puja to mark the beginning of the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, two sets of dresses have been made — one is green, while the other is orange.

“The clothes are made using soft material such as makhmal (velvet). After all, they are for Ram Lalla who is a child. The green dress has been made keeping in mind the day-specific colour, while orange is considered auspicious,” he said.

On Wednesday, the green dress will be worn first and the orange one later, Shankarlal said.

The special dress for the

ceremony has nine gems stitched in golden thread. “There is grandeur in the clothes of the Lord as well,” he said.

On Sunday, the dresses were handed over by the tailors, said Acharya Satyendra Das, the chief priest of the Ram temple.

“A day-specific colour scheme is followed for the dresses worn by Lord Ram. On Monday the dress is white, on Tuesday it is red, while on Wednesday it is the turn of the green dress for the Lord,” Shankarlal said.

On Thursdays the idol is dressed in yellow, Fridays are for cream-coloured dresses, on Saturdays it is the turn of blue clothes while on Sundays pink clothes adorn the deity.

Shankarlal also said the same cloth, with which Ram's dress is stitched, is used to make dresses for Lakshman, Bharat, Shatrughan, Hanuman and Shaaligram.

“Earlier, 11-metre-long fabric was required to make the dress, but now, we need about 17 metres of cloth. Once the grand temple is built, I do not know how much cloth will be required to make one set of dresses for Lord Ram and others,” Shankarlal said.

At present, Shankarlal is assisted by his nephews Pawan Kumar, Sanjay Kumar and Shravan Kumar.

“My son Rajveer is in class 7. As soon as he clears class 8, he will join me,” he said.

Shankarlal's elder brother Bhagwatlal ‘Pahaadhi’ attributed their stitching expertise to God.

“The entire family is involved in this. Whatever qualities have been given by God, we are making dresses using those qualities only. It is He who is



A model of Ram temple displayed at Kar Sewak Puram in Ayodhya on Monday. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to attend the Bhoomi Puja ceremony of Ram Temple in Ayodhya on August 5.

● **FOR THE DAY** of bhoomi puja to mark the beginning of the construction of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya, two sets of dresses have been made — one is green, while the other is orange.

getting them made by us, as He gets everything done.”

Interestingly, the brother duo and their family members depend on other tailors for their own apparels.

“We only make clothes for Lord Ram and some clothes of seers. We do not accept any orders from the common people. We even do not make our own

clothes. Our own clothes are made using the services and expertise of other tailors,” Shankarlal said.

Meanwhile, as details of the invitation card and guest list were unveiled on Monday, reports said that only five people will be on the stage for the event — Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat, Uttar Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Mahant Nritya Gopaladas.

The invite, which has an image of the idol of “Ram Lalla” or infant Lord Ram, mentions Modi and three others. —PTI

Thackeray unlikely to attend event

BHAGWAN PARAB | DC
MUMBAI, AUG. 3

Owing to the Coronavirus outbreak in Ayodhya, Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray is not likely to attend the bhoomi puja ceremony of the Ram Mandir in the holy town.

“The situation is critical in Ayodhya and everyone believes VIP movement should be as less as possible. The Prime

Minister is going there, we wish him well. The Chief Minister can go there later any time,” said senior Shiv Sena leader Sanjay Raut on Monday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will perform the bhoomi puja of the proposed Ram Mandir at Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh on August 5.

Raut's remarks have come after UP minister Kamal Rani Varun succumbed to the virus.

— PTI

BABRI LITIGANT INVITED FOR CEREMONY

Ayodhya, Aug. 3: Iqbal Ansari, who was a litigant in the Ayodhya land dispute case, has decided to gift a ‘Ram nami’ stole and a copy of the Ramcharitmanas to Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he attends the bhoomi puja ceremony for the Ram temple here on Wednesday.

“Yes, I have received the invitation from Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust for the bhoomi puja ceremony. I will certainly attend it. The dispute is over now after the court's verdict,” said Ansari (69).

“Our Prime Minister is coming. I will meet him and give him a ‘Ramnami’ stole (with Ram's name written on it) and Ramcharitmanas as a present,” Ansari said.

His father Hashim Ansari, the oldest litigant in the Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi land dispute case, died at the age of 95 in 2016 after which the son started pursuing the case in the court.

Talking about Wednesday's groundbreaking ceremony to mark the beginning of the construction of a grand Ram temple here, Ansari said, “I belong to Ayodhya. All this (temple's construction) will change the fate of Ayodhya. We all want our child to get better opportunities”.

He further said, “I respect sadhus and saints. I am happy to have received the invitation for the ceremony. I think it is Lord Ram's will that I attend it”.

—PTI

TS cuts tests but adds 983 cases

DC CORRESPONDENTS
AUG. 3

Hyderabad: Telangana state recorded nearly 900 fewer cases on Sunday, but that was because the state government reduced the number of tests by 9,759.

On Saturday, the government had conducted 19,202 tests and 1,891 persons had tested positive. On Sunday, the number of tests plunged to 9,443 and those who tested positive fell to 983. The reports of 1,414 tests are awaited.

The total number of cases as on Sunday 8 pm stood at 67,660, according to the bulletin issued by the health department on Monday. While the GHMC area recorded 273 cases, Ranga Reddy had 73 and Karimnagar 54. Eleven deaths were also reported in the state, taking the toll to 551.

7,822 new cases,
62 deaths in AP

Vijayawada: Andhra Pradesh registered 7,822 new Covid-19 cases taking the tally to 1,66,586 and 62 deaths taking toll to 1,537 in the last 24 hours.

A health department bulletin said out of 45,516 samples tested, 7,822 individuals have been found infected with

Coronavirus. Among new infections, East Godavari has registered the highest number of 1,113 followed by 1,049 in Visakhapatnam, followed by 953 in Anantapur.

New cases drop in
Karnataka

Bengaluru: The number of new Covid 19 infections dropped below the 5,000 mark for the first time in 10 days in Karnataka on Monday. The state recorded 4,752 cases taking the total number of infections to 1,39,571, while 4,776 patients were discharged after recovery. The state, however, reported 98 fresh deaths, taking the death toll to 2,594.

Overcharging: Hyd
hosp loses permission

The Telangana government has revoked permission for Deccan Hospital, Somajiguda, to treat Covid-19 patients for overcharging patients.

The action was taken by the Director of Health and Family Welfare under the Epidemic Diseases Act. The government in its order stated that private hospitals were flouting the guidelines related to treatment charges.

VINEETA PANDEY | DC
inputs from agencies
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

Amid daily reporting of a huge number of coronavirus cases, India has taken a step forward in race against time to develop a vaccine. The Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has given approvals to the Serum Institute of India (SII) to conduct Phase 2 and 3 human clinical trials of the Oxford University developed Covid-19 vaccine candidate in the country.

The SII, one of the largest manufacturers of vaccines in the world, has been chosen by Oxford and its partner AstraZeneca to manufacture the vaccine COVISHIELD once it is ready for larger use. Currently, phase 2, 3 clinical trials of the Oxford sponsor vaccine are going on in the United Kingdom, while phase 3 clinical trials are on in Brazil and phase 1, 2 clinical trials are going on in South Africa. The vaccine candidate has shown promising results during its phase-1 trials in the UK in which two Indians were also administered the vaccine.

The SII had last month sought permission from

● **AS PER THE STUDY** design, each subject will be administered two doses at a gap of 4 weeks - first dose on Day 1 and second on Day 29.

