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# **IRREGULAR by MANJUL**



A man lifts a tarpaulin covering stored grain as mice scurry around on his farm near Tottenham in Australia. Vast tracts of land in Australia's New South Wales state are being threatened by a mouse plague that the state government describes as "absolutely unprecedented." Just how many millions of rodents have infested the agricultural plains across the state is guesswork

#### **Teenage girl** attacked in classroom

GREENSBORO (US): Eight persons stormed a high school classroom and attacked a 14-year-old girl in an incident thought to have stemmed from an earlier fight at a school bus stop, a North Carolina sheriff's office said. The Guilford County Sheriff's Office said Thursday that a 16-year-old female student helped the group get inside Southern Guilford High School and led them to an upstairs classroom. The sheriff's of fice described the group as six students and two adults and sav they assaulted the 14-year-old student, who suffered facial injuries. Faculty, administration and a school resource officer responded but by then the attack was over, the sheriff's office said.

#### **Donations** for Ayodhya mosque tax-free

AYODHYA: The government has granted tax exemption to those contributing for the construction of the mosque, for which the Supreme Court had allotted five acres in the Babri Masjid-Ramjanmabhoomi land dispute case, according to members of the trust overseeing the project. The decision came nine months after the Indo-Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF), the trust overseeing the project, applied for it first. Foundation chairman Zafar Farooqui said they had applied for the tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act on September 1 last year and the application was rejected on January 21.

#### **Nifty hits** record high as RIL zooms

MUMBAI: Rising for the sixth session on the trot, the NSE Nifty closed at a fresh lifetime high on Friday, powered by a robust rally in index heavyweight Reliance Industries. The rupee's rising streak and daily Covid-19 cases falling below the 2-lakh mark also spurred bullish sentiment, traders said. The Nifty surged 97.80 points or 0.64 per cent to finish at 15,435.65, closing at a record high for the second straight day. The 30share BSE Sensex ended 307.66 points or 0.60 per cent higher at 51,422.88. ▶ P7

## DELHI ON UNLOCK MODE

Factories, construction activities allowed for one week from Monday

New Delhi

CHIEF Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said Delhi has somehow gained control over the second wave of Covid-19 and the government will now start the process of lifting the lockdown gradually, starting with resumption of construction activities and reopening of factories for one week from Monday.

This doesn't mean the fight against the deadly disease has ended, he stressed. "It is time to start the unlock process. It should not be the case that people escape coronavirus but die of hunger... We have to maintain a balance between controlling the spread of coronavirus and allowing economic activities," Kejriwal said during an online press briefing.

"At a meeting of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) on Friday, it was decided that the lockdown be lifted gradually. In this process, we have to take care of the lowest strata first ... daily wagers, labourers, migrant workers who come to Delhi from far off areas in search of livelihood," he said.

Keeping this in mind, it has been decided to open factories and allow construction activities for

one week from Monday," he said, adding the government will continue the unlock process every week based on the opinion of experts and the

However, if the cases start rising again, we will have to stop the unlock exercise, he added and appealed to people not to step out unless it is absolutely necessary. In the last 24 hours, Delhi reported a positivity rate of around 1.5 percent and around 11,00 new cases, the CM said.

The chief minister had announced a lockdown in Delhi on April 19, with the city recording over one lakh cases in the previous five days. Thereafter, the government kept extending the restrictions every week, hoping to break the chain of infection as hospitals reeled under a massive surge of cases and shortage of oxygen and es-

"The number of cases and the positivity rate has declined gradually. There is no difficulty in getting beds, oxygen and ICU beds are also available in good numbers. But the fight against the virus hasn't ended," Kejriwal said. So, whatever gains Delhi has made in the one-anda-half month of lockdown cannot be squandered by

lifting the restrictions in

one go, he added.

sential drugs.



Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal addresses the media virtually on gradual unlocking of Covid-induced

### Restaurants anxiously wait for govt to ease curbs

 $N{\rm EW}\,D{\rm ELHI}$ 

HOME-STYLE cooked meals and 'in-house delivery' ecosystem might have saved the day for some restaurants in Delhi, but with dine-ins contributing "70-80 per cent" of the total revenue, owners wait anxiously for the city government to lift curbs after a six-week gruelling lockdown. Dine-in facility has not been allowed in Delhi since April 17 -- the day first weekend lockdown was announced -- in a bid to break the chain of COVID-19 infections in the city. The Delhi government had first imposed a weekly lockdown on April 19 which was later extended multiple times, last on May 23.

On Friday, Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said Delhi has somehow gained control over the second wave of COVID-19 and the government will now start the process of lifting the lockdown gradually, starting with resumption of construction activities and reopening of factories for one week

### Orphaned kids' plight moves SC

### **Apex court directs States to** identify, help the children

New Delhi

OBSERVING that it cannot even imagine how many children in this large country have got orphaned due to the devastating Covid-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court on Friday directed the State authorities to immediately identify them and provide relief.

The top court asked state governments to understand the agony of children starving on the streets and directed the district authorithey be immediately taken care of without waiting for any further orders from the courts.

A vacation bench of Justices LN Rao and Aniruddha Bose directed district administrations to identify the orphans in their areas and upload their data on the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) website by Saturday evening.

The top court's direction came on an application filed by amicus curiae Gaurav Agrawal in the pending suo motu case seeking identification of orphaned children due to Covid-19 or otherwise and providing them immediate relief by the state governments. The bench said state governments must inform it of the position of these children and the steps

they have taken to provide them immediate relief.

"We have read somewhere that in Maharashtra over 2,900 children have lost their one or both the parents due to Covid-19. We don't have an exact number of such children. We cannot even imagine how many such children in this large country have got orphaned due to this devastating pan-

demic," the bench said. It told the state government's counsel appearing in the matter, "I hope you understand the agony of the children starving on the streets. You please ask the state authorities to immediately take care of their basic needs". The top court noted that the Centre has already issued advisory to the authorities concerned for the protection of children, who have lost their parents due to COVID-19.

"There is an obligation on the part of the authorities to ensure such children in need are taken care of," the bench said, while referring to various provisions of the Juvenile Justice Act. It said the district administration authorities should upload the latest data of such orphaned children on the website 'Baal Swaraj' of National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) by Saturday evening.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chairs the 43rd GS Council meeting in New Delhi on Friday

### **GST** Council leaves tax rate on Covid vaccines unchanged

New Delhi

THE GST Council on Friday left taxes on COVID-19 vaccines and medical supplies unchanged but exempted duty on import of a medicine used for treatment of black fungus.

A group of ministers will deliberate on tax structure on the vaccine and medical supplies, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told reporters after a meeting of the GST Council. The GST Council, which is headed by the Union Finance Minister and comprises representatives of all states and union territories, exempted levy of I-GST on import of Amphotericin-B, which is used for the treatment of black fungus. Currently, vaccines attract 5 per cent GST. Sitharaman said the Council decided to continue a waiver of I-GST on free COVID-19 related supplies imported from abroad. Also, the panel decided that the Centre will borrow Rs 1.58 lakh crore and pass it on to the states to make up for the shortfall in their revenues from the

 $implementation \, of \, the \, GST.$ A special session of the Council will be held soon to consider extending the fiveyear GST shortfall compensation period to states beyond 2022. The panel provided relief to small GST taxpayers through an amnesty scheme for late return filers.

### Globe on trail of corona origins India supports calls for studies on tracing Covid

New Delhi

INDIA on Friday supported

renewed global calls for a tion by the WHO into the origins of Covid-19, days after US President Joe Biden asked American intelligence agencies to find out how coronavirus emerged in China. There growing d e mands sizeable number of countries, including the US and Australia to investigate whether the virus originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan in late 2019 from an animal

source or from a laboratory accident in December 2019. In March, the World Organisation (WHO) came out with a report on the origins of the

virus but it had failed to meet the expectations of the US and several other leading countries. External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said the follow up of the WHO



and further studies deserve the understanding and cooperation of all. "The WHO convened global study on the origin of Covid-19 is an important first step. It stressed the need for next phase studies as also for further data and studies to reach robust conclusions." Bagchi was responding

to media queries on the issue. "The follow up of the WHO report and further studies deserve the understanding and cooperation of all," he said.

gence of the deadly Covid-19 pandemic and report back to him in 90 days. "I have now asked the intelli gence community to redouble their efforts to collect and analyse information that could bring us closer to a definitive conclusion, and to report back to me in 90 days," Biden had said. "As

in investigating the emer-

There are growing demands by a sizeable number of countries, including the US and Australia to investigate whether the virus originated in the Chinese city of Wuhan from an animal source or from a laboratory accident in December 2019

the WHO earlier this year, the US and several other countries expressed concerns over Chinese authorities not providing complete data to the WHO team probing the origin of the virus. President Biden had on Wednesday ordered the US intelligence agencies to "redouble" their efforts

During the probe by

part of that report, I have asked for areas of further inquiry that may be required, including specific questions for China. I have also asked that this effort include work by our national labs and other agencies of our government to augment the intelligence community's efforts," the US president had said.

#### for Polavaram: Jagan HANS NEWS SERVICE AMARAVATI: The Centre is vet to release Rs 16,000 crore for the Polavaram project, disclosed Chief Minister Y S Jagan Mohar

Centre yet to

clear ₹16K cr

Reddy, explaining that the state government had however released the money in advance as Polavaram is the high priority project and needs to be completed on war footing. He said this after a review

meeting the Chief Minister had with the officials on Friday to take all necessary steps to see that the bills which have been submitted to the Centre get cleared at the earliest. The CM said it is estimated

that the state would require another Rs 1,400 crore in the next three months since important works like the spill way, fixing of radial gates and completion of first and second reaches of the coffer dam to the targeted height were on and are scheduled to be completed by June end. Hence, he said, it was necessary that the officials get the pending bills cleared from the Centre at the

The Chief Minister directed the officials to focus on constructing Naredi barrage on Vamsadhara river and consider it as a priority project.

The officials said the construction of Nellore barrage will be completed by June 31 and 84 percent of works related to Sangam barrage are completed and it will be completed by July 31. The Chief Minister was informed that works are in progress on both sides of Owk tunnel and the work of 116 meters is still pending and will be completed in coming three months. The officials informed the Chief Minister that Tunnel -1 of Veligonda project is ready and head regulator works of Tunnel 1 are almost completed.

The Chief Minister directed the officials to expedite the works of Tunnel -2. He said there should be no delay in works and instructed the officials to come up with an action plan to next meeting. He said works for interlinking Vamsadhara and Nagavali rivers should be completed soon.

## International flights suspended till June 30

NEW DELHI

THE coronavirus-induced suspension of scheduled international passenger flights has been extended till June 30, aviation regulator DGCA said on Friday. "However, international scheduled flights may be allowed on selected routes by the competent authority on a case-tocase basis," the Directorate General of Civil Aviation added. Scheduled interna-



tional passenger services have been suspended in India since March 23, 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic. But special international flights have been operating under the Vande Bharat Mission since May 2020, and under bilateral "air bubble" arrangements with select countries since

India has formed air bubble pacts with around 27 countries, including the US, the UAE, Kenya, Bhutan and France. Under an air bubble pact between two countries, special international flights can be operated by their airlines between their territories. The DGCA's Friday circular

also said that the suspension does not affect international all-cargo operations and flights specifically approved by it. The decision to extend the suspension on scheduled international passenger flights comes as India battles a second wave of coronavirus, even though daily cases have seen a steady decline over the past several days.

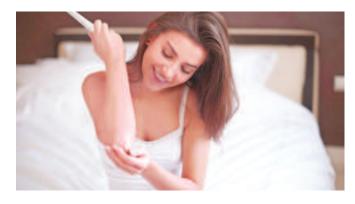


## BIPASHA BASU @BIPSLUVURSELF

Let go of anything that no longer serves your higher purpose #release #loveyourself #lovelife #loveall



DELHI SATURDAY 29 MAY 2021



# Say good bye to elbow tanning with these simple remedies

Darkening of elbows is the most common problem seen in women these days. Over exposure to sun is the main cause of tanning on elbows. It is one of the most difficult and stubborn areas from where removing these black marks will become a big task to every individual. But there are certain home remedies that will help you to get rid of dark and black elbows.

#### Lomon

Lemon juice acts as a great exfoliator. Cut a lemon into half and rub one half of a lemon on one elbow and the other half on the other elbow. Rub for 10 minutes and then allow the juice to dry. Wash the juice with cold water. Do this treatment as many numbers of times as you want in a day. But don't forget to apply a moisturizer on your elbows after every treatment.

