

'CHANDANAKKUDAM' CELEBRATED SANS FRENZY

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Keeping with the tradition, the unique bonhomie between Lord Ayyappa and his trusted Muslim lieutenant Vavar was relived on Sunday — but through a town bereft of black-clad pilgrims.

Marking the final phase of this edition of the annual Sabarimala pilgrimage season, the Chandanakkudam celebrations at the Nainar mosque in Erumeli were held on Sunday.

The event was staged in strict adherence to the COVID-19 guidelines with the number of persons attending the procession limited to 20.

The procession, which began from the Nainar mosque around 7 p.m., was accorded receptions at various points, including the two Ayyappa temples in the town, and concluded by 10 p.m. — as against the usual timing of 5 a.m. the next day. Various art forms and percussion ensembles that often accompany the procession too had been cancelled.

According to P.H. Shahjahan, president of the Erumeli Mahallu Muslim Jamaat, none of the rituals associated with the Chandanakkudam celebration were cancelled despite the restrictions.

"In previous years, the procession used to move through a sea of pilgrims, who would start to gather on the streets here much before the procession begins and would remain there until next morning. But in view of the pandemic situation, it was staged as a low-key affair this time," he said.

Petta Thullal today

Meanwhile, the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) has completed preparations for the ceremonial 'Petta Thullal' by the Ambalapuzha and Alangad teams, which is slated to begin on Monday.

The two groups, comprising 50 members each, have already reached the town.

"The two Ayyappa temples have been sanitised with the help of the Fire and Rescue Services personnel and since the Petta Thullal groups will not be leaving for Sabarimala immediately after the ritual, arrangements have been put in place for their accommodation at Erumeli," said Krishnakumar Warrier, Deputy Commissioner, TDB.

Antigen testing

All members of the Petta Thullal groups are required to undergo antigen testing before attending the dancing ritual.

The teams have been permitted to include one person above 60 years as the Periyon (group leader).

However, the receptions usually accorded to the dancing teams at various points have been cancelled.

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