● **OFFICIALS SAID** the safety and immunogenicity will be assessed at predefined intervals.

DCGI to conduct these trials in India. The approval for conducting phase-2 and 3 clinical trials by the SII was granted by the DCGI after an evaluation based on the recommendations of the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) on Covid-19.

The SII will conduct an “observer-blind, randomised controlled study” to determine the safety and immunogenicity of COVISHIELD on healthy Indian adults, said sources. Accordingly, 1,600 persons at 17 sites will participate in the trials.

As per the study design, each subject will be administered two doses at a gap of 4 weeks - first dose on Day 1 and second on Day 29. Officials said the safety and immunogenicity will be assessed at predefined intervals. SII will have to submit safety data, evaluated by the

Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB), to the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).

The clinical trial sites which have been proposed for the study be distributed across India and include AIIMS-Delhi, B.J. Medical College-Pune, Rajendra Memorial Research Institute of Medical Sciences (RMRIMS)-Patna, Post Graduate Institute of Medical Education and Research-Chandigarh, AIIMS-Jodhpur, Nehru Hospital- Gorakhpur, Andhra Medical College-Visakhapatnam and JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research-Mysore.

Covid-19 cases in India are on a steep rise as the country reported 57,972 fresh cases in the last 24 hours taking the country's overall figures to 18,03,695, as per union health ministry. So far 38,135 deaths have been reported out of which 771 took place in the last 24 hours. However, according to COVID19India.org by Monday evening, India had about 18.31 lakh total cases and close to 38,500 deaths.

India is now reporting the highest number of daily cases in the world

followed by Mexico as daily high reporting in the United States of America and Brazil came under check. According to ICMR chief Dr Balram Bhargava it is difficult to predict whether or not India will see a second wave of Covid-19 infections and there will be smaller peaks at different times due to the varied geography of the country.

According to the union health ministry, India continues to improve the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) which is now 2.11 per cent and recovery rate is 65.77%. Country's Test Per Million (TPM) has increased to 14,640 and 24 states and UTs have reported higher testing per million than the national average.

Meanwhile, the union health ministry on Monday issued protocols to be followed at fitness centres like gymnasiums and yoga institutes. As per guidelines, only asymptomatic persons with Aarogya Setu app should be allowed and they must maintain social distancing and wear of visor while exercising. Such centres in containment zones will not be allowed to open and spas, sauna, steam bath. Swimming pools too will remain closed across the country.

KERALA COPS GET MORE POWERS TO ENFORCE LOCKDOWN

DC CORRESPONDENT
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM,
AUG.3

With contact cases in Kerala increasing rapidly, the state government on Monday decided to entrust state police with the task of enforcing restrictions in containment zones, contact tracing, ensuring people in quarantine stay indoors and social distancing is followed strictly in public places.

The new measures were announced by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan at a press conference here on a day when Kerala recorded 962 cases of Covid - 19. The police has been directed to identify and mark containment zones, ensuring the restrictions in containment zones are adhered strictly, he said.

Mr Vijayan said the police will make sure that those in quarantine stay indoors. Mobile police patrolling will be intensified to keep a close watch on those under quarantine and strict action would be taken against those who violate the norms. He said the police would conduct contact tracing of people who test positive.

No. of active terrorists in Valley comes down

PAWAN BALI | DC
NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

There has been a decrease in terrorism in the Kashmir Valley with 70 incidents reported this year against 107 during the same period last year, said sources in security establishment on Monday.

According to the report, security forces were able to foil six attempts of IED blast in Kashmir Valley by the terrorists through their timely detection, preventing serious casualties. The report said that the security forces have been able to stabilise situation in Kashmir after Article 370 was abol-

ished last year.

It said security forces carried out aggressive anti-terrorists operations to prevent them from creating trouble in the Valley and also increased vigilance at the Line of Control so that Pakistan reportedly is not able to send terrorists into Kashmir.

Due to these measures, the number of active terrorists present in Valley has come down to less than 200. Last year, there were intelligence reports that some 350 terrorists were waiting at various launch pads in PoK to infiltrate into Jammu and Kashmir.

SAD | CHAPTER

Students are feeling worried about their future, says psychiatrist

A double whammy for edu in J&K

YUSUF JAMEEL | DC
SRINAGAR, AUG. 3

One of the biggest sufferers from lockdown under lockdown in Jammu and Kashmir has been education. Previously, Kashmiri Valley in particular suffered huge academic losses as its students were forcibly kept away from schools and colleges by frequent official curfews and restrictions, separatist-sponsored shutdowns, incidents of violence and prolonged political unrests.

While at the local level innovative and creative educational initiatives

were taken from time to time by teachers and community leaders to compensate academic losses, many parents who could afford it, sent their wards to schools and colleges outside J&K to continue their studies.

Back home, the closure of educational institutions for more than one year has taken a heavy toll on the academic career of students, many of whom now feel stressed and apprehensive.

“Over past couple of months I have treated a number of students who were emotionally upset. They said that they were

365 DAYS
AFTER 370

worried about their future”, said noted psychiatrist Dr. Abdul Waheed Khan.

Amid the lockdown necessitated by Covid-19, various educational institutions in J&K, like other parts of the country, started online classes a couple of months ago. But the government's denying access to 4G internet services in the Union Territory has played the spoilsport. Also frequent withdrawal of even 2G bandwidth services on the

pretext of law and order issues has caused huge inconvenience to both students and teachers.

On May 11, the Supreme Court had directed the government to constitute a three-member high-powered committee to look into the issue of restoring 4G internet services in J&K. The Union Home Ministry informed the top court recently that the special committee has decided against resuming the services. In an affidavit filed on July 21, in response to a contempt petition against the Central government, the MHA said that the com-

mittee will review its decision after two months, citing the prevailing security situation in the UT.

However, J&K's Lt. Governor Girish Chandra Murmu, said on July 26 that restoration of 4G internet will not be a problem. He said, “I'm not afraid how people will use this. Pakistan will do its propaganda whether it is 2G or 4G. It will always be there but I don't see an issue”.

Meanwhile, it is reliably learnt that the Central government has agreed to restore J&K's statehood and will soon set the process in motion for it.

DECCAN Chronicle

4 AUGUST 2020

Restoring status quo in Ladakh: Long haul ahead

The border stalemate with China continues in eastern Ladakh. This is a sanitised way of putting things. However, the bitter reality is that the military standoff is in areas that lie well to the west of the absurd claim line of China first propounded in November 1959 - as its westernmost region; in other words, many kilometers inside Indian territory, which India did not accept. The threat is that even if China vacates some of this in order to appear reasonable in diplomatic or military negotiations, it will still be inside Indian territory or on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). And the risk - on the basis of what appears to be in the minds of policy makers in Beijing behind the scenes - is that China may seek to compel India to accept the territories it may vacate as no man's land. This means Indian patrols may not return to those areas. The Chinese ambassador in New Delhi was unambiguous in his public remarks less than a week ago that Chinese forces were within the "traditional" frontier of China. This would appear preposterous not only to Indians but also to objective international observers of China's frontier regions, particularly in relation to its sovereignty claims on Tibet and Xinjiang and also China's ambitions in respect of its southern and south-eastern maritime frontiers that rub up against several countries of the Indo-Pacific. The region China claims in Ladakh has been incorporated as part of its Xinjiang military district. This means China has pushed the Uighur country by thousands of square kilometers west of the Tarim river basin to which it is geographically, historically and culturally confined after gobbling up Aksai Chin in the 1950s.