#### Turmeric, honey and milk

Turmeric has antiseptic properties and milk act as bleach, while honey moisturizes the dry skin. Mix some turmeric with milk and honey to make it a smooth paste. Apply the paste on the dark areas and leave it there for at least 20 minutes. Wet your hands and rub it for few minutes and then wash it off with cold water.

#### **Gram flour and lemon**

Gram flour cleanses the area and also provides mild exfoliation. While lemon juice acts as natural bleach and helps to reduce the darkness from your elbows. Add some lime juice to gram flour to make it paste. Apply the mixture and rub in circular motion on your elbows. Allow it to dry and wash it off with cold water.

#### Olive oil and sugar

Sugar works as an excellent source of exfoliation, while olive oil will moisturize the skin. Mix equal quantities of olive oil and sugar to make a thick paste. Apply this mix on to the black knees and elbow. Rub the skin using this mixture for about five minutes. Wash using mild soap and water.

### Sunscreen lotion Sunscreen should be gen-

erously applied on the elbows when you are stepping outside as elbows are also exposed to the harsh sunrays which can ruin your skin cells. So, it will show an impact if you apply a generous dose of sunscreen the next time you are stepping out of your home.

## **Take care of your skin during Covid-19**

Dr Chiranjiv Chhabra, leading Dermatologist and Director of Alive Wellness Clinics says that regular usage of masks and sanitizers may lead to skin problems

ASKARI JAFFER

s the second wave of Covid19 is spreading severely, masks and sanitizers became common products in everyone's daily routine. Using sanitizers and washing your hands in regular intervals may keep you away from the deadly virus but Dermatology experts say that, it is very harmful to your skin.

In our conversation with Dr Chiranjiv Chhabra, leading Dermatologist and Director of Alive Wellness Clinics says, "While wearing masks, sanitising and social distancing are the key step to keep ourselves safe from virus, it is equally important to take care of our skin health and personal care during this tough times. Following basis self-care routine can help you to stay away from these skin related problems."

HIS DAY IN

HISTORY



"Frequent hand washing and sanitising can strip your hands of their natural oils. To prevent dry and cracked skin, it is very important to be gentle to your hands. Use cool or lukewarm water with soap to wash your hands," says Dr Chhabra. He suggests avoiding antibacterial cleansers as they aren't that useful for preventing infectious disease and they contain chemicals such as fragrance that

can irritate skin.

Dr Chiranjiv adds, "It is important using moisturizers after washing your hands. Gently rinse and pat the hands dry and apply plenty of moisturiser. Hypoaller-

genic moisturisers are more preferable which are free of fragrances and dyes to avoid skin irritation." Working for long hours in Covid duty and wearing mask to protect us from virus causes itchiness or a rash, sweaty or damp conditions under the mask which leads to acne breakouts and other skin concerns. Making a few skin care routines can help to counteract these problems.

"Cleanse, moisturise and tone your face before and after using a mask. Choose 'non-comedogenic' products, which won't clog skin pores. Don't use products with petrolatum such as petroleum jelly. Exfoliate your face with a home-made or a light scrub at least once a week to get rid of dead skin and bacteria. Don't forget to wash and clean your face before going to bed at night," says Chhabra.

He added, "To prevent or relieve skin injuries caused by pressure or friction from masks, a thin layer of zinc oxide can soothe and

protect skin. Zinc oxide is used to protect the skin often used for diaper rash or severely chapped skin. Use it on the bridge of your nose or behind your ears. Cleanse your skin regularly. Use a watersoluble moisturiser. Look for acne treatment products that contain benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid and avoid popping or squeezing nimples."

## PERSONAL CARE MEASURES ONE SHOULD TAKE DURING COVID-19

#### Drink plenty of water

It's very important to stay hydrated to stay active, look fresh and prevent your skin and body from toxins. Drink at least 8-10 glasses of water that will help to flush out the toxins from your body.

#### Eat righ

When you're eating a balanced and nourishing diet, your skin will reflect exactly that. Eat a king-sized breakfast, healthy lunch and light dinner. Focus on ingredients in your kitchen that will help boost your immunity such as, turmeric, ginger, garlic, black pepper etc.

### Take Enough Sleep

Do not compromise on your regular sleep pattern. Sleep early and wake up early and try and get at least eight hours of sleep every night. This will help you to prevent dark circles, puffy eyes and premature ageing of the skin.

#### Take Vitamin C and Oral antioxidants

Serums are one of the most important skincare products you can use. Topical Vitamin C prevents free radical damage while brightening the skin. An oral antioxidant with the goodness of vitamins and minerals goes a long way in protecting and revitalizing the skin.



As you might imagine, celebrating Biscuit Day is a lot of fun. It is your yearly excuse to eat as many biscuits as you like – and to do a spot of baking.

Baking an ancient Roman biscuit called a

buccellum is perhaps the most exciting way to experience the day. While the final product won't be as delectable as manufactured biscuits, it will give you an insight into the sort of cuisine that people enjoyed in the past while sailing.

Failing that, nothing is stopping you from baking cookies or traditional biscuit bread. What's more, you could trial unique, healthy versions using authentic ingredients. There are plenty of recipes that still use wholemeal flours and sugar alternatives on the internet.

Biscuits are an experience that you'll want to share. Many people, therefore,

invite family and friends over for an afternoon of cookies and tea enjoyed in the traditional style. You just take your favorite type of tea (Assam, Darjeeling, and so on), add a spot of milk, some sugar, and then pair with your favorite biscuits – sweet or savory! Many people like to dunk their biscuits in their tea. Traditionally biscuits came in particular sizes and shapes. Still, there's no need to stick with the official format if you don't want to. Cookies don't have to be round. If you've got some shape cutters at home, put them to good use. You can make cookies in the shape of donkeys, cars, stars, hearts, triangles – whatever you have to hand. And for extra fun, you can cover them in icing sugar.

There are few crumbs of information about just how
Biscuit Day started, but that's no reason to miss out on the
celebrations. So bake up a treat for friends and family, or
settle down with a cup of tea or coffee

and enjoy one of your favorite
varieties. Don't forget to share
your creations with your
friends on social media.
You never know what
other biscuit fanatics
are lurking out
there.



PUJA GUPTA

Bollywood actress Deepika
Padukone has featured in the 'Seven Happy Women' list by Chopard under its 'Happy Diamond' campaign. The other names in the list include Aja Naomi King, Jung Ryeo-Won, Sadie Sink, Anne Nakamura, Dorra Zarrouk and Yang Zi. Chopard's Co-President and Artistic Director, Caroline Scheufele has chosen the names with unparalleled influence to embody Happy Diamonds. "Seven Friends of the Maison who represent, each through in their own way, a strong, free, joyful way of living in the world and of owning the spirit of the era. Deepika Padukone, Aja Naomi King, Jung Ryeo-Won, Sadie Sink, Anne Nakamura, Dorra Zarrouk and Yang Zi have all grasped the codes of their time to blaze their trail in a manner that is both

Other names in the list include Aja Naomi King, Jung Ryeo-Won, Sadie Sink, Anne Nakamura. Dorra Zarrouk and Yang Zi

singular and generous." Theirs are powerful voices that resonate with that of Karin Scheufele - Caroline Scheufele's mother - who once exclaimed, faced with the first sketches of the future Happy Diamonds: "diamonds are happier when they are free". The brand quotes: "An indispensable voice, she (Deepika) speaks of the fragility and strength of the human mind, which she describes with great intelligence: 'To accept the highs and the lows. To embrace the various emotions that we are challenged with every single day. And to live a life that is fuelled by authenticity and purpose.' A strong mantra for a free spirit that bears witness to a deep humanity, making her a true global icon."

Nakamura, Dorra Zarrouk and Yang Zi

NEWS ROUNDUP

### Ileana D'Cruz: You just want people to like watching you

A ctress Ileana D'Cruz has had a great run down South and has also been doing her share of Bollywood films. She says everything comes down to people and, as an artiste, one just wants the audience to like watching you. Popularity, she explains, is the one thing that balances the fact that the film industry can actually be a very cruel

place to survive. "It (the film industry) is brutal, of course, but it comes down to people.

If they (people) like you that is all you need. You just want people to like watching you," says Ileana.

Ileana feels the moment an actor is not appreciated they lose the mark. "It basically goes the same for me. I wouldn't want to watch a film

with an actor I don't like watching.
The minute you are not liked
anymore you sort of lose the mark.
The industry is brutal in a sense, but
it has got so many perks as well," she

Acting is a profession that comes with its pros and cons, the actress notes, in this context. "You cannot have all the good things only here,

there is always a little bit of con. I think that makes it interesting. It makes you work harder. It makes you strive to keep doing better," she sums up. In the workfront, Ileana will next be seen in "Unfair N Lovely", a comic take on India's obsession with fair skin. The film is set against the backdrop of Haryana and casts her opposite Randeep Hooda.

### RT-PCR test: NEERI develops simple, fast method of swab collection and processing

New Delhi

The National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) has developed a simple and fast method of swab collection and processing for RT-PCR coronavirus test which could be used in rural and tribal areas.

The method is simple, fast, cost-effective, patientfriendly and comfortable, the

friendly and comfortable, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) said. It is well-suited for rural and tribal areas, given minimal infrastructure requirements, it said

The Nagpur-based NEERI is a constituent laboratory of CSIR. Krishna Khairnar, senior scientist, Environmental Virology Cell at NEERI, said the swab collection method requires time. Moreover, since it is an invasive technique, it is a bit uncomfortable for patients. "Sometime, it is also lost in the transport of the



sample to the collection centre.

On the other hand, the Saline Gargle RT-PCR method

is instant, comfortable and patient-friendly. Sampling is done instantly and results will be generated within three hours," he said. The method is non-invasive and so simple that a patient can collect the sample himself, said Khairnar.

Collection methods like nasopharyngeal and oropharyngeal swab collection require technical expertise and they are also time-consuming. In contrast, the Saline Gargle RT-PCR method uses a simple collection tube filled with saline solution, he said.

The patient gargles the solution and rinses it inside the tube. This sample in the collection tube is taken to the laboratory where it is kept at room temperature, in a special buffer solution prepared by NEERI. An RNA template is produced when this solution is heated, which is further processed for Reverse Transcription-Polymerase Chain Reaction (RT-PCR).

This particular method of collecting and processing the sample enables to save on the otherwise costly infrastructural requirement of RNA extraction. The method is environment-friendly as well, since waste generation is minimised, Khairnar said.

The Nagpur Municipal Corporation has given permission to go ahead with the method, following which testing has begun at NEERI, the CSIR said. (PTD)

# PM RESPONSIBLE FOR SECOND COVID WAVE: RAHUL

## 'More to come if no vaccine strategy in place'

New Delhi

LASHING out at the government for its Covid management, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday held Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "theatrics" responsible for the second coronavirus wave and warned of more waves to come at the current rate

of vaccination.

Calling on the government to evolve a vaccine strategy for the entire population, he noted that India is the vaccine capital of the world and it is possible to escalate the inoculation drive as only 3 per cent of the people have received their jabs.

Addressing an online press conference, Gandhi also termed the prime minister an event manager and said it is time for him to be a leader and show that he can organise vaccines for everyone. "My understanding and the understanding of experts is the current rate of vaccination of 3 per cent almost guarantees a third wave of virus when the lockdown goes, which is completely unnecessary," he warned.

If the vaccination is at 50-60 per cent of the population, India would not have a third wave and certainly not a fourth or a fifth wave, Gandhi said.

"The problem is there is no strategy. The prime minister doesn't think strategically. He is an event manager. He thinks one event at a time. You don't need events now as events will kill people, you need a strategy. The aim of the strategy should be to shut the space for corona," he said. Asserting that the more space you leave for the virus, the more dangerous it will become, the former Congress chief said Modi and his government have still not understood the virus and that is why they have no strategy.

Going by the current pace of vaccinations, the entire inoculation exercise will take another three years, till May 2024, and the country will witness several Covid waves by then.

Gandhi said the prime minister created space for Covid to spread through his actions

through his actions.
"The PM is responsible for the



## Highest inoculation done in Northwest Delhi

New Delhi

NORTHWEST Delhi has administered 6.34 lakh vaccine doses, the maximum by any district in Delhi so far, while only 3.15 lakh people have got jabs in the northeast region, according to government

According

to data
shared with
the Centre,
52.84 lakh
doses have been
administered in
Delhi since the inoculation
exercise started on January
16. Of this, 36.79 lakh were
Covishield doses and 16.04
were Covaxin jabs.

The maximum number of 1.41 lakh people were vaccinated on May 10. As many as 11.87 lakh people have received both the doses. At least one dose has been administered to 23.71 lakh males and 17.24 lakh females

in the city.