Regrettably, China's present claims, no matter how outrageous, have been buttressed by the Prime Minister's June 19 remarks made in a conference with senior opposition leaders, leaving them aghast. Now Beijing throws Mr Modi's words at us and tries to absorb territories to which it laid no formal claims before November 1959 (which India had not accepted in any case). It is not likely to be easy correcting this Himalayan blunder, although our external affairs minister, our defence minister and top military leaders are working hard at it. Four rounds of military negotiations and conversations between India's and China's foreign ministers, and our national security adviser with his counterpart on boundary negotiations, have been largely futile. A fifth round commenced Sunday and nothing is known about its outcome. In light of the Chinese ambassador's recent observations, it is unrealistic to expect encouraging news. In response to Chinese moves all along the approximately 4,000-kilometre Himalayan frontier, India too has massed its forces. But the job they have is to push back invaders. It looks like it will be a long haul through a bleak winter. Accompanying international political moves are an imperative.

Not the model patient

These are testing times. Home minister Amit Shah, Uttar Pradesh BJP president Swatantra Dev Singh and Karnataka CM B.S. Yediyurappa have all been diagnosed with Covid-19 within hours of one another. In a sobering turn, the only woman in the UP Cabinet passed away a day after another senior party leader in Andhra Pradesh also succumbed to the coronavirus. The SARS-CoV-2 is indeed the great leveller — or not — with Lok Sabha MP Karti Chidambaram and Tamil Nadu governor Banwarilal Purohit found positive among others. India's Covid-19 tally has risen to 18 lakhs — the daily case count surpassed 57,000 on successive days.

Over in Ayodhya, 15 policemen and a priest had contracted the coronavirus and by Monday, the number rose by five. But that — and the pandemic raging — has not deterred the Prime Minister and his loyal entourage from their bhoomi puja agenda. At any rate, only five people will be on the dais — including RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, chief minister Yogi Adityanath and the PM.

Commendably, a few are distancing — despite receiving an invitation even while Babri demolition co-accused L.K. Advani and M.M. Joshi were only asked over telephone, Uma Bharti will not attend — she would be at another spot on the Sarayu bank. She would arrive only after "everyone has left, in order to protect the PM and thousands others". No one can find fault with Ms Bharti's intentions this time. Nor of information technology minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who went into self-isolation having met Mr Shah over the weekend.

Mr Shah's decision to get himself admitted in Medanta, Gurugram, has drawn flak. Opposition leaders wondered as to why he chose to give reputed facilities like AIIMS and Safdarjung Hospital a miss since public institutions need the patronage of the government to inspire trust. But conversely, when the country's home minister chooses private hospitals over public ones, it does say something about, if not the latter's efficiency, but the government's own investments in and expectations from public healthcare. The virus has completely exposed it. India simply does not have the infrastructure to tackle the coronavirus.

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Kishwar Desai
London Diary

Covid-19 returns, holidayers bear brunt; A Suitable Boy looks great!

A rather scorching weekend, 100 F! And while we dither as a country between being locked down or being let out, pubs are full —especially those which can offer outside seating. You don't see much social distancing there nor on the beaches where people flock every warm weekend. Many are working from home, so office time is flexible — and what can one do when sunshine beckons ? But now everything is changing, because Covid-19 is back. Leicester was the first city to be out under lockdown a fortnight back. Now the virus has spread to Manchester, East Lancashire and Yorkshire. With Eid this weekend, there was a lot of inconvenience for Muslims as any meeting between more than two families indoors is banned under lockdown. Before that, the rules of going out kept changing as well as for holidaying abroad. After an initial complacency till mid-March , and a tight lockdown till mid-July, things had begun to finally move forward. Both the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson and the Chancellor "Dishy" Rishi, wanted to restart

the economy in a hurry. But Boris is now worried, scared of a second wave. So rules changed again, catching holiday makers unawares. Earlier last week, foreign travel to European destinations was allowed . Then Spain had a second wave of Covid-19. Many who had landed in sunny Spain, including a UK Cabinet Minister, were told that upon return they face a fortnight 's quarantine. As the policies are now being made keeping in mind the capricious ways of the virus, the rest of the year is going to be tough, till the vaccine arrives. Last Sunday, we had the first episode of *A Suitable Boy*, based on novelist Vikram Seth's much loved book, and directed by Mira Nair. This is the first TV serial from the BBC with all Indian characters, who are not (for a change) caricatures or stereotypes. And not served with a dash of colonial masala, either. Nor is this a story of the Raj like Jewel in the Crown with mixed nationalities. This is hundred percent desi. It

looks beautiful and got five star reviews in the newspapers. So India, of a distant past, should be part of our Sunday evenings for a while. Yes, the local Indians are being critical about it — as are Indians elsewhere too— but this is the BBC version of India, and it looks good and feels good. Speaking of the BBC, it is sad to record the passing away of Kailash Nath Budhwar, the first Indian head of the BBC Hindi and Tamil service. He had heralded an important change — as before him the head of the Hindi service had invariably been White . For many in the United Kingdom and listeners of the BBC Hindi Service he had been the voice of India, and will be missed. Central London is deserted. But at the Trafalgar Square, there is a new presence. The fourth plinth has been reserved for bold and experimental sculpture which is given space for a while and then another one comes along. The latest is called *The End is by Heather Phillipson*. It is a sculpture of whipped cream with a cherry on

top. But it's not all cheery as there is a fly climbing up the side and a small drone. Don't laugh. It is thirty feet high and weighs nine tons. The artist said that it symbolised something about to collapse, like the United Kingdom after Brexit. Previous sculptures have been equally adventurous or pretentious, depending on which side you are on. One was a 'thumbs up'. another was of Nelson's famous ship Victory inside a bottle. It was Ken Livingstone, while Mayor of London, who had the idea of opening up the empty plinth for installations or sculptures by young artists. Well done Ken! Looking at it I am always reminded of the empty canopy near India Gate. After the removal of the statue of King George V, in 1968, it has remained empty. Perhaps it too could be given over to modern Indian sculptors, displaying contemporary work.

Every time a new list comes out of people raised to Peerage, the House of Lords gets abused in the media as useless, waste of money and so on. Boris has

just announced his list and it is the usual mix of party political cronies—donors , retiring MPs, dissidents from the Opposition etc. But two names are noteworthy as friends of India. Jo Johnson, an old friend who was posted in Delhi as a correspondent for Financial Times, then became an MP and Minister in the United Kingdom under successive Conservative governments. Jo had resigned on grounds of conscience because he could not agree with brother Boris's Brexit policy. Jo was helpful in setting up the Gandhi Statue in Parliament Square. The other is Nemat Talaat (Minouche) Shafik the Director of the London School of Economics (LSE). She has set up Mahatma Gandhi Scholarship Fund for Indian students coming to LSE with a donation of £100,000 from the Gandhi Statue Memorial Fund.

Kishwar Desai is an award winning author. Her 6th book, the biography of the 1930s superstar, Devika Rani, The Longest Kiss, will soon be out.



Subhani

China's real target may be Arunachal Pradesh



Mohan Guruswamy

I have always believed that with having Lobtained by hook or crook just about all they wanted in Ladakh, the real prize the Chinese are eyeing is Arunachal Pradesh. The Chinese have never been explicit on how much of Arunachal they seek. I once saw an official map in a travel agent's office in Lhasa that showed only the Tawang tract as Chinese territory. In other maps I have seen in China, they have their border running along the foothills, which means all of Arunachal or what they now call "Southern Tibet".

The Chinese based their specific claim on the territory on the premise that Tawang was administered from Lhasa, and the contiguous areas owed allegiance to the Dalai Lama. Of late, the Chinese have given a glimpse of what their true intentions are by laying claim to Bhutan's Sakteng wildlife reserve area, which falls just below the Tawang tract. When you look at this in the map, their intentions become clear. They are looking for a direct passage from occupied Tibet into the Assam valley.

The Mughals' Imperial India spanned from Afghanistan to Bengal but didn't go very much below the Godavari in the South.

The Imperial India of the British incorporated all of today's India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. It was the British who for the first time brought Assam into India in 1826 when they defeated Burma and formalised the annexation with the Treaty of Yandabo.

Only in 1886 did the British first foray out of the Brahmaputra valley when they sent out a punitive expedition into Lohit valley in pursuit of marauding tribesmen

who began raiding the new tea gardens. The area was apparently neither under Chinese nor Tibetan control: there were no protests either from the Dalai Lama or the Chinese agent in Lhasa. The British stayed put.

Tibet remained in self-imposed isolation and the race to be first into Lhasa became the greatest challenge for explorers and adventurers in the second half of the 19th century. Not the least among these were the spies of the Survey of India, the legendary pundits. The most renowned of these was Sarat Chandra Das, whose books on Tibet are still avidly read today. As the adventurers, often military officers masquerading as explorers, began visiting Tibet, the British in India began worrying.

Reports that the most well known of Czarist Russia's military explorers, Col. Bronislav Grombchevsky, was sighted in Tibet had Lord Curzon, Governor-General of India, most worried. In 1903 Lord Curzon decided to send a military expedition into Tibet led by Grombchevsky's old antagonist, Col. Francis Younghusband. A brigade of Gurkhas and Tommies went over the Nathu La into the Chumbi valley and advanced unhindered till Xigatse. A Tibetan military force met them there but offered what can only be described as passive resistance at a place called Guru near Gyantse. Not a shot was fired back as the British Indian troops rained bullets on them, killing thousands.

From Xigatse, Younghusband made a leisurely march into Lhasa. The British got the Tibetans to agree to end their isolation and having extracted trade concessions, withdrew in

1904 the way they came. In 1907, Britain and Russia formally agreed that it was in their mutual interest to leave Tibet "in that state of isolation from which, till recently, she has shown no intention to depart".

In 1913 the Tibetans declared independence after the collapse of the Chinese Qing dynasty and the establishment of a republic under Sun Yat Sen. They drove the Chinese garrisons in Tibet into India over the Nathu La. Also, in 1913, the British convened the Simla Conference to demarcate the India-Tibet border. The British proposed the 1914 McMahon Line. The Tibetans accepted it. The Chinese representative, however, initialed the agreement under protest. But his protest seemed mostly about the British negotiating directly with Tibet as a sovereign state and not over the McMahon Line as such.

In 1935, at the insistence of Sir Olaf Caroe ICS, then deputy secretary in the foreign department, the McMahon Line was notified. In 1944, J.P. Mills ICS established British Indian administration in NEFA, but excluding Tawang, which continued to be administered by the Lhasa-appointed head lama at Tawang, despite the fact that it lay well below the McMahon Line. This was largely as Henry Twynam, Assam's governor, lost his nerve and did not want to provoke the Tibetans.

In 1947 the Dalai Lama (the same gentleman now in Dharamsala) sent newly-independent India a note-laying claim "to some districts" in NEFA/ Arunachal.

On October 7, 1950, the Chinese attacked the Tibetans at seven places on their frontier and made known their intention of reasserting control over all of Tibet. As if in response, on February 16, 1951, Maj. Relangnao "Bob" Khatang, IFAS, raised the Indian tricolor in Tawang and took over the tract's administration.

The point of this narrative is to bring home the fact that India's claim

over Arunachal Pradesh doesn't rest on any great historical tradition or cultural affinity. We are there because the British went there. But then the Chinese have no basis whatsoever to stake a claim, besides a few dreamy cartographic enlargements of the notion of China among some of the hangers-on in the Qing emperor's court. The important thing now is that we have been there for over a hundred years and that settles the issue.

Arunachal Pradesh has a very interesting population mix. Only less than 10 per cent of its population is Tibetan. Indo-Mongoloid tribes account for 68 per cent of the population. The rest are migrants from Nagaland and Assam. As far as religious affinities go, Hindus are the biggest group with 37 per cent, followed by 36 per cent animists, and 13 per cent Buddhists. Recent census figures suggest a spurt in Christianity, possibly induced by pocketbook proselytising. In all, there are 21 major tribal groups and over 100 ethnically distinct sub-groupings, speaking over 50 distinct languages and dialects. The population of about a million is spread out over 17 towns and 3,649 villages. With the exception of a few villages of Monpas that live north of the McMahon Line, it's an ethnically compact and contiguous area.

It is true that historically India never had a direct border with Tibet till the British took Kumaon and Garhwal from Nepal in 1846 and extended its domain over Arunachal in 1886. But the formidable Himalayas were always culturally a part of India and formed a natural barrier against ingress from the north, whether Tibetan or Chinese.

The writer, a policy analyst studying economic and security issues, has held senior positions in government and industry. He also specialises in the Chinese economy.

LETTERS

RSS LEADERS

Apropos your editorial *A snub to Advani, Joshi* (Aug. 3). In 2013, RSS was forced to anoint outsider Modi to quell infighting. Subsequently, many party stalwarts were eased out to retain Modi's primacy as he comes in a package solely to be used to leverage its ideology which in fact created the party in the first place. RSS never allowed the tallest of its leaders to exceed a prescribed stature, not even Advani. It was rumoured that Sangh was keeping Gadkari, temperate in language and dealings with opposition and long rooted in Nagpur and the RSS, as an alternate pick should the 2019 results go otherwise.

R. Narayanan
Chennai

COMMENDABLE COURAGE

IT IS HEARTENING to learn that Manasi Bariha, a tribal guest worker from Odisha's Bolangir district, who after undergoing unbearable sufferings from the brick kiln owner in Pudhukuppam in Tiruvallur, has displayed extraordinary courage to knock on all doors and helped 6,000 workers to return to their places through the TN government, is a remarkable achievement for which she deserves to be appreciated. The above incident clearly exposes the ruthless inhuman and merciless attitude of the employer against pathetic workers who are forced to come out of their native places due to abject poverty to work even in precarious conditions for the paltry sum of ₹250 per week. It is a sad thing that most of the employers in almost all fields who venture to exploit guest workers by paying the very least wages in comparison to regular workers and earn enormous profit.

M. Govindaraj
Gudiyatham

EDUCATION POLICY

THE NEW EDUCATION Policy has come up with a lot of changes that have been necessary for a long time now. If implemented skillfully, the NEP is sure to reduce regulatory hassles and promote autonomy in the higher education sector. On the face of it, the NEP looks to benefit both students and the education providers. It aims to provide importance to students' practical knowledge instead of just pushing them towards parrot-fashion learning. On the flip side, it appears that in a bid to promote regional and local languages, English will take a back seat.