Authorities in the Northwest district have administered 6.34 lakh doses till Friday afternoon, the highest in the city so far. In West Delhi district, 6.29 lakh jabs have been given.

The number of doses administered stands at 5.74 lakh in Central Delhi, 5.55 lakh in South Delhi and 5.37 lakh in Southwest district, according to

government data. Southeast Delhi has administered 4.84 lakh doses so far. The figure is 4.68 lakh in New Delhi, 3.74 lakh in North Delhi, 3.73 lakh in Shahdara, 3.34 in East Delhi and 3.15 lakh in Northeast Delhi. A government official said the number of doses administered in districts also depends on the number of inoculation centres and eligible population. @TD

second wave of virus, it is a result of his theatrics and the lack of his responsibility. It is time for the prime minister to be a leader and display leadership skills and show courage and not come out with excuses and blame others," he

said. The fact that India has so far vaccinated 3 per cent of its population means that 97 per cent can get the infection as "the government has left the door open for the disease to spread".

he disease to spread". Gandhi also alleged that the

## UP vaccine goof-up: ANM suspended, medical officer transferred

SIDDHARTHNAGAR (UP)

A female health worker was suspended and a medical officer got transferred, two weeks after 20 villagers in Uttar Pradesh's Siddharthnagar district were administered Covaxin after receiving Covishield in the first dose.

The incident took place on May 14 at the primary health centre in Barhni where people from Audahi Kala and another village received Covaxin shots. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Sandeep Chaudhary has admitted departmental negligence on their part and suspended Auxiliary Nursing Midwife (ANM) Kalavati in

Kumar, the medical officer, who was in charge of the health centre, was transferred, an official statement said. The CMO also issued a recovery order of Rs 7,500 against Immunisation Officer Shanti Singh after 50 doses of Covishield were found missing from the cold chain, it said.

Meanwhile, medical teams

this regard. Besides, Shivesht

Meanwhile, medical teams visited villages, including Audahi Kala and Manpur, on Thursday to examine the people who were received the wrong jabs. "We have tested 18 of the 20 people so far and none of them are facing any issues," said AS Khan, team incharge. (PTD)

## Vaccination centre for persons with disabilities opened

New Delhi

A Covid vaccination centre dedicated for persons with disabilities (PwD) was opened on Friday at the Sarvodaya Kanya Vidyalaya in Chhatarpur.

As per a notice from the south Delhi district magistrate, the centre will cater to PwDs aged 45 or older for now. The centre will remain open from 9 am to 5 pm every day of the week, except on Sunday. The visitors will be required to carry a proof of disability in the form of PwD identity card, or proof of residency in a PwD shelter/hostel/centre, or any other relevant PwD certificate, the notice said.

The Delhi government on Thursday had asked all district

Covid death rate in India is "a lie".

The government, he said, is trying

to suppress information and that

is why it is lying about the deaths.

He also urged the government to

not give the virus time or space

and change the strategy.

social welfare officers (DSWOs) to proactively coordinate with revenue and health department functionaries at the district level to facilitate timely treatment and vaccination of persons with disabilities against COVID-19.

The DSWOs have also been directed to actively coordinate with the office of the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities and implement any directions received without delay.

The department also provided the DSWOs a district-wise list of NGOs so that they can establish linkages for providing information and services to persons with disabilities for access to food, shelter, treatment and other necessities during the pandemic. (PTI)

According to the Congress leader, the lockdown, masks and social distancing are temporary fixes. Vaccination is the permanent solution to COVID-19 and the government must evolve a strategy, he said. (PTD)

# HC seeks Centre, Delhi's response on 12-year-old's Covid vax plea

New Delh

THE Delhi High Court on Friday sought response from Centre and Delhi government on a plea moved by a 12-year-old seeking for immediate vaccination of children between the ages of 12-17 in the city.

The plea, filed by Tia Gupta through advocate Bihu Sharma also demanded vaccination be pri-

oritised for parents having children up to 17 years of age.
The plea con-

tended that data from across the country, including Delhi, has revealed that between

April-May, the number of reported cases of children infected and suffering from Covid-19 "has risen tremendously".

The plea said children have a

fundamental right to be a beneficiary of the Covid-19 vaccines which are being promoted as "an easy, low-cost way to avoid the infection which may cause them serious harm or death".

A bench comprising Chief Jus-

tice D.N. Patel and justice Jyoti Singh issued notice to the Centre and Delhi government on the petition.

The plea contended that it is pertinent that the vaccine policy against Covid-19 has failed to factor-in children or parents of children, who are a vulnerable section of society, for vaccination against the deadly virus.

The plea added that the evidence that unvaccinated children are more likely to develop a new, more powerful Covid-19 strain, is reflected in the prevalent 'second wave', which has infected many more children than the 'first wave' last year.

"The Respondents have failed to prepare a National Plan for chil-

dren in adherence to the guidelines as given under the National Disaster Management Plan 2019, for-

mulated under the Disaster Management Act 2005 ("DM Act"), which clearly recognize children and their vulnerability during a 'biological health emergency', such as the present COVID pandemic," said the pleas.

The plea said there is enough empirical evidence to show that Covid-19 virus brings long term health complications such as organ damage, long Covid, or multisystem inflammatory syndrome (MIS-C) and death -- to at least some proportion of children.

"The State is obligated to recognize the vulnerability of children during this pandemic and accordingly take all suitable vaccination measures for them, along with other preventive medical infrastructure measures to ensure mitigation of the 'disaster'," added the plea. GAMSS

## Covid negative mom gives birth to Covid+ baby

VARANASI

A Covid negative mother has given birth to a baby who tested positive immediately after being born. The 26-year-old mother had tested negative for coronavirus before the delivery when she was admitted to SSL Hospital in Banaras Hindu University on May 24.

On May 25, the woman gave birth to a baby girl who was tested for coronavirus just after her birth. The new-born's test report came positive despite her mother testing negative for the virus.\ The family and doctors are shocked over the new born being Covid positive. The BHU hospital has said they will test

the two again in a few days for Covid.

SSL hospital medical superintendent K.K. Gupta said that this was not a rare or abnormal incident.

"The RT-PCR test's sensitivity was up to 70 per cent. The woman's sample might have gone beyond that sensitivity. So the woman's Covid-19 test would be done again," he said. (IANS)

Both, the mother and her new born, are doing fine.

Varanasi Chief Medical Officer B.B. Singh said the RT-PCR tests will be conducted again. "I have been informed about the case, but we can say something only after their re-examination."

### Transgender's plea for passport: HC seeks Centre stand

New Delhi

Aggrieved by non-issuance of a passport by the authorities with a change in name and gender, a transgender person moved the Delhi High Court for issuance of the travel document with the requisite changes.

A bench of Chief Justice D N Patel and Justice Jyoti Singh issued notice to the Ministry of External Affairs seeking its stand on the plea which has claimed that the petitioner was issued an Aadhaar card, PAN card and a Voter ID under the changed name and gender, but not a passport.

"That since all the documents of the petitioner, including her Aadhaar Card, Voter ID as well as her PAN Card have been issued to her with the required changes in name and gender on the basis of the affidavit dated December 2, 2019, the petitioner is also entitled to be issued her new passport with the same changes as have been made in her other documents," the petition has said.



The petitioner, who was born a male and subsequently changed his gender to female by way of a self declaration on an affidavit in 2019, has also challenged a requirement under the Passport Rules 1980 to submit a "sex-change certificate" from a hospital for issuance of the travel document.

In the petition, filed through advocates Siddharth Seem and Oindrila Sen, the petitioner has claimed that the requirement for a sex-change certificate was "illegal and unconstitutional" and it has prevented several

transgender persons in getting their passports to reflect their self-identified gender.

"The petitioner has already undergone a facial feminization surgery from a trusted doctor at Bangkok. She wishes to undergo rest of her gender reassignment procedures/ surgeries from the same doctor at Bangkok.

"Presently, the petitioner does not have a passport and would therefore be unable to travel anywhere for her future surgeries," the plea has said. (PTD)

## 65 yr old man becomes 1st Covid patient to get antibody cocktail at Apollo in Delhi

New Delhi

A 65-year-old man from Delhi, having multiple co-morbidities, has become the first COVID-19 patient to receive monoclonal antibody therapy at the Apollo hospital here, the healthcare group said on Friday.

The patient responded well to the infusion of the antibody cocktail and went home after an hour of observation on Thursday, hospital authorities said. As part of this single dose infusion-based treatment, patients with mild to moderate symptoms, are offered a cocktail of Casirivimab and Imdevimab, that is said to reduce their chance of hospitalisation by 70 per cent.

In a statement, Indraprastha
Apollo Hospitals, Delhi on Friday
announced that "Roche India's
antibody cocktail (Casirivimab
and Imdevimab) distributed by
Cipla Ltd. is available for administration to patients with mild and
moderate COVID-19 infection" at

The Antibody Cocktail was launched on May 24 in India by



Roche India after receiving Emergency Use Authorisation (EUA) from the Central Drugs Standards Control Organisation (CDSCO), it said. The first patient to receive the therapy at Apollo hospital here is a 65-year-old COVID patient from Delhi who has multiple co-morbidities, including acute blood pressure, a spokesperson of the hospital said.

"We are glad to have launched a pan-India program to make available this advanced treatment comprising of neutralising monoclonal antibodies for our patients with COVID-19," said Anupam Sibal, Group Medical Director, Apollo Hospitals Group and seniors consultant, paediatric gastroenterology at the hospital.

Monoclonal antibodies bind to and 'neutralise' the SARS-CoV-2

virus, he said, adding, "we are confident that this treatment option will significantly boost our efforts to bring the pandemic under control and will help prevent progression of the disease in those with mild to moderate COVID-19".

The therapy is most suited for "high-risk COVID-19 patients" who are within first ten days of symptom onset and meet any of the listed criteria, such as age being 65 years or above.

Other criteria include, obesity with BMI (Body Mass Index) of more than 35; or type 1 or type 2 diabetes mellitus; or chronic kidney disease, including those on dialysis; or chronic liver disease; or currently receiving immunosuppressive treatment; or if aged above 55, having either heart disease, or hypertension, or chronic

lung disease.

Dr Rajesh Chawla, senior pulmonologist at Apollo hospital, said the reason why this therapy is termed as an anti-body cocktail is because it comprises a mixture of biological drugs (Casirivimab and Imdevimab) that mirror the hu-

man antibodies in the immune system which consequently help fight the infection, similar to the natural antibodies produced when one gets infected with Covid. Both these antibodies also strengthen the immune defence system, he said.

This drug is said to restrict pathogens and virus from entering the patient's body, from where they otherwise would have derived nutrition and multiplied. This antibody cocktail will help prevent progression of the disease to a severe stage, he said.

Mohabbat Singh, an 84-yearold Covid-positive man, was given monoclonal antibody therapy at Medanta Hospital in Gurgaon on Tuesday and was sent home the same day, after being kept under observation, hospital authorities said on Wednesday, adding, Singh became the first patient to receive the therapy at Medanta. Fortis Escorts Heart Institute (FEHI) in south Delhi, after receiving doses on Wednesday has started offering the therapy from Thursday, FEHI Chairman Dr Ashok Seth earlier said. (PTI

### WHO should come clean on the origin of coronavirus

THE International Council of Jurists has urged the Director General of World Health Organisation to release all scientific and medical information regarding Covid-19 in the light of reports that Coronavirus had originated from a laboratory in Wuhan and not from the 'wet market' in Wuhan, hitherto believed by all countries. Dr. Adish C. Aggarwala, President of International Council of Jurists, in a letter to the Director General, WHO, said there was a great sense of anguish and concern over the situation arising in various countries with the spread of the novel Coronavirus. Various scientific, medical and journalistic reports on the origin and spread of this dreaded virus from a laboratory lend credibility to such fears and

The letter pointed out that 'when the Covid-19 originated, as reported, in a market in the Wuhan Province of China, the world was not informed about the same on time. All the authorities who had a duty to caution the world in advance, did not do so thereby causing immense loss of lives, relationships and properties to millions of people throughout the world. We were very much pained by the indifference of various authorities and lack of concern shown by the WHO during this period'.

The attention of WHO was drawn to a recent Australian news report, a document written by Chinese scientists and health officials before the pandemic in 2015 which states that SARS Corona viruses were a "new era of genetic weapons" that could be "artificially manipulated into an emerging human disease virus". The contents of this report make it clear that the virus is man-made and released from a laboratory and that the Chinese government has further plans to weaponise the same.