R. Sivakumar
Chennai

quick BITES

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	36,939.60	-1.77
Nifty 50	10,891.60	-1.64
S&P 500*	3,298.16	0.83
Dollar (₹)	75.00	-0.26
Pound Sterling (₹)	98.18	-0.37
Euro (₹)	88.30	0.55
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	54,678.185	0.33
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	44.17	0.65
IN 10-Yr bond yield	5.837	0.00
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	0.566	0.030

* As of 9:30 PM IST

UPI transactions reach a new high in July

As more people preferred contactless payments due to Covid-19 fear, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions touched a new high in July. UPI transactions in July reached 1.49 billion compared to 1.34 bn in June, a growth of 11 per cent. After a decline in April, transactions had picked up and had stood at 1.23 bn in May. In value terms, UPI recorded transactions worth Rs 2.9 lakh crore in July, up by 11 per cent.

SpiceJet asked to stop 5-day discount sale



The DGCA has asked SpiceJet to stop its five-day discounted sale of tickets as the government-imposed fare limits, with upper and lower fare limits, are in place till November 24. SpiceJet on Monday morning announced a five-day "1+1 offer sale", offering one-way base fares starting as low as Rs 899 and a complimentary voucher with a maximum value of Rs 2,000 per booking for use in future bookings.

Job search for WFH rises 440% in February-July

Job searches for remote work or work from home in India have increased by over 442 per cent between February and July, the highest globally. Amid the pandemic, many jobs have become work-from-home jobs and with the flexibility and a variety of career options, it has become more popular than ever, global job site Indeed said. The job postings grew in sectors such as software tech, healthcare and marketing.

PVR's rights issue offer oversubscribed

Multiplex operator PVR's rights issue has been oversubscribed, according to data available with stock exchanges. Its rights issue opened on July 17 and closed on July 31. According to issue subscription data, PVR proposed to issue 38.23 lakh equity shares. The company's board had fixed rights issue price at Rs 784 per equity share, including a premium of Rs 774 a share over face value of Rs 10 per share.



■ Person days under MGNREGA drops 57%

Steep fall in rural job days in July

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Employment generated under the MGNREGA has dropped 57 per cent in July against the previous month. The rural employment guarantee scheme has been seeing month-on-month increase in person-days since April after the lockdown hit urban centres.

The initial data published by the government shows that the number of person-days has dropped from 64 crore in June to 27.3 crore in July, which is a massive drop of 57 per cent. Even the employment provided to households has come down by 41 per cent from 3.89 crore in June to 2.29 crore in July.

Both person-days and household employment have been growing since April. In the lockdown month of May, person-days stood at 56.8 crore, which was higher than the initial data for July.

Work demand too dropped 31 per cent in July-from 6.2 crore in June to 4.26 crore in July. Work demand among households too dropped by 27.7 per cent.

According to Kruti Shah, economist, Emkay Global Financial Services, the sowing under kharif crop happened faster this year and the lower levels of farm activity in July would have reflected in the MGNREGA employment data. "The CMIE data also shows that the farm jobs have come down by 4 mil-



lion in July compared to June. During the lockdown months, farm jobs had bucked the overall employment trend. Seasonally farm jobs are

lesser in July compared to June," Shah said.

Compared to July 2019, person-days generated last month are still higher as a better monsoon improved the kharif acreage and sowing activity this time. Further, availability of labour also was higher this time due to the reverse migration of the labourers from urban centres.

Chances of these labourers having gone back to urban centres are very less in July as has been evident from the lower manufacturing PMI data. Manufacturing PMI, which was rebounding after hitting a historic low in April, dipped in July. "In July many of the industrial centres were still under lockdown. More relaxed restrictions in August can see better industrial activity. By September, we could see re-migration of the labourers happening as the wages as well as job demand are better in urban centres compared to rural areas," said Shah.

REALTY SENTIMENTS HIT ALL-TIME LOW

SANGEETHA G CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Real estate sector sentiments have hit an all-time low in the June quarter. While future sentiments have seen an improvement, they still remain pessimistic.

The Knight Frank-Ficci-Naredco Real Estate Sentiment Index fell to 22 in the June quarter from 31 in March and 53 in December.

However, the score for future sentiments moved up to 41 in the June quarter against 36 in the March quarter.

Economic indicators dampen market spirit

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD MUMBAI, AUG. 3

Stock market's benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty continued their losing trend due to deteriorating economic indicators on account of rising Covid cases and the lockdown impact.

RBI policy announcements scheduled for later this week also kept investors cautious and bearish. The Sensex declined 667 points, or 1.77 per cent, to 36,939.60 in one of the biggest single-day fall in the last five months. The Nifty-50 closed below 11,000 at 10,891.60, losing 181.85 points, or 1.57 per cent.

The market, after outperforming global peers in July, saw profit taking on Monday as the July manufacturing PMI data came lower at 46 compared to 47.2 in June, an indicator of low economic activity in the country compared to other parts of the world.

The July manufacturing PMI data in China came in at 52.8 and the Euro area PMI came in at 51.8,

which seemed to have raised alarm bells among investors in India.

Domestic loan growth also moderated to 5.8 per cent year-on-year for the fortnight ended July 17, 2020, said a report by Motilal Oswal Financial Services, adding "We expect loan growth of private banks to moderate to around 10 per cent versus around 18 per cent projected earlier (pre-Covid) for FY21."

Financials lost the most on Monday, as the Nifty Bank Index fell 2.33 per cent, led by IndusInd Bank (-3.74 per cent), Kotak Bank (-3.57 per cent), Axis Bank (-2.93 per cent), HDFC Bank (-2.60 per cent) and ICICI Bank (-0.88 per cent).

IT stocks also saw profit booking after gaining maximum among all sectors in July. The Nifty IT Index was down 0.64 per cent led by TCS (-1.42 per cent), Infosys (1.11 per cent) and Tech Mahindra (1.05 per cent).

"Most private banks reported sequential decline in loan growth," Motilal Oswal said.

Manufacturing PMI contracts in July

FC BUREAU NEW DELHI, AUG. 3

With continuous slump in the manufacturing activities from intermittent lockdowns, India's manufacturing Purchasing Manager's Index, or PMI, declined to 46 points in July from 47.2 in June, still an improvement over the decline from 30.8 in May.

The manufacturing PMI in July contracted for the fourth month in a row, staying below the 50-mark separating contraction and expansion in growth. This is the index's longest spell of contraction since March 2009.

"The survey results showed a re-acceleration of declines in the key indices of output and new orders, undermining the trend towards stabilisation seen over the past two months," noted Eliot Kerr, an economist at IHS Markit.

"Anecdotal evidence indicated that firms were struggling to obtain work, with some of their clients remaining in lockdown, suggesting that we won't see a pick-up in activity until infection rates are quelled and restrictions can be further removed," Kerr added.

Last week, the IMF said high-frequency indicators signal plateauing of economic activity in India as the positive impact from unlock is not as strong as the negative impact of the lockdown.

GMR Infra to sell land, other non-core assets

New Delhi, Aug. 3: GMR Infrastructure is working on disinvestment of non-core assets, including land, and hopes to yield "significant value" even from 50 per cent of land monetisation, according to a document.

The airport-to-port conglomerate in an investor presentation said land at strategic industrial locations will benefit from the possible manufacturing dislocation from China.

"Plan is to divest large part of other assets identified as non-core divestment initiative," the document said and noted that it has 10,500 acres of port and industrial land and "even 50 per cent land monetisation" could yield significant value.

About its Kakinada Special Investment Region (SIR) in Andhra Pradesh, the group said that it is in discussion with a large number of clients for monetisation of land.