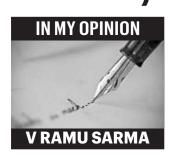
The ICJ had already raised the issue on April 3, 2020 with the United Nations Human Rights Council, but there is no tangible result so far in arresting the second wave of the pandemic. Information in this regard which the WHO possesses must be released at once in order to avoid further confusion which is plaguing the efforts of the international fraternity in dealing with the crisis. This information will not only help the countries to formulate their plan of action and devise the method to fight the pandemic but also

help them in eradicating this global

Countries can formulate data and information on Covid-19 and for this the WHO owes moral obligation to release the information in its possession. If the WHO does not part with the required information, it will be failing in its duty and future will not condone this lapse. The release of such information should not be hindered on account of any compromising information pertaining to any nation in particular.

At this juncture, it is also required to be noted that the second wave of Covid-19 spread has wreaked havoc in India even though the Government of India has taken all necessary precautions and acted as per its guidelines. In this regard, it is pertinent to know the exact details as to the origins of the virus. The WHO should release a 'White Paper' to dispel doubts.

## Centre, States in a quagmire over vaccination



F late making a lot of noise and less of action has become the order of the day. We have seen how the Centre, States and people ignored early warning with regard to Covid-19 and how people had to suffer. We have seen how private and corporate hospitals had a free run and fleeced people but nothing was done.

There was no vigil on them. The government issued a GO fixing rates for various procedures which were violated with impunity by all private hospitals but still no action was taken till recently. About a week back the government issued notices to some hospitals but refused to give the names. Even when it claimed it had issued notices to 64 hospitals, the Director Health refused to announce the

On the other hand, health department officials are claiming that they were not defending the private hospitals and the fact is that they have to pay higher salaries to employees as the investments in such hospitals is also heavy. Well it is a debatable issue but then why should the Government issue GO if there is no sanctity to it? How can any hospital violate the government order particularly during the pandemic situation? That is the big question. There are any number of examples where bodies were not handed over till the bills were cleared even if it meant keeping the body in hospital for over nine hours.

Similarly, the country seems to have slipped in working out a We have vaccine strategy. reached a stage where booking slots has become herculean task. And once again the blame game between Centre and States has begun.

Telangana government feels that Centre erred in working out plan for distribution of vaccine and that has resulted in unusual gap in demand and supply. The IT Minister K T Rama Rao found fault with the system of centralised supply. The minister lamented that though Hyderabad is the global capital to manufacture vaccine, the state and private sector have been asked to share from 15 per cent of the production. Not just that it had created different rates for Centre, State and private hospitals. People are ready to take vaccination, but it is the wrong policies that had led to confusion and there is near chaos. He certainly has a point.

The decision of the Centre to  $suddenly\,throw\,open\,the\,market$ to State governments and private hospitals has led to a situation where the private sector will have to negotiate the price with manufacturers and this has led a to a situation where the difference of price of the vaccine is four times more in private hospitals.

Even if one goes by

the argument that

those who can afford will go to private hospitals, the government has again indulged in flip flop by centralising allocation of slots. There is no system of walk in vaccination. Registering through CoWin website is next to impossible. It is like 'apply apply no reply'. Even the WhatsApp facility to know the availability of slots by mentioning area code is of no use since the instant reply one gets is 'no slots available here try another code'. The hits on CoWin seems to be much more than Facebook, people sav.

The government could have explored other options to see that the process of vaccination was put on fast track, but instead massive confusion has been created. The new policy putting the onus of procuring vaccine on their own by States and hospitals has left no time to negotiate the prices or stockpile vaccines. Even if orders are placed, the manufacturers are not able to deliver them as the orders from Centre are also pending. This has resulted in a situation where stocks are just trickling in and the situation is unlikely to ease before next few months as the maths simply does not add up.

According to estimates, the Centre requires at over 600 million doses to vaccinate all those who are in the age group of 45 and above. It has now decided to vaccinate all under 18-44 age group as well. It is estimated that nearly 900 million doses are required to vaccinate majority of the population. Experts feel that the government should have completed its target of vaccinating 45 and above groups before deciding to allow vaccination for 18-44 age group.

Till April, the indications available were that it would first complete vaccination to those in the age group of 45 and above but perhaps the Centre took the decision to expand the base in view of the sudden spike in Co-

Biotech in Hyderabad. While SII can produce about 70 million doses, Bharat Biotech can produce another 20 million. Both are trying to ramp up the capacity but it cannot happen overnight. Though the third vaccine Sputnik will become available from June, the high level of shortage would continue for some more time. In fact, experts say that the production process itself is time taking process. It is not like churning out medicines once formula is available. Even

The supply is nowhere close

to what is needed. We have two

major companies manufactur-

ing the vaccine, Serum Institute

of India in Pune and the Bharat

doses or filling them into vials takes substantial time and they can be shipped immediately. They need to undergo quality check as well. Another issue that needs to be resolved yet is transfer of technology

manufacturing the vaccine

and gave an impression that Corona was gone once and for ever. They never bothered to take effective measures to see that Covid-19 behavioural norms were followed.

The Centre did not keep Plan 'B' ready in case Plan 'A' does not give the result as it desired. As a result, now things are in a state of chaos.

It's time the Centre and State governments review as to where things had gone wrong and may be they should sit together and come up with Plan 'B' instead of each blaming the other. The Centre says they had given millions of doses to states and states challenge those figures. This is resulting in political 'Tu Tu mein mein' while the common man continues to suffer. Reeling out statistics makes no sense to the common man. What he wants is streamlining of the system and smooth procedure to get vaccinated.

Those who want to get vaccinated free of cost in the government designated centres as well as those who are willing to pay

The government could have explored other options to see that the process of vaccination was put on fast track, but instead massive confusion has been created. The new policy putting the onus of procuring vaccine on their own by States and hospitals has left no time to negotiate the prices or stockpile vaccines. Even if orders are placed, the manufacturers are not able to deliver them as the

orders from Centre are also pending. This has resulted in a situation where stocks are just trickling in and the situation is unlikely to ease before next few months as the maths simply does not add up

rona cases. The decision is good but it apparently faulted in its arithmetic. To cover the entire population in 18 and above age group, India requires around 3.5 million doses a day and we are short by about a million doses or so, claim experts.

Chances of importing Astra Zeneca or having collaboration to manufacture the same here also is unlikely. Reports also indicate that Pfizer's German partner who announced that it would set up a factory in Singapore would take another two years to be ready. There are other Indian companies like Zydus which are manufacturing vaccine but are still in third stage of trials and are yet to get emergency clearance from the facturing vaccine do not appear cause of the slot system. to be willing to go in for tech-

nology transfer. Manufacturing vaccine is a long-drawn process. On the other hand, there is shortage of raw materials like bio reactor bags, lipids and filters have been in short supply. Experts say that the situation may not improve before 2022. By that time more and more vaccines

will hit the market, they say. If the Centre and States had ensured that the pace of vaccination was kept high and it was given top priority during February and March, perhaps the second wave would have been far less intense. The Centre and States were busier in elections

to other pharma companies. As the high rates in private hospiof now, the companies manu- tals are equally suffering be-

> Another major confusion that has been created is regarding the gap between first shot and the second dose. Initially it was said that the gap between the two doses should not be more than 28 days. Then they said that in case of Covishield it can be six to eight weeks and now they say it can be more.

> This raises questions like who is more confused, the government, the experts or the manufacturers. Well, whether any one of them is confused or not people are totally confused. Of course, in politics it is always said if you cannot convince people confuse them. May be that is what we are witnessing.



### Greed, rationality and ethics in medicine

DR PINGALI GOPAL

UTONOMY (for the patient), justice (ensuring availability to all), Abeneficence (only for the good of the patient), and non-maleficence (not causing harm to individual or society) are the four basic principles of health care ethics. At the core of health ethics is the sense of right and wrong; and beliefs about rights and duties. Like all domains, ethics and morals are fluid and debatable with even cultural differences too. What is moral or ethical in one culture may not be so in another one. Ethics is dynamic. What was good ethics a hundred years ago may not be so today. Despite many controversies and discussions on the above four principles, most agree that patient autonomy is by far the most important overriding all the other considerations in event of a clash.

There are rights and duties of the doctor and there are rights and duties for the patient too. Unfortunately, the entire discourse of the governments, media, and the intelligentsia focuses on the duties of the doctor and the rights of the patient. In this process, a heartburn ensues which finally damages the profession.

Medicine, like many other professions, is a fine balance of art and science. Somebody in a malaria endemic area may choose to start antimalarials for a fever with chills. There might be another doctor who would want an investigation to confirm malaria before starting treatment. Both are perhaps correct and cannot undergo comparison in the binaries of 'non-academic/ academic' or 'non-commercial/commercial.' The conflicts doctors encounter in the profession many times are complex beyond the understanding of even other non-involved doctors, not to mention the laypeople.

There is a list of many do and don'ts for the doctors divided as compulsory duties, voluntary duties, unethical acts, and misconduct. There are some we are quite aware of as it makes a lot of noise in the media. Some are more subtle. The unethical acts include advertising, printing a self-photograph on the letterhead, commissions, euthanasia, and so on. Misconduct includes sex determination tests, not maintaining records, and disclosing secrets, amongst many others. Active euthanasia is thankfully not a big debate issue in India as in some western countries. Significantly, there are no guidelines on what the ideal charges for the patient should be. There might be official bureaucratic orders to display the consultation charges or the charges of various services provided in the hospital. However, the ethical guidelines provided by the Medical Council do not address the charges for services in the non-public sector at an individual or institutional level. In terms of legal attacks, governmental regulations, and popular perception, the majority of the medical private sector has come in the ambit of a business model. Thus, there is an inherent and fundamental contradiction between the service model and the business model in our medical systems. The patient in a private hospital expects the best possible services but at the most reasonable charges. How is this balance decided? How can one calculate the rational pricing when an expert surgeon saves the life of an individual? Why should capping be applicable only to the medical sector?

The business proposition seriously mixes with humanitarian considerations in medicine and this is the main reason there is so much debate in society. Consumer protection and legal questions stay intact making the doctor always vulnerable in case of adverse outcomes. The art of medicine loses out in legal battles as the focus becomes only the guidelines and scientificity.

One goes to a five-star hotel and pays twenty times more than the nice hotel in the neighbourhood for the same idli. An individual or institute approaching a top-shot private lawyer would grumble but would happily pay a Himalayan amount of money for the services rendered. There is a choice available to the person. The reason for dissatisfaction and heartburn in society happens because poor patients and uninsured patients forcibly go to the private sector instead of utilising the public sector. This lack of choice should make our thinkers reflect on the state of the public services in the country or the lack of proper and rational insurance policies. Ironically, the government insurance schemes for the public sector are so poorly structured that there is enormous hesitation to take up difficult cases and generate a whole set of practices which ultimately does not benefit the health of the individual or the society. Similarly, attacking individual doctors or slapping notices on corporate hospitals for being greedy is a short-term populist method of solving issues.

When the capping comes for private institutes in the health sector, what should be the limits? To what extent business practices apply to the medical sector? The point is, these are difficult issues and there is certainly a need for wide debate instead of unthinking reactions which can only harden stances. Ethics and morals are a very difficult subject, especially in the practice of medicine. Rationalising any unethical practice (on part of the doctors) and outright condemnation of any practice (not fitting into popular common-sense perceptions) are both wrong; and there should be perhaps an attempt to achieve a balance. The public-private model of health should deliver the goods to all the citizens of India in an effective manner without physical or intellectual violence in society. Is there hope for such a debate?



Baba has gone a little too far

Ramdev Baba's disparaging remarks against allopathy and insensitive comments like "even their Baap cannot arrest me " are full of arrogance. Ramdev Baba mocked the people who died with lack of oxygen, he mocked the patients trying to get the oxygen cylinders. His remarks are insensitive, irresponsible in the middle of this pandemic. His comments are insulting to the doctors and Covid patients who died due to lack of oxygen and also to their families.

Ramdev's remarks demoralised medical practitioners and the role of medicines and vaccines. His comments have not only hurt Doctors but also people everywhere. Doctors and other health care professionals are tirelessly battling the virus

at the frontline and this insensitive Baba's remark are insult to them. We are proud of our health workers and medical research team, working day in and day out to save our lives . Every system of medi-

cine has its own limita-

tions, instead of debat-

ing and fighting which is great Ayurveda or Allopathy ,both should come forward and help the patients dying because of this deadly virus. Government should take strict action against this Ramdev Baba for alleged misinformation campaign on vaccination and challenging government protocols for treatment of Covid 19.