"Government of Andhra Pradesh signed MoUs with Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd to set up a refinery cum petrochem project in 2,500 acres and with HPCL-GAIL consortium for Petrochem complex in 2,000 acres land," it said and added that in addition, a pact has been inked with a stainless steel manufacturer for 500 acres and an Australian lithium refinery for 100 acre.

The port-based Kakinada SIR in the Krishna-Godavari basin has plans to set up an all



weather multi-purpose deepwater port, a logistics park, a petrochemicals cluster and an eco-industrial park, it said.

As per the document, an area of 4,650 acres there has been notified as SEZs and utility and environment approvals are in place.

In the Kakinada SEZ in Andhra Pradesh, however, the company has continued its efforts for various government approvals and technical studies and added that demand for industrial parks is expected to revive to pre-Covid-19 levels.

The group said infrastructure has not been much affected in the region due to Covid-19 as the company was able to re-mobilise and commence work quickly as workers were hailed from neighbouring areas and Hosur.

About the Krishnagiri SIR (Tamil Nadu), the

company said infrastructure development in 275 acres is in progress with all approvals in place.

The company said it is leveraging locational advantage to create clusters in aerospace, automobile, logistics, engineering and electronics sectors besides setting up a special investment region in joint venture with Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (Tidco).

It said while the State Industries Promotion Corporation of Tamil Nadu (Sipcot) will acquire 500 acres for an industrial park, it has leased 20 acre to Toyota Boshoku for a manufacturing unit.

GMR Infrastructure's consolidated net loss for the quarter ended March 31 narrowed to Rs 1,126.82 crore, as against Rs 2,341.24 crore loss in the January-March period in FY19.

—PTI

Samsung crafts comeback as anti-China wave surges

SANKALP PHARTIYAL, HEEKYONG YANG NEW DELHI/SEOUL, AUG. 3

Samsung Electronics Co Ltd is forging a comeback in India's smartphone market with a new range of budget devices and a ramped-up online presence, aiming to recoup ground ceded to Chinese rivals such as Xiaomi Corp. Samsung, the only major non-Chinese player in the country, has already begun to gain ground, and a surge in anti-China sentiment in India following a border clash in June is expected to provide a fresh boost.

Samsung jumped to the No. 2 spot with 26 per cent market share in the second quarter behind Xiaomi's 29 per cent, according to tech researcher Counterpoint, as the South Korean company's diverse and inhouse supply chain helped it avoid product delays suffered by rivals during coronavirus lockdowns.

It was in the third position with a 16 per cent share in the previous quarter.

Once the unrivalled leader in the world's sec-



ond-biggest smartphone market, Samsung has over the past three years lost Indian customers to Chinese brands, whose devices are perceived as better value.

But India still accounts for some \$7.5 billion in annual retail smartphone revenues for Samsung, according to Counterpoint, making it the company's biggest market outside the United States.

It has built what it has described as the world's largest mobile phone man-

ufacturing plant on the outskirts of New Delhi, where it tests new devices and often assembles them for export.

That manufacturing power, and Samsung's ability to source many components internally, is helping it gain ground amid the pandemic. Chinese smartphone brands Xiaomi and Oppo suffered local production hiccups and product delays due to Covid-19, but Samsung was able to keep delivering phones smoothly.

Now it is building on the momentum. Samsung has launched seven new smartphones since June, three of them under Rs 10,000, including one in the Rs 5,600 range.

"The Covid crisis has pushed people to use smartphones for everything from online education to digital payments to even connecting with friends on video calls. That's why these budget phones are focused on the mass market," said a source familiar with Samsung's strategy in India.

—Reuters

Wockhardt to supply vaccines to UK



Bengaluru, Aug. 3: Wockhardt Ltd will supply millions of doses of multiple Covid-19 vaccines, including that being developed by Astra-Zeneca and Oxford University, under a deal with the UK government announced on Monday.

Shares of Wockhardt jumped 10 per cent after the news in a downcast Mumbai market.

The company has reserved fill-and-finish capacity—the final manufacturing step of putting vaccines into vials or syringes and packaging them—as part of the agreement, it said.

This is the latest step by the UK to secure supplies and production of Covid-19 vaccines after striking four deals with drugmakers to buy their potential shots.

"Fill finish is a critical step in the process to get the vaccine in a form to be given to patients. The agreement with Wockhardt will boost our capability to ensure that," Kate Bingham, chair of UK Vaccines Task Force, said in a statement.

The UK government has also reserved one fill-and-finish production line at a Wockhardt subsidiary in Wrexham, Wales for its exclusive use for the next 18 months to secure supply. It is expected to start the Wexham line in September.

AstraZeneca has indicated it would need 30 million fill-and-finish doses of their vaccine candidate.

—Reuters

Consumer behaviour changing: Chandra

New Delhi, Aug 3: A tremendous transformation, stemming from Covid-19, is expected in the mobility segment over the next two years, as consumers' move to "slow" travel—with personal versus public/shared transport—is likely to shape the future demand for passenger vehicles, according to Tata Motors chairman N. Chandrasekaran.

The turnaround journey of the company's domestic business has also been disrupted in 2019-20, as demand deteriorated sharply on the back of an abruptly slowing economy coupled with the spread of Covid-19.

Addressing shareholders at the company's annual report for 2019-20, Chandrasekaran said the global auto industry has grappled with multiple

issues during the year.

"On one hand, we saw greater clarity emerge on Brexit; yet on the other hand, mounting trade tensions, muted global growth and enhanced regulatory norms have fundamentally changed the contours of the business environment in which we operate. Next came the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in the final quarter of the year, which has ushered in a new reality for industries across the world," he said.

Chandrasekaran further said, "As we look ahead over the next two years, we anticipate a tremendous deal of transformation stemming from Covid-19.

Consumer behaviour will change in numerous ways, from demanding more integrated digital experiences to



N. Chandrasekaran

prioritising health and safety features across purchasing decisions. The move to 'slow' travel and personal (versus public and/or shared) transport may shape future demand for passenger vehicles."

Greater scrutiny will be placed on building environmental sustainability and climate resilience into the very core of business models, he said adding the Tata Motor Group is "well placed to

meet the demand opportunities that will arise from these important and fundamental shifts".

Referring to the performance of Tata Motors Ltd (TML), he said over the past two financial years, TML focused on refreshing its portfolio, improving structural efficiencies and streamlining internal processes. In doing so, TML turned a corner and delivered improved market shares, profitability, and positive free cash flows.

"In FY19, we delivered positive net income of Rs 2,021 crore, after making losses for five years. In both FY18 and FY19, TML produced positive free cash flows, following five years in negative territory." However, in FY20, this turnaround journey has been interrupted.

—PTI

SHORT TAKES

Not yet in Lanka
League: Irfan

New Delhi: Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan on Monday said he hasn't confirmed his availability in any franchise-based T20 league at this stage, refuting reports that he could participate in the inaugural Lanka Premier League (LPL) starting August 28. A report in ESPNcricinfo had stated that "Pathan is among 70 foreign players to have shown interest in playing the Lanka Premier League (LPL)" and his name will be "put in a player draft unless one of the five franchises choose him to be a marquee player." However, the 35-year-old who announced his retirement in January this year, said he is not available at the moment. "I wish to play T20 Leagues around the world in future, but at this stage I haven't confirmed my availability in any Leagues," Pathan wrote on his twitter handle. Pathan has played for Chennai Super Kings, Delhi Daredevils, Kings XI Punjab, Rising Pune Supergiants and Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL. — PTI

Payment issues,
says players body

New Delhi: Many players have been dealing with the issue of late payment or non-payment of salaries in a host of domestic T20 leagues across the world, states the latest annual players' report.