Zakir Hussain, Kazipet

WHEN allopathic system of medicine is widely accepted in the world, Baba Ramdev calling it as defunct and attributing allopathy is the root cause for the failure of Indian health care system is ridiculous. In fact, he is not qualified himself in any of medical systems or has any right to pass judgement in the first place undermining allopathy outright.

Yoga Guru must first understand that none of the systems of medicine including allopathy and AYUSH in vogue are neither superior nor inferior to one another. In fact, they have never been competing with each other at any time and each has been treating patients following the practice and procedures scripted in the respective medical system. Therefore, his brazen remarks questioning the allopathic system of using drugs to find out symptoms and diseases and then treating them making it very costly beyond the reach of the common man is reprehensible.

Further, poking fun at treatment of Covid cases at a time when the whole world is convinced that allopathy only offers the cure is atrocious and unpardonable. Even today, most people turn to allopathy for cure through drugs, radiation and surgery despite switching over to alternative medical systems. Over all, Ramdev's incongruous remarks degrading allopathy medical system and doctors is condemnable in strongest terms. After letting hell loose and damaging the reputation of a medical system judiciously followed by millions around the world for cure to any disease or ailment, Ramdev should not be allowed to go scot-free under any circumstances.

K R Srinivasan, Secunderabad

### Why this controversy?

Thave listened to the oratory of eminent scholars like Diwakarla Venkatavadhani (who is no more), nanogenerian Malladi Chandrasekhara Sastry and now Chaganti Koteswararao, Garikipati Narasimharao, Samavedam Shanmukha Sarma and other authorities on our ancient epics who stated only the birthplaces of Rama in Ayodhya and Sita in Janakpuri (Nepal) but none touched the issue in respect of Hanuman.

How today suddenly this point was discovered which has turned into a controversial subject. Ramayana took place in Tretayuga lakhs of years ago. Anjanadri the mother's name of Hanuman is a hill in Tirumala Now Karnatakabased seers are arguing that his birthplace is located in their state. Courts also cannot decide as the evidences are not sufficient and valid since this case is lakhs of years old. How does it matter where he was born? Better stop squeezing this conflicting and unresolvable issue further.

Dr NSR Murthy, Secunderabad

### Extend lockdown relaxation

W<sup>E</sup> understand that the lockdown will be extended by one or two weeks. The relaxation period of 06:00 Hours to 10:00 Hours may be revised 07:00 Hours to 13:00 Hours in order to avoid crowding at the shops and to prevent covid-19. The increase in the relaxation period in the lock down (07:00 Hours to 13:00 Hours) will definitely reduce crowds. As such Covid-19 cases will naturally come down. Sambasiva Rao Choda, Hyderabad

Good move by TS govt

 ${
m T}^{
m HE}$  Telangana government cracking whip on 60-odd hospitals in different parts of the state for charging ex-

orbitant fees for treating patients with Covid-19, is a brave and commendable move; and a clear message to other erring hospitals - though the names of the hospitals have not been made public. The area wise distribution of such hospitals throughout the state will however give an inkling of such errant hospitals, about which the public is aware of.

Public awareness is the main mantra in this regard to help unravel the 'greed' by such hospitals that have been in the business for well over 16 or more months as the afflicted individuals are putting up with the whims of these hospitals for so long; despite complaints being aired in this regard, every now and then.

KR Parvathy, Mysuru

### China's role dubious

THERE is no smoke without fire. As China's demeanour ▲ and standpoint on the novel coronavirus have been sceptical since its outbreak, a high level probe was a global imperative to know from where and how the deadly virus originated.

The circumstantial evidences claiming the outbreak as a laboratory accident elicited by the US intelligence agencies in the recent days have raised the eyebrows. Also, one should not forget that the World Health Organization had expressed disappointment over China for not finalising the permissions initially for the arrival of the team that was to investigate the origin of the virus in early January this year.

If the theories surfacing are spurious as China claims, why is it not lending a helping hand to the agencies and organisations for the probe? After all, it has faced the brunt of the pandemic too.

Tushar Anand, Patna

thehansreader@gmail.com



District Collector RV Karnan inspecting special vaccination drive for super-spreaders in Khammam on Friday

# 7,500 super-spreaders vaccinated on day 1

HANS NEWS SERVICE KHAMMAM

DISTRICT Collector RV Karnan observed super-spreaders vaccination drive in Khammam on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, he informed that nearly 24 centres were setup for the drive and vaccine was

given to about 7,500 people. He said the government had identified ration shops, fertiliser and seed shops dealers, LPG

and seed snops dealers, LPG dealers, workers, petrol bunk workers, journalists as the super spreaders.

The Collector said the drive will continue till Saturday (May 29) from 9 am to 4 pm in the district.Stating that vaccination is the only way to prevent Covid, he appealed to all the eligible people to take vaccine.

Municipal Corporation Commissioner Anurag Jayanthi, Additional Collector N Madhusudhan and others have accompanied the Collector.

## Rachakonda CP inspects lockdown at Gudur tollplaza

HANS NEWS SERVICE NALGONDA / BHONGIR:

RACHAKONDA Commissioner of Police Mahesh Bhagwat on Friday visited check post at Gudur toll plaza on Hyderabad-Warangal highway in Bibinagar mandal in the district. He inspected the functioning of check post and instructed the staff to implement lockdown strictly and directed the duty staff to exempt emergency services, patients, hospital visitors and journalists during lockdown hours. Later, he distributed masks, sanitisers and butter milk packets to the duty police.

The Police Commissioner was accompanied by Bhongir Zone DCP Narayana Reddy and other police officials.

Meanwhile, Nalgonda district SP AV Ranganath inspected the lockdown situation at various places in Nalgonda town on Friday. He directed the duty police to implement the lockdown strictly and expressed anger as a few shops inside the colonies were opened. He warned of seizing the vehicles of persons, who come on roads unnecessarily and added that stern action would be taken against the violators. The SP advised people to buy essentials during lockdown relaxation time only.



Rachakonda CP Mahesh Bhagwat inquiring a woman during lockdown at Gudur toll plaza in Bibinagar on Friday



BC leader, TRS office in-charge RJC Krishna at Chiranjeevi oxygen plant in

### RJC Krishna visits Chiranjeevi oxygen bank

Hans News Service Khammam

SENIOR BC leader and TRS office in-charge RJC Krishna on Friday visited Chiranjeevi oxygen bank, which was setup in Khammam on Wednesday. During his visit, Krishna thanked Tollywood actor Chiranjeevi for establishing oxygen bank in Khammam. He

also lauded the services of Chiranjeevi blood bank in the district. Krishna appealed to Chiranjeevi to extend his services in the erstwhile Khammam district for the benefit of tribal people.

Corporator Raparthi Ravi, Chiranjeevi Charitable Trust members and others participated in the programme.

### ₹50L ex-gratia demanded to teachers died of Covid

HANS NEWS SERVICE KHAMMAM

CPM district secretary Nunna Nageswara Rao demanded the government to give Rs 50 lakh ex-gratia to the teachers, who died during election duty.

Speaking to the media here on Friday, he said that a large number of teachers, who did election duty, got infected with Covid and died. Hence, he demanded that the government should immediately fulfil their demands and provide job to one of their family members. He also asked the District Collector to withdraw show-cause notice, issued to those, who didn't attend election duties.



CPM district secretary Nunna Nageswara Rao



Minister for Tribal Welfare Satyavathi Rathod and MP Maloth Kaviha inaugurating Covid-19 ward at Eturnagaram in Mulugu district on Friday

## TS State to help orphans

HANS NEWS SERVICE

MULUGU
THE State government to help the children orphaned by the Covid-19,

Minister for Tribal Welfare Satyavathi Rathod said.

Speaking at a review meeting at Eturnagaram in Mulugu district on Friday, she assured of taking the responsibility of children who lost

their parents due to the coronavirus

been equipped with proper facili-

pandemic.
All the State-run hospitals have

ties to treat Covid-19, she said, referring to the measures being taken by Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao.

Even though the imposition of lockdown affects the exchequer of the State, the CM took a bold decision to protect the people falling prey to the Covid-19.

"Since the imposition of lockdown, the number of coronavirus cases has started to decline. The fever survey conducted by the government also helped the authorities to focus on grey areas," she said. The survey helped a lot of people to undergo appropriate treatment, Rathod said.

The Minister inaugurated the Covid-19 ward at the ITDA office and also the oxygen concentrator provided at the health centre.

MP Malothu Kavitha, MLA Seethakka, ZP Chairman Kusuma Jagadish, Collector Krishna Aditya and ITDA Project Officer Hanmantu K Zendage were among others present.

### 'Provide moratorium facility to goods vehicles'

HANS NEWS SERVICE NALGONDA

TELANGANA Lorry Welfare Association State vice-president Survi Yadaiah Goud criticised that increasing petrol and diesel prices 14 times in a single month was a record in the history of the country, which became a burden on the people.

On Friday, he released a statement on the plight of lorry owners in the present pandemic time. He observed that except our country, no other country might have increased fuel prices in the present critical time.

Life of common man will become miserable if the Central government continues increasing diesel and petrol prices without any restraint, he explained.

Yadaiah Goud lamented that increased diesel prices have become a major challenge for the owners of goods vehicles, who were facing financial difficulties. Lorry owners will be pushed into debts if the same situation continues, he pointed out and the Central government to provide moratorium facility on goods vehicles by considering the plight of owners of these vehicles.



## Mangalagiri Ayurvedic doctor offers cure to Covid in 1 hour

 Vasudev of Chamundeswari Ayurvedic Hospital claims those who take 3 pills from his medicine kit will test negative in 1 hour

 Says he can treat people in age group of 15 to 60 years but not pregnant women and people with comorbidities

 Patients have to take medicine for 20 more days for other symptoms of pandemic

HANS NEWS SERVICE GUNTUR

DR A Vasudev of Chamundeswari Ayurvedic Hospital, Mangalagiri, claimed that he would cure Covid-19 within one hour. "Patients suffering from Covid-19 can take my Ayurvedic medicine and get themselves tested with rapid antigen kit after one hour. The test will return definitely negative," he said in a statement. Soon after, his name went viral on social media.

When contacted by The Hans India, Dr Vasudev said his Ayurvedic preparation would cure patients aged above 15-years and below 60 years of Covid within an hour. But he said he can't cure pregnant women, diabetics, those having hypertension and breathing problems. He said at present he is dispensing Ayurvedic medicine kit to cure the deadly pandemic within 24-hours. If the patient uses three pills, he will test negative after 24-hours, he added.

For other symptoms, the patient has to use Ayurvedic medicines for 20-days. Dr Vasudev said the medicine kit contains three pills and medicines for symptoms for 20 days. The cost of each kit is Rs 4,500. So far, he had sold 70 kits only through mouth publicity. He says as soon as the patient takes first pill, he has to drink one litre coconut water immediately. He said he had not taken details of Covid-19 patients who purchased medicines from him. Expressing his uninterest in media publicity, Dr Vasudev said a satellite TV channel telecast news about his medicine without his permission.

### TDP demands Bharat Ratna to NTR

- Rich tributes are paid on the 98th birth anniversary of veteran actor, TDP founder and former CM
- TDP president Chandrababu Naidu says NTR will remain a rich legacy and heritage of all the Telugu people forever
- Family members visit NTR Ghat to pay homage to the late leader NTR on 98th birth anniversary

Amaravati/Hyderabad

RICH tributes were paid to TDP founder and former chief minister NT Rama Rao on his 98th birth anniversary on Friday with the leaders of TDP reiterating the demand for conferring country's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna on him. TDP national president and former chief minister N Chandrababu Naidu, his son Nara Lokesh, grandson Devansh and other family members and party leaders paid tributes to Rama Rao at NTR Ghat on the banks of Hussain Sagar lake in Hyderabad.

Chandrababu Naidu, who is sonin-law of the late leader, said NTR would remain as a rich legacy and heritage for the Telugu people for-

ver. He said the late leader would al-



TDP national president along with his son Nara Lokesh and other party leaders pays tributes to N T Rama Rao on the occasion of his 98th death anniversary at NTR Ghat in Hyderabad on Friday

ways be remembered for his contributions in politics and films. "NTR will continue to be an inspiration not only for this generation but also the coming generations," said Naidu. Later, addressing annual conclave Mahanadu of the TDP via video conferencing, Naidu recalled how NTR left an unforgettable impression on the Telugu speaking people all over the world with his great achievements. Born in an ordinary family, NTR rose to the greatest heights in film and political careers and became a 'Yugnurush' for the people

purush' for the people.

The TDP chief said that NTR was not just one person but an institution by himself and Naidu recalled how NTR excelled in what-

ever he took up and he did not merely act in the films but he actually lived in the characters that he portrayed.

After entering politics, NTR introduced many programmes that met the basic needs of the disadvantaged sections of the people. He used foresight and pragmatism in making decisions to pass on benefits to the deserving people.

Naidu asserted that NTR's life and career had made the average Telugu person proud. Everybody should remember NTR's contributions and draw inspiration from them to do best possible service to the people. NTR showed to the world that power and authority were not meant for one's enjoyment but they were something that should be used to render greater service to the public.

The TDP chief said NTR never used to compromise or rest till achieving the set goals. "He made even impossible tasks possible with his determination," said Naidu.

NTR's second wife Lakshmi Parvathi, actor son and MLA N Balakrishna and other family members separately paid tributes at NTR Ghat. NTR's another son N Ramakrishna released a video and said that he and his family members were unable to visit NTR Ghat for paying tributes because of the Covid pandemic.

Covid pandemic.

Meanwhile, senior TDP leader and former union minister Ashok Gajapathi Raju reiterated the demand that Bharat Ratna be posthumously conferred on NTR. He recalled that the TDP founder strived for the upliftment of the backward and weaker sections and always worked for decentralization and strengthening of federal system.

NTR had launched TDP in 1982 on the slogan of Telugu self-respect and created record of sorts by coming to power within nine months, ending the single party rule of Congress in the undivided Andhra Pradesh. He died on January 18, 1996, a few months after Chandrababu Naidu led a revolt against him and became the chief minister.

## PSA oxygen plants must in pvt hospitals

- Principal Secretary, Health, Anil Kumar Singhal issues order prescribing minimum standards for equipment and manufacture for hospitals on the basis of bed strength
- As per the order, every hospital with more than 100 beds will have to install a 1,000 Litres Per Minute PSA oxygen plant and those with 50 beds, a 500 LPM plant

Amaravati

THE state government on Friday made it mandatory for private hospitals and nursing homes to install Pressure Swing Adsorption (PSA) technology oxygen plants in proportion to their bed strength

Principal secretary (health) Anil Kumar Singhal issued an or-



der, amending the Andhra Pradesh Allopathic Private Medical Care Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Rules, 2007, and prescribing the minimum standards for equipment and furniture for hospitals based on the bed strength.

Every hospital with more than 100 beds will have to install a 1,000 Litres Per Minute (LPM) PSA oxygen plant and those with 50 beds, a 500 LPM plant, according to the order.

The hospitals should also have oxygen concentrators equal in

number to the oxygensupported beds. The private hospitals are also required to have oxygen masks with regulators in equal numbers.

"During the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the government supplied oxygen even to private hospitals. But they charged their

own rates from the patients. Now we are making it mandatory for them to install their own PSA plants so that they will be selfsufficient," a senior health official

The industries department of the state government is working out a plan to extend a 30 per cent subsidy to the private healthcare establishments for installing the PSA oxygen plants.

"The Chief Minister approved this proposal and the modalities are being worked out," the official added. (PTD)

### Excess fees: Hospitals to face fines, cases

Hans News Service Amaravati

THE state government on Friday issued orders notifying the rates to be charged for Covid treatment and penalties for excess charging in private hospitals.

The order stated that if any hospital is found to be charging more than the rates as indicated by the government earlier, they shall be levied a penalty which shall be 10 times of the additional charges by the district medical and health officer concerned at first violation

and if any hospital is found to be repeating the same, such hospital shall be prosecuted as per the provision of IPC, besides action as per the Clinical Establishment Act.

the Clinical Establishment Act.
Principal secretary, medical and
health, AK Singhal issued the orders to this effect.

## 'Dharavi model' helps tame second Covid-19 wave in slum town

Mumb

AFTER reporting up to 99 Covid-19 cases daily in April, Mumbai's slum colony of Dharavi has seen a gradual drop in single-day infections - below 5 - in the last couple of days with the tally of patients under treatment dropping to 50, marking a turnaround in the second wave. The 'Dharavi model' of Covid-19 management and the vaccination drive have helped in successfully containing the second wave in the area, officials said.

A steady drop in coronavirus cases in Dharavi, a sprawling and congested shanty town which was once a Covid-19 hotspot, has brought huge relief to the civic authorities in Mumbai. BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) officials said the slum cluster, spread across 2.5 square km and located on the border of the island city, reported three and four cases on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively, while Mumbai is still witnessing daily coronavirus cases in four digits.

They said Dharavi's active cases have come down to just 50 (6,398 of the total 6,802 Covid-19 patients have recovered, while 354 have died). This was in sharp contrast to the adjoining Dadar and Mahim areas, which have 204 and 254 active cases, respectively. Since the outbreak of coronavirus in April 2020, the slum-dominated area has reported 354 deaths (till May 26). Of those, 42 fatalities have been recorded since February 7, 2021, the officials said. According to them, the daily



Covid-19 cases in Dharavi started going up from mid-February, when Mumbai was hit by a second wave of the coronavirus infection. Cases in the slum-dominated area rose significantly in March and peaked in April, when it reported the highest single-day spike of 99 cases on April 8.

The sharp rise in daily infections pushed the civic authorities to once again fall back on the "Dharavi model" which involved 4Ts-tracing, tracking, testing and treating - a strategy which was praised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) during the first

wave of Covid-19. "Despite a slow spread of the virus in December 2020 and early January 2021, we continued with comprehensive testing and tracking of cases in Dharavi," said Kiran Dighavkar, assistant municipal commissioner of G-North ward that houses Dharavi.

With the onset of the Covid-19 second wave in February 2021, the Dharavi Model was activated again to stem the spread of the infection, he said. "Door-to-door screening of people with symptoms, aggressive testing, regular screening and testing of Dharavi

residents who work in different parts of Mumbai, including delivery personnel, industrial workers, helped to control the spread of the pandemic," Dighavkar said. Dharavi has a population of 6.5 lakh, which means 2,27,136 people living per sq km.

Social distancing was next to impossible in Dharavi, where families of eight to 10 people live in 10x10 hutments. Apart from congested slum pockets, Dharavi is home to several small-scale leather, pottery and textile manufacturing units. The area has 5,000 GST-registered enter-

prises, 15,000 single-room factories and is a hub of international exports with an annual turnover of 1 billion USD, according to BMC data.

In Dharavi, the first Covid-19 patient was found on April 1, 2020, about 20 days after Mumbai reported its first COVID-19 case. Thereafter, the daily Covid-19 cases rose sharply and the area was declared a 'Covid-19 hotspot'. With a proactive screening of residents with the assistance of private doctors and community support, the local body managed to flatten the COVID-19 curve last year.

According to a BMC official, the biggest challenge was to maintain hygiene as 80 per cent the population is dependent on 450 community toilets. Hence, the civic body focused on cleaning these toilets thrice a day to control the spread of Covid-19, he said. Dighavkar said even though the second wave has eased, the BMC was going to continue screening and testing of people through 11 fever clinics and mobile testing units in anticipation of a third wave of the infection.

"We will not let our guards down even though the cases have dropped. We are going to continue aggressive screening and testing until Dharavi reports zero cases," Dighavkar said. The focus will continue to be on vaccination in Dharavi where 27,000 people have been inoculated against Covid-19 so far, he



# Over 1.84 crore vaccine doses with states, more on way: Health Ministry

New Delh

MORE than 1.84 crore coronavirus vaccine doses are currently available with states and union territories, and three lakh more will be received by them in the next three days, the Union Health Ministry said on Friday.

The central government has so far provided, through the free of cost channel and direct state procurement, more than 22.46 crore doses to states and UTs. Of these, the total consumption, including wastage, is 20,48,04,853 doses, according to data available till 8 AM on Friday.

A total of 1,84,92,677 COVID-19 vaccine doses are still available with the states and UTs to be administered, the ministry said, adding 3,20,380 more doses are in the pipeline and will be received by them within the next three days. As part of the nation-wide vaccination drive, the Centre has been supporting the

states and UTs by providing them vaccines free of cost.

In addition, the central government has been facilitating direct procurement of vaccines by the states and UTs. Vaccination is an integral pillar of the comprehensive strategy of the Government of India for containment and management of the pandemic, along with test, track, treat and COVID-19-appropriate behaviour. Implementation of the liberalised and accelerated Phase-3 strategy of COVID-19 Vaccination has started from May 1.

Under the strategy, in every month 50 per cent of the total Central Drugs Laboratory (CDL) cleared vaccine doses of any manufacturer would be procured by the Government of India. It would continue to make these doses available to the states free of cost as was being done earlier, the ministry said. (PTD)

## Cyclone Yaas: PM announces ₹1K cr relief package after aerial survey

New Del

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi on Friday conducted an aerial survey to review the damages caused by the severe cyclonic storm 'Yaas in Odisha and West Bengal.

Expressing solidarity with the people affected by the cyclonic storm, the Prime Minister announced financial assistance of Rs 1,000 crore for immediate relief activities. Of this, Rs 500 crore would be given to Odisha, while the remaining amount would be allotted to West Bengal and Jharkhand on the basis of the extent of damage.

The Union government will also deploy an inter-ministerial team to visit the states to assess the extent of damage, based on which further assistance will be announced

The Centre has assured all help for restoration and rebuilding of the infrastructure in the affected

An amount of Rs 2 lakh ex gratia would be given to the next of kin of the deceased, while Rs 50,000 would be given to the injured persons.

During his visit to Odisha and West Bengal to review the situation arising out of cyclone Yaas, the Prime Minister undertook an aerial survey of the affected areas in Bhadrak and Baleswar districts in Odisha, and East Midnapore in West Bengal.

In Bhubaneswar, the Prime Minister chaired a meeting to re-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi conducts aerial survey of Cyclone Yaas hit parts of Odisha and West Bengal

## Mamata skips review meeting, meets Modi personally

Kolkata

IN a surprise development, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday skipped a review meeting conducted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Kalaikunda Air Force Station near Kharagpur to assess the damages caused by severe cyclonic storm Yaas that hit the state on Wednesday. The review meeting snowballed into a political controversy after Banerjee personally met the Prime Minister before the meeting and submitted a copy of the damages caused by the cyclone to him.

She even left the Air Force Station before the meeting commenced.

Sources in the administration confirmed that Banerjee had asked for a separate meeting with Modi ahead of the review meeting convened by the Prime Minister. Accordingly, a slot of 15 minutes was allotted during which Banerjee submitted a detailed report of the damages caused by the storm, mainly in three districts, to Modi.

Though there has been no official briefing on the meeting between the two leaders so far, sources close to the Chief Minister confirmed that the state government has submitted in the report that Bengal incurred damage to the tune of Rs 15,000 crore due to the severe cyclonic storm.

view the relief and rehabilitation measures undertaken so far.

The Prime Minister was briefed that the maximum damage due to cyclone Yaas happened in Odisha, and in some parts of West Bengal and Jharkhand.

Modi assured the people of Odisha, West Bengal and Jharkhand that the Centre will work closely with the state governments at this difficult time, and extend all possible assistance for the restoration and rebuilding of the infrastructure in the affected areas

The Prime Minister expressed his solidarity with all those who suffered due to the cyclone and expressed deep sorrow to the families which lost their kin during the calamity.

"We have to continue the focus on more scientific management of disasters. As the frequency and impact of cyclonic storms are increasing in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, communication systems, mitigation efforts and preparedness have to undergo a major change," Modi said.

He also spoke about the importance of building trust among the people for better cooperation in relief efforts.

Modi appreciated the preparedness and disaster management measures of the Odisha government which resulted in minimal loss of lives. He also noted that the state has embarked on long-term mitigation efforts to deal with natural disasters gum

## Naxal-hit Bastar gets roads, river bridges, security camps



Raipur

A total of 28 camps for security forces were set up in the last two years in Chhattisgarh's Naxal-affected Bastar region to facilitate and accelerate development works, the state government said on Friday. In a statement issued by the state public relations department, the Congress government under Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel said inaccessible Naxal-hit areas of Bastar, where it was difficult to even walk, has roads, electricity supply, education and health facilities now.

"To add momentum to development works, 28 security forces camps were set up in different areas of Bastar in the last two years. With the establishment of these facilities, development works have been acceler-

ated," the statement said. Since December, 2108, when the Congress came to power in the state after 15 years of BJP rule, 21 roads have been built in Maoisthit areas, while remote areas are being connected through a network of about 700 kilometres of roads. These include the Bijapur-Awapalli-Jagrgunda, Narayanpur-Palli-Barsur, Antagarh-Bedma, Chintanapalli-Nayapara, Chintal Nar-Madai Guda, Konta-Golla Palli roads etc, it informed.