The Federation of International Cricketers' Associations (FICA) found that over a third of all players have suffered in recent years. The Men's Global Employment Report 2020, put together by FICA, found that 34 per cent of all players had experienced payment issues. Global T20 Canada, Bangladesh Premier League, Abu Dhabi T10, Qatar T10, Euro T20 Slam and Masters Champions League are the six league identified as having problems in clearing the players' dues. While the BPL is the only established Full Member-run league in the list, others such as the GLT20 Canada, the Abu Dhabi T10 and the Euro T20 Slam have attracted well-known players from across the world. — PTI

Cool Keshavan
is luge coach

New Delhi: Shiva Keshavan, the first Indian representative to compete in the luge event at the Winter Olympics, has been appointed chief coach as well as the High Performance Director of the national team by the Luge Federation of India. The federation informed Keshavan of its decision to appoint him for the twin role while acknowledging his achievements.

TNCA mourns
Venkat's demise

Chennai: The Tamil Nadu Cricket Association on Monday condoled the demise of N. Venkataramani, former vice president of the association and chairman & managing director of India Pistons Limited. The TNCA recalled his exemplary services and assistance rendered to cricketers and administrators.

CSS, NIS JOIN
HANDS FOR
SPORTS COURSE

The Netaji Subhas National Institute of Sports (NSNIS) Patiala and CSS-SRIHER, Chennai, on Monday launched six-month online courses in sports physiotherapy and sports nutrition aimed at grass-root-level development in the country. It was a part of an MOU signed between the two institutes to launch these certificate courses in sports science which will give an opportunity to young qualified professionals to further specialise in their area of expertise. In the first leg, sports physiotherapy and sports nutrition courses have been launched online with admission to the courses starting on Monday.

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AGE OLD PROBLEM
BCCI moves in to weed out overage players

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The BCCI on Monday said it will grant amnesty to registered players who voluntarily declare any age fraud but those found to be in breach of the unusual scheme could be slapped with a two-year suspension.

The measures will be applicable to all cricketers participating in the board's age-group tournaments from the 2020-21 season onwards.

"Under this scheme, players who voluntarily declare that they have manipulated their date of birth by submitting fake/tampered documents in the past will not be suspended and allowed to participate in the appropriate age group level if they disclose their actual date of birth (DOB)," the BCCI said in a release.

"Players have to submit a signed letter/email along with supporting documents to BCCI Age Verification Dept. revealing their actual DOB before 15th September 2020."

The apex body also made it clear that if the players don't accept it now and are later found to be guilty of age fraud then they will be heavily sanctioned.

"However, if registered players do not disclose the facts and are found to have submitted fake/tampered DOB proof documents by BCCI, then they will be banned for 2 years, and after completion of 2-year suspension, they will not be allowed to participate in age group tournaments of BCCI, as well as, age group tournaments organised by the State Units."

The BCCI also said that "all cricketers committing Domicile fraud, including senior men & women, will be banned for 2 years" and "voluntary disclosure scheme does not apply for cricketers who have committed domicile fraud."

Among other measures, the governing body said for the under-16 age group tournament "only players who are between 14-16 years old will be permitted to register." — PTI



BCCI president Sourav Ganguly (right) with NCA chief Rahul Dravid in this file photo.

Board draws guidelines to
resume cricket training

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The BCCI is forming a Covid-19 task force and it will include, among others, former captain and National Cricket Academy chief Rahul Dravid, the apex body said in its Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to State associations.

Players will have to sign a consent form before resuming training at their respective centres as per the standard operating procedure, which bars anyone above 60 years of age and individuals with underlying medical conditions from being part of the camp.

For resumption of training at the NCA in Bengaluru, the Covid task force will include Dravid, a medical officer, a hygiene officer and BCCI AGM, Cricket Operations.

The 2019-2020 domestic season ended in March but the upcoming season, which usually starts in August, is set to be cur-

tailed due to the health crisis. "The health and safety of players, staff and stakeholders will be the sole responsibility of respective State Cricket Associations," read the BCCI guidelines on resumption of cricket. Support staff, officials and ground staff over 60 years of age and with individuals with underlying medical conditions are barred from attending

training camps until "suitable guidelines are issued by the Government".

Before the commencement of the camp, the medical team should acquire travel and medical history (past 2 weeks) of all players and staff through an online questionnaire. Any player and staff suspected to have Covid-19-like symptoms should undergo PCR tests.

"Two tests one day apart (Day 1 & Day 3) should be done to account for false negatives. If both the test results are negative, only then they should be included in the camp," read the SOP.

The players will have to wear a N95 mask (without a valved respirator) on the way to the stadium and will be encouraged to wear eyewear in public places as well as during training. Players are advised to take their own transportation on way to the stadium. — PTI

SJM SLAMS
BCCI FOR
CHINA LINK

New Delhi, Aug. 3: Shocked over the BCCI's decision to continue with the Chinese sponsors for the IPL, the RSS-affiliate Swadeshi Jagaran Manch (SJM) on Monday said people should consider boycotting the T-20 cricket league.

"The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the Indian Premier League (IPL) Governing Council have shown utter disrespect to the Indian soldiers killed by Chinese troops with its decision to hold the cricket league with its Chinese sponsors," SJM's co-convenor Ashwani Mahajan said in a statement.

"At a time when the country is striving hard to make our economy free from Chinese dominance in the markets, the government is making all efforts to keep China out of our markets, this act of the IPL Governing Council is an aberration," Mahajan said.

VIVO, a Chinese mobile phone manufacturer, is the title sponsor of the IPL and has paid over ₹2,000 crore to the BCCI for a five-year deal.

BCCI invites bids for kit sponsor

Meanwhile, the BCCI on Monday invited bids for the team's kit sponsor and official merchandising partner rights through a tender process to replace Nike, whose contract is set to expire next month. The sports apparel giant had a four-year deal for ₹370 crore with a royalty of ₹30 crore.

Under the Invitation to Tender (ITT), the winning bidder will be granted the right to be the kit sponsor and/or the official merchandising partner and various other associated rights. — PTI

Indian shuttlers
in cozy groups

New Delhi, Aug. 3: India have been handed relatively easy draws in the twice rescheduled Thomas and Uber Cup Finals slated to be held from October 3 to 11 in Aarhus, Denmark.

The Indian men's team has been placed in Group 'C' alongside 2016 champions Denmark, Germany and Algeria, while the women's side has been clubbed with 14-time winners China, France and Germany in Group 'D' in the draw which was staged at the Badminton World Federation (BWF) headquarters in Kuala Lumpur on Monday.

Both the men's and women's team are seeded fifth in the tournament, according to the BWF release.

Indonesia, 13-time former champions, and six-time former winner Japan will headline as the top seeds for the Thomas Cup and Uber Cup respectively.

The prestigious event was originally scheduled to be held from May 16-24 but was postponed to August 15-23 before finally rescheduling it in October due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

No tournament has been possible since BWF had

shut down their World Tour and other sanctioned tournaments following the completion of the All-England in March due to the global health crisis.

In Thomas and Uber Cup Final, the top two teams in each group at the end of the group stage will make it to the knock-out round.