"At the same time, about 450 kilometres of roads have been completed in the extreme Naxal-affected areas of Bastar during the coronavirus-enforced lock-down. Similarly, 132 bridge-culverts have been constructed during this period," the statement informed. A bridge built on the

Indravati River in Chhindanar village, expected to be functional by the end of June this year, will allow access to the forests of Abujhmad from Dantewada, thereby giving access to several villages on the other side, it said.

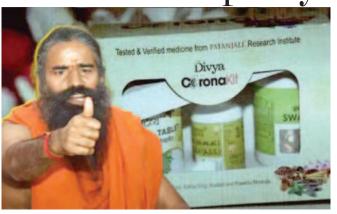
Inspector General of Police (Bastar range) Sundarraj P said the life of tribals has changed with the establishment of new camps. "Four bridges are being built on the Indravati River. Since Independence, there were only three bridges on the 200kilometre stretch of Indravati River, which will increase to seven by next year. Similarly, the Palli-Barsur, Basaguda- Jagargunda and Usur-Pameed roads, which have been closed for the last 30 years, are being opened with the help of security forces," Sundarraj said. (PTI)

## UP BJP MLA backs Ramdev over comments on allopathy

Ballia

UTTAR Pradesh BJP MLA Surendra Singh has joined the row between Ramdev and the doctors' fraternity, saying the comments against the yoga guru are condemnable. The Bairia MLA took to Facebook on Thursday to back Ramdev for his remarks against allopathy and termed him a flag bearer of the Indian medicine system.

"Those robbing the society by making the present the medical system expensive are giving lessons on morality. People who sell tablets worth Rs 10 for Rs 100 in the field of allopathy are criminals in white clothes, not wellwishers of society," Singh said in a post on the social media platform. He, however, went on to say both allopathy and Ayurveda are helpful. "Allopathy is useful but Ayurveda is no less. Physicians



should serve the ailing people with this sense," the BJP MLA added. In a second post, he said, "I heartily congratulate the flag bearer of the Indian system of medicine, Ramdev ji. He has started the 'Swasth Bharat, Samarth Bharat Abhiyan' through Ayurveda." On Sunday,

Ramdev was forced to withdraw a statement made in the viral video clip in which he was heard questioning some of the medicines being used to treat the coronavirus infection and saying that "lakhs have died from taking allopathic medicines for COVID-19".

### Army averts fire tragedy in J&K's Udhampur district

Jammu

A major tragedy was averted after the Indian army's fire fighting trucks helped douse a raging fire at a chemical factory in Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir, officials said on Friday.

The army said that in the late hours of Thursday a major fire broke out at the Chemical factory in Battal Ballian industrial area in Udhampur. "A distress call from the Udhampur civil administration was received by the station commander, Military Garrison Udhampur, seeking army's assistance in dousing the raging fire," the army said.

"Three fire-fighting trucks of the army were immediately rushed to the spot and in collaboration with the fire tenders from the civil and Air Force, the fire was brought under control by the wee hours of Friday, though the factory was damaged," it added.

### **CAREER MOVE**



Newly recruited constables of Uttar Pradesh Provincial Armed Constabulary (UP-PAC) during their passing out parade in Moradahad on Friday



**TODAY'S QUOTE** 

India well-placed to tap AI tech

India is well-placed on the government and businesses fronts to leverage artificial intelligence (AI) in unique ways to solve challenges. The huge data now across systems has been generated and the time is right to apply AI across the board to India's most challenging issues - Nandan Nilekani, Aadhaar architect, Infosys co-founder



#### **HONOURS Icon Awards will celebrate success**

Global Icon Awards 2021 to recognise the various organisations and companies, entrepreneurs and service providers for their outstanding performance and achievements in their respective fields. These awards are going to be a small token of appreciation for the individuals who are pushing the boundaries.

FOREX (bu	n ₹)		
US Dollar	73.15	South	
Euro	89.18	African Rand	6.01
UAE Dirham	20.31	Hong Kong Dollar	10.73
Thai Baht	2.55	Japanese Yen	0.76
British Pound	103.84	New Zealand Dollar	53.06
Australian Dollar	56.54	Saudi Riyal	21.23
Canadian Dollar	60.57	Swedish Krona	10.05
Swiss Franc	81.47	Singapore Dollar	55.84

DELHI SATURDAY 29 MAY 2021

### **BIZ BRIEFS**

### **ASCI** norms for digital media

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) unveiled the final guidelines for influencer advertising on digital media. The draft guidelines initially were issued in February and feedback from all stakeholders advertisers, agencies, influencers and consumers – was sought. To ensure a collaborative process and expert inputs, ASCI tied up with Big Bang Social, a leading marketplace for social storytelling, to get India's leading digital influencers' views on board. The guidelines will be applicable to commercial messages or advertisements published on or after June 14, 2021. The guidelines make it mandatory for influencers to label the promotional content they post. Subhash Kamath, Chairman, ASCI, said: "We received an overwhelming positive engagement and feedback from influencers and others for the draft guidelines, as well as suggestions to finetune and clarify some points."

#### **Corteva ties up** with NGOs

Corteva Agriscience, a global agriculture company, is collaborating with local governments and non-profit organizations (NGO) to fight against the pandemic. Keeping in line with its CSR goals to safeguard the community and to address urgent needs, the company is serving more than 2,000 patients every day at 13 Covid care centers in Delhi, Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Ranchi, Lucknow, Savli and other cities in India. These Covid care centers are set up in hospitals in some locations, others are set up as dedicated quarantine centers equipped with oxygen facilitated beds, 24X7 doctor consultation, nursing staff and access to ambulance facilities. Rahoul Sawani, President South Asia, Corteva Agriscience said: "With the severity of the second wave of Covid-19, we see an important role for us in supporting communities in overcoming

## India sees steep fall in new jobs in FY21

**SBI Research reveals that India's economy** has added 16.9 lakh less jobs in FY21

NET job creation in the economy fell by 16.9 lakh in FY21 over the previous fiscal, shows an SBI Research analysis of EPFO payroll data.

However, the FY21 numbers are better than the FY20 net job creation, which had declined by 28.9 lakh, further cementing the view that the economy is not creating new employment op-

portunities. The latest EPFO data shows that net new EPF subscribers stood at 94.5 lakh in FY21, and NPS added 5.82 lakh, taking the cumulative net addition to 100.4 lakh, which is marginally down from 102.3 lakh in FY20.

However, according to Soumya Kanti Ghosh, SBI's group chief economic adviser, "this does not represent the correct picture as the data include the number of exited members who re-joined and re-subscribed, and thus not fresh job creation.

"An estimate of the actual net new payroll (first job) adjusted for re-joined/re-subscribed members and formalization (based on ECR data), shows the actual net new payroll is only 44 lakh is FY21, which is 16.9 lakh less than the net new payroll generated in FY20, when the new payroll declined by almost 28.9 lakh," he said. Ghosh also said most of the 44 lakh additions are low quality jobs. The second job (or the exited members who re-joined and resubscribed) rose by 17.9 lakh in FY21. However, the number of new members who joined declined by 6.9 lakh in FY21 compared to an increase of 1.5 lakh in FY20. This indicates that lower number of people exited from job market in search for better/new iobs (which was obviously scarce during the pandemic-hit year).

HANS BUSINESS



"A breakup of the 95.4 lakhs job created by the EPFO payrolls, 41.2 lakh were through second jobs, 44 lakh through first jobs and 9.3 lakh were through formalization," he said. Ghosh added that the official numbers did not capture the 16.9 lakh decline in first-time jobs in FY21, though the number of second time jobs or those members who rejoined the payroll rose by 17.9 lakh. Even the rate of formalisation declined by 1.2 lakh, reflecting the disruptions in MSME sector. "Cumulatively, total payroll generation of EPFO and NPS was almost 19 lakh less than the previous fiscal," he says, adding in the private sector, most job losses were in smaller companies.

# Nifty hits record high as RIL zooms

Sensex soars 308 pts, NSE index gains 98 pts to end at 15,435.65 pts

**M**UMBAI

RISING for the sixth session on the trot, the NSE Nifty closed at a fresh lifetime high on Friday, powered by a robust rally in index heavyweight Reliance Industries.

The rupee's rising streak and daily Covid-19 cases falling below the 2-lakh mark also spurred bullish sentiment, traders said. The Nifty surged 97.80 points or 0.64 per cent to finish at 15,435.65, closing at a record high for the second straight day. The 30-share BSE Sensex ended 307.66 points or 0.60 per cent higher at 51,422.88.

Reliance Industries hogged the limelight in Friday's session, topping the Sensex gainers' chart with a jump of 5.90 per cent. M&M spurted 2.13 per cent after the homegrown auto major swung into black in the March quarter with a profit after tax (PAT) of Rs 163 crore. HDFC twins, Kotak Bank, IndusInd Bank, ITC and Bharti Airtel were among the other gainers, climbing as much as 1.47 per cent.

On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Bajaj Finserv, Nestle India, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank and Dr Reddy's were among the laggards, tumbling up to 4.30 per cent. During the week, the Sensex rallied 882.40 points or 1.74 per cent, while the broader Nifty



surged 260.35 points or 1.71 per cent. "Domestic equities remained upbeat and recorded fresh high as improved prospects of economy recovery and strong 4QFY21 earnings continued to bolster investors' sentiments. A strong rebound in Reliance Industries was a key driving force," said Binod Modi, Head Strategy at Reliance Securities.

Sustained market rally added over Rs 3 trillion in investors' wealth this week, with the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies crossing the landmark \$3 trillion during the week, he noted. Further, a sharp drop in daily Covid-19 caseload in second wave (remaining below 2 lakhs despite higher testing) and improvement in recovery rates have emboldened investors in the last couple of days, he said.

Vinod Nair, Head of Research

at Geojit Financial Services, said, "Constant fall in US dollar is driving the Indian equity market in addition to the falling infection rate. The sustenance of the rally is supported by the recent improvement in foreign investment with the stabilising US yield and drop in the dollar index. INR is regularly appreciating against \$."

BSE energy, oil and gas, telecom, metal and finance indices rallied up to 4.35 per cent, while healthcare, power, utilities and consumer durables were in the red. Broader BSE midcap and smallcap indices underperformed the benchmark, dropping up to 0.48 per cent. World markets remained upbeat following reports that US President Joe Biden will unveil a huge \$6 trillion budget for 2022 as the economy emerges from the Covid-19 lockdown.

Elsewhere in Asia, bourses in Hong Kong, Seoul and Tokyo ended on a positive note, while Shanghai was in the red. Stock exchanges in Europe were also trading with gains in mid-session deals. International oil benchmark Brent crude was trading 0.25 per cent higher at \$69.37 per barrel. The rupee strengthened for the third straight session to close 15 paise higher at 72.45 against the US dollar.

### **NCC clocks** ₹115 crore net in Q4

HANS BUSINESS HYDERABAD

CITY-BASED NCC Ltd has reported a net profit of Rs 115.49 crore in Jan-March quarter. The operations of the company have resulted in an EBIDTA of Rs 289.74 crore and a turnover of Rs 2,618 crore in fourth quarter. In the corresponding quarter of the previous year the company has reported a turnover of Rs 2,182 crore. The company has logged an EPS of Rs 1.89 crore as against Rs 1.82 crore in the corresponding quarter of the previous year.

The infra major has reported a turnover of Rs 7,256 crore for the financial year 2020-21 as against Rs 8,219 crore in the previous year. The Company has posted an EBIDTA of Rs 8,54.48 crore and a net profit of Rs 261.13 crore as against Rs 1,030.15 crore and Rs 382.04 crore respectively in the previous year. The company has reported an EPS of Rs 4.28 crore for FY 2021 as against Rs 6.34 crore in the previous year. The Board of Directors at their meeting held on Friday have recommended equity dividend of 40 per cent (Rs 0.80 per share of Rs 2 each) on the paid up capital of Rs 121.97 crore subject to the approval of the shareholders at the annual general meeting.

### **Ketto sees 250x rise in memorial fundraisers**

HANS BUSINESS

HYDERABAD: Ketto.org, a crowdfunding platform, records an unprecedented surge in memorial fundraisers. Historically, the company has hosted over 2,200 fundraisers so far and raised over Rs 144 crore, but ever since the pandemic started. Ketto has seen an increase of 250 times in memorial over 600 fundraisers and raised around Rs 31 crore during the pandemic.