The Indian women's team had lost to champion China in the semifinal stage in the 2016 edition of Uber Cup. They also reached the semifinal in the 2014 New Delhi edition.

— PTI

THOMAS CUP (men)
Group A: Indonesia, Malaysia, Holland and England.

Group B: China, Taiwan, Australia and France.
Group C: Denmark, India, Germany and Algeria.

Group D: Japan, South Korea, Thailand and Canada.

UBER CUP (women)
Group A: Japan, Taiwan, Egypt and Spain.

Group B: Korea, Indonesia, Australia and Malaysia.
Group C: Thailand, Denmark, Scotland and Canada.
Group D: China, India, France and Germany.

INDIAN TEAM PULLS OUT
OF WORLD SQUASH EVENT

DC CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI, AUG. 3

Indian squash team has pulled out of the Women's World Team Squash Championship scheduled to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from December 15 to 20 due to "lack of preparation time" and "uncertainties" about travelling amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

SRFI secretary general and former national coach Cyrus Poncha said the decision was taken after consulting with the top players.

"Due to uncertainties regarding guidelines for the safe travel of our athletes and staff for national & international tournaments (yet to be obtained from the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports (MYAS) & Sports Authority of India (SAI)), coupled with lack of preparation time and match readiness of athletes, and after consulting our top players, the SRFI has decided to withdraw from the championship," Poncha said.

Top players resume training

Squash ace Joshna Chinappa resumed training at the Indian Squash Academy courts as authorities reopened facilities. According to Poncha, training resumed for its elite athletes with SOPs laid out by the Tamil Nadu government/Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu.

Apart from Joshna, Velavan Senthilkumar, Abhay Singh and Aditya Raghavan started training. As per government instructions, only players above the age of 15 years are allowed to train.



Joshna Chinappa

Eye on Fifa Cup,
talent hunt is on

New Delhi, Aug. 3: Sports Minister Kiren Rijiju on Monday said the government is riding on "mainstay" football to make India a sporting powerhouse and announced the formation of five zonal committees to hunt talent across the country.

Rijiju said the talent hunt initiative, to be funded by the Sports Authority of India under the Khelo India Programme in partnership with the All India Football Federation, will be the "most aggressive exercise" ever done. The committees will be formed in the next few months.

"We will form five talent scouting committees in the next few months, one for each zone — north, south, east, west and northeast — under Khelo India Programme of SAI in partnership with AIFF," Rijiju said during a virtual programme organised by Football Delh to mark the 36th birthday of India captain Sunil Chhetri.

"We cannot go with the usual approach, we have to go deeper in a professional way. It will be the most aggressive exercise we had ever done. We have to find out talented children below 12 years from every nook and corner of the country," he added. — PTI

GAMES IN GOA
LEAGUE UNDER
FIX SCANNER

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The Asian Football Confederation has red-flagged six matches of last year's Goa Professional League for possible "match manipulation" but the state association on Monday said there was not enough evidence.

"The AFC had written to the integrity officer of AIFF, Javed Siraj, in March informing about "suspicious betting patterns indicative of match manipulation" in six matches held between October 16 and November 19 last year.

Goa Football Association secretary Jovito Lopes said his organisation had conducted an investigation but said match-fixing could not be proved due to a lack of evidence.

"The matches involved local teams Calangute Association, Panjim Footballers, Guardian Angel Sports Club, FC Goa II and former I-League sides Dempo, Salgaocar and Sporting Clube. — PTI

Trott is England
batting coach

London, Aug. 3: Former batsman Jonathan Trott has been appointed England's batting coach for the upcoming three-Test series against Pakistan, starting on Wednesday.

The 39-year-old, who scored 3,835 runs in 52 Tests between 2009-2015 for England, will be joined by former New Zealand spinner Jeetan Patel and Warwickshire seamer Graeme Welch, the "BBC" reported.

Trott, who played 68 ODIs and seven T20 matches, has scored 18,662 runs in first class cricket.

England and Pakistan will lock horns in a three-match Test series starting Wednesday at the Old Trafford in Manchester, followed by the next two games in the Ageas Bowl in Southampton.

England won the recently-concluded three-Test series, that mark the resumption of international cricket, against West Indies 2-1.

Swann hits out at England selectors

Meanwhile, former off-spinner Graeme Swann has slammed selectors for splitting England's most successful new-ball pairing of Stuart Broad and James Anderson during the recently-concluded Test series against the West

Indies, saying "you don't discard blokes with 500 Test wickets lightly".

England paid the price for dumping Broad in the first Test as they lost by four wickets at Southampton. With Jofra Archer missing the second Test due to a bio-secure breach, Broad returned to take six wickets as England bounced back with a 113-run win.

In the third Test, Broad was awarded the Man of the Match after he took 10 wickets to cross the 500-wicket mark and also scored a crucial 62 with the bat as England sealed the series with a 269-run win.

"How stupid did it look to break up England's most successful bowling partnership of all-time when we lost that first Test match?" Swann, who has taken 255 wickets in 60 Tests, was quoted as saying by "Mirror.co.uk".

"Jimmy and Broady have formed one of the most successful bowling double acts Test cricket has known. Why would you want to chuck it out before its sell-by date? I can understand the attraction of 90mph pace, and both Jofra and Woody are huge assets."

"But I'm sorry, you don't discard blokes with 500 Test wickets lightly," Swann said.

— PTI

Pace problem for England

London, Aug. 3: England have the luxury of six specialist pacemen in their 14-man squad for this week's first Test against Pakistan at Old Trafford — a welcome "headache" for captain Joe Root.

The skipper can call on veteran new-ball partners James Anderson and Stuart Broad, the express pace of Jofra Archer and Mark Wood and the impressive Sam Curran and Chris Woakes.

The hosts rotated their

quicks during last month's 2-1 series win over the West Indies which, together with the upcoming campaign against Pakistan, forms a programme of six Tests in seven weeks.

That is a particularly tough schedule for fast bowlers in a season cut short by the Coronavirus pandemic.

England's management has argued no paceman can play all six Tests, with the restrictions imposed by maintaining a bio-secure "bubble"

requiring several options to be immediately at hand.

But it is an issue they will need to handle with care given they have now lost the opener in eight of their past 10 multi-match Test series, which for all their resilience could prove costly if it happens against Pakistan.

Broad revealed on Sunday he felt "so low" after being omitted from the West Indies opener that he considered retiring.

Misbah wants Pak to get off blocks early

London, Aug. 3: Pakistan coach Misbah-ul-Haq has urged his side to get off to a flying start in their Test series with England, saying they must be at their best "right from the word 'go'".

England are notoriously sluggish starters and have lost the opener in eight of their past 10 Test series,

including a recent 2-1 home success against the West Indies that marked international cricket's return from the coronavirus lockdown.

Misbah, suggesting England would have the advantage of momentum, told reporters on Monday: "We should be ready for an England team that

have already had three matches of experience and they won their last two Test matches. We have to really come in this Test series right from the word 'go' at our best if we want to win a Test series or a Test match here.

"We are aware that England have a slight advantage but if we are

alert and go 100 percent in the first Test match, that is the only way we can beat England, otherwise we will find ourselves in difficulty."

Misbah believes his side also have the batsmen to give their bowlers enough runs to defend. "It's always tough with the Duke ball in England

where the ball moves around off the seam and also in the air," Misbah said, adding, "but this is where you can really fight and our batting looked in great shape in the last two series. We played in Pakistan but even in Australia we managed to score good."

— AFP