With an intent to honour the loss of a loved one, memorial fundraisers are usually started by friends and colleagues to offer financial support to the family of the deceased, especially in cases of children's education or whose income was dependent on the defundraisers. The platform has hosted ceased. VarunSheth, CEO and co- abad contributing around 9 per cent."

founder Ketto.org, said, "We are noticing an unusual increase in memorial fundraisers and contributions coming across major cities like Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. In the last year, we have raised more than Rs 30 crore with the highest amounts being raised from Mumbai at 15 per cent followed by Delhi and Bengaluru at 12 per cent each and Chennai and Hyder-

**REAL CORNER** 

### **MEIL's 3 cryogenic tanks arrive**



The second batch of three cryogenic oxygen tanks out of the 11 being imported by infrastructure major Megha Engineering and Infrastructures Limited (MEIL) landed in Air Force Station Begumpet on Friday. An Indian Air Force IL 76 Air Craft has took off from Chandigarh Air base to Bangkok in Thailand and airlifted the three cryogenic tanks and touchdown at Hyderabad. The remaining five tanks will reach Hyderabad within few days, MEIL is importing these tanks to provide medical oxygen free of cost to hospitals treating Covid patients.

## RESIDENTIAL REALTY WILL **TAKE 2 YRS TO RECOVER**

### **Demand will touch pre-pandemic level only after FY23, says Crisil**

Mumbai

THE residential real estate sector demand will touch the pre-pandemic levels only after 2022-23, a domestic ratings agency said on Thursday. The top-six markets of Bengaluru, Hyderabad, the National Capital Region (NCR), Kolkata, Pune and Mumbai will collectively grow five-ten per cent by area in 2021-22 on improved affordability and work from home needs, Crisil said.

Two of these six markets, Pune and Mumbai, will show a contraction because of the stamp duty cut-fuelled demand in the previous fiscal year, it said. "Demand in Bengaluru, Hyderabad, the National Capital Region (NCR) and Kolkata is set to rise 40-45 per cent this fiscal after plunging 25-45 per cent last fiscal, propelled by better affordability and lower base," its Director Isha Chaudhary said.

The Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) and Pune will likely see a contraction of 10-20 per cent this fiscal, after a 5-15 per cent growth last fiscal, with endusers concluding transactions to benefit from lower stamp duty, Chaudhary added. The agency said demand in the first half of this fiscal will be impacted by the



second wave of the pandemic but a healthy recovery is pre-pandemic lev-2023," it said.

expected in the second half, much like the previous fiscal. "Absolute demand will catch up with els only after fiscal Affordability has

improved by up to 30 per cent in lished developers with a strong the six cities during the past five years because of low interest rates, moderate price correction

**MMR** and Pune will likely see a contraction of 10-20 per cent this fiscal, after a 5-15 per cent growth last fiscal, with end-users concluding transactions to

benefit from lower

stamp duty

and reduction in stamp duty (especially in Maharashtra in fiscal 2021), the agency said. Established developers with well-managed balance sheets would grow faster than the industry, consolidate their presence, and sustain their credit profiles, the agency said. The estab-

track record of timely delivery increased their market share to 25 per cent last fiscal from 21 per

cent in FY20, as they recovered faster in the second half and maintained, or even exceeded, pre-pandemic sales, it said.

Anand Kulkarni, a director at the agency, said the well established developers raised Rs 44,000 crore in the last five years via equity, and land and commercial assets monetisation. He added that the improved financials will help tackle stress from the second wave, meet growth needs and keep their credit profiles stable

Some mid-sized, regional developers, which have historically maintained low leverage, are also expected to sustain their credit profiles, the agency said. However, leveraged developers dependent on debt as the primary source of capital will continue to struggle, crippled by high debt-tototal assets ratio of above 60 per cent, weak liquidity and limited ability to raise equity and monetise commercial assets. The agency expects a slowdown in new launches this fiscal, and developers to focus on sale of ready or near-complete properties, leading to a gradual reduction in inventory. It added that the impact of the pandemic on employment and incomes will also be monitored.

### **Listed realty** players' sales share widens amid Covid

NEW DELHI: The overall housing sales share of the top eight listed realty players has surged amid the pandemic. As per latest Anarock data, out of the total sales of around 93,140 units in the first nine months of FY21 across the top seven cities, the top eight listed players' share stood at 22 per cent while nonlisted leading players' share was 18 per cent. Non-branded developers accounted for a 60 per cent share. In contrast, of the total 2.03 lakh units sold in top seven cities in FY17, the share of these top eight listed players was the lowest at about 6 per cent while that of non-listed leading players stood at 11 per cent and others (non-branded) had a whopping 83 per cent share.

The increased share of these top eight listed players over the years provides a clear roadmap of home buyers' evolving preferences.The top eight listed developers considered are Brigade Enterprises, Godrej Properties, Kolte-Patil, Mahindra Lifespaces, Oberoi Realty, Prestige Estates, Puravankara, and

The top listed players together sold as much as 21.23 million square feet area in the first three quarters of financial year 2021 despite the first wave of Covid-19, rising by 2 per cent against the corresponding period in FY20, when 20.88 million square feet were sold.

### Timeline extension for projects by 9 mths likely

**HOUSING** and Urban Affairs Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra on Friday said the government will look into various demand of the real estate industry, including an extension of timeline for completion of projects by 6-9 months.

He highlighted various initiatives taken by the government in the past seven years such as development of 1.12 crore houses under the Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY), launch of the Affordable Rental

Housing Complex scheme for migrant workers, 'infrastructure' status to affordable housing, and 100 smart cities. Mishra was addressing a webinar organised by realtors body Naredco.

Naredco's representatives made several demands before the secretary to revive both demand and supply in the sector that has been badly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The association sought extension of timeline for completion of projects by 6-9 months under the realty law RERA, extension of all building permissions till March 2023, rationalisation of government taxes on real estate, and control of rising prices of cement and steel.

It also sought reintroduction of interest subvention scheme, grant of input credit tax on GST

paid in leased commercial real estate, suspension of insolvency law for some more period, and an online environment clear-

ance system. Responding to the demand of extension of timeline for project completion, Mishra assured that he will "go in detail" to understand the matter.



"If need be, we will take this matter to RAC (RERA Advisory Council)," he said.

However, the secretary did mention that this relief was given last year because of the imposition of the national lockdown. On high taxes levied by the central and state governments on real estate, Mishra directed the ministry"s senior officials to examine the matter in detail.

"We will try to reduce govern-

ment levies," he said. Regarding a rise in prices of steel and cement, Mishra said he took up this issue with the ministry's concerned and would discuss the issue again.

On the PMAY, he said 1.13 crore houses have already been sanctioned and out of that, 48 lakh have been completed and handed over to the people.

## **Tokyo hopes end for Srikanth, Saina**

### BWF says no further events in qualifying window

change.

months

tant

respite from the

New Delhi

KIDAMBI Srikanth and Saina Nehwal's slim hopes of qualifying for Tokyo Games ended after the game's governing body (BWF) on Friday made it clear there will not be any change in the current ranking list and no further tournament will be held inside the qualification period.

Former world no 1 Srikanth and London Games bronze-medallist Saina's hopes were all but dashed when the last of the Olympic qualifiers in Singapore was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The duo had hung on a slim hope when the governing body said it "will issue a further statement on Tokyo Olympics qualifying at a later date".

"The Badminton World Federation (BWF) can confirm no further tournaments will be played inside the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games qualifying window," the apex body said in a statement on Friday.

"As such, while the qualification period officially closes 15 June 2021 as per the Revised Tokyo 2020 Qualification System, the

postpone the last three qualifiers -- India Open, Malaysia Open and Singapore Open, current Race To Tokyo rankings list will not leaving players, including Srikanth and Saina, with no chance to earn a qualifi-

Owing to the health crisis, the world body had "The Olympic qualification earlier revised the process is in effect closed as there are no additional opqualification period, extending it by nearly two to June 15 after postponement of three imporevents. However, with no

portunities for players to earn points," BWF secretary general Thomas Lund said. "However, we still need to receive confirmations from National Olympic Committees and Member Associations, followed by any possible reallocations, and this will take a number of

pandemic, BWF was forced to cancel or weeks to complete."

According to the qualification rules, the top 16 players - a maximum of two players each in men's and women's singles from a country - as on June 15 will gain direct entries.

The BWF said "invitations will be sent shortly with final participation lists and seedings to be published at the conclusion of this process." Indian shuttlers who

have already made the cut for the Olympics include PV Sindhu, B Sai Praneeth and the men's doubles pairing of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy. (PTI)

> bossinov. The Indian played the waiting

### Amit Panghal storms into final of Asian Boxing C'ship

DEFENDING champion Amit Panghal (52kg) out-punched familiar foe Saken Bibossinov of Kazakhstan to enter the finals of the Asian Boxing Championships here on Friday.

The top-seeded Indian defeated Bibossinov 5-0. The Kazakh is a world championship bronze-medallist and had lost to silver-winner Panghal in the semifinals of that event as well. Panghal was in top form as he took control with his sharp counter-attacks against the defensively weaker Bi-

game to perfection as the thirdseeded Bibossinov's plan to dazzle him with early aggression fell flat as the bout progressed. The world number one from Haryana became the aggressor in the final round as Bibossinov ran out of

On Thursday night, four Indian women boxers had advanced to the finals. Six-time world cham-

buatsaihi (64kg), Pooja Rani (75kg) and Anupama (+81kg) won their bouts to make the summit

pion M C Mary Kom (51kg), Lal-

Of these, Pooja got a walkover after her opponent pulled out. It was heartbreak for two-time world youth champion Sakshi Choudhary (54kg)

as she lost her final spot

after her rival, top-seeded Kazakh Dina Zholaman, successfully challenged the narrow victory that she had clinched in the last-four stage. Sakshi had prevailed 3-2 in the regulation bout but the decision was challenged by the Kazakh team and eventually overturned. (PTI)

### **Talking points** ahead of the **Champions League final**

LONDON

MANCHESTER City and Chelsea meet in an all-English Champions League final in Porto on Saturday. Here are some of the talking points in the match:

**GUARDIOLA VS. TUCHEL It's a** meeting of two of the sharpest minds in soccer, seven years after Guardiola and Tuchel were first properly acquainted - in a Munich restaurant where they talked tactics for hours using salt and pepper shakers as props and were so animated that waiters were too afraid to interrupt. Guardiola is the "benchmark," according to Tuchel, and is looking to win the 27th major trophy (excluding Spanish Super Cups and English Community Shields) of his 13-year coaching career. It's his third Champions League final - a first in 10 years - and he won his first two at Barcelona. Tuchel became the first coach to reach back-toback finals with different clubs, having lost last year's title match with Paris Saint-Germain. The pair are so tactically astute that they are prone to overthinking in big matches, Indeed, whoever has more clarity in his thinking is likely to emerge victorious.

TOO RESTED? The teams have had contrasting builduns to the final. While City was able to rotate its lineup in the last weeks of the Premier League with the title wrapped up early, Chelsea was at full tilt through the end of the season to secure a top-four finish. NO STRIKERS Get ready for a strikerless final - kind of. City is sure to go into the match without a genuine striker, with center forwards Sergio Aguero and Gabriel Jesus on the bench and attacking midfielders Kevin De Bruyne and Bernardo Silva alternating as "false nines." It's not the first time Guardiola has adopted this tactic - he did so often at Barcelona but he has never had a team that spreads the goals around as much City's class of 2020-21 does.

Chelsea is also likely to start without the presence of an outand-out striker. Timo Werner should start but potentially in a deeper, inside-left role. Mason Mount and either Christian Pulisic or Kai Havertz — all three being attacking midfielders - will complete Chelsea's forward line. **DEFENSES RULE It's unlikely to be** a goal-fest at Estádio do Dragão. City and Chelsea had the best two defensive records both in the Premier League — conceding 32 and 36 goals, respectively - and in the group stage of the Champions League - conceding one goal and two goals, respectively. In the knockout stage, the teams conceded only five goals (two by Chelsea, three by City) between them in 12 games. Chelsea's revival under Tuchel since his arrival in January has centered around being tight at the back and smothering the midfield through the energy of N'Golo Kante and Mateo Kovacic and the positioning of Jorginho. "We want to be annoying, a horrible team to play against," Chelsea defender Andreas Christensen said. City, meanwhile, has been transformed by the September signing of center back Ruben Dias, a 23-year-old Portugal international who has played like a veteran. (AP)

## Our preparation far from being ideal, expected lot more from Qatar association: Stimac

'I'm confident India will qualify for 2023 AFC Asian Cup'

"If I knew that everything will be like it is today, I would never accept to be honest. We

could organise such games in such way in India also. At the end we lost possibility of playing two home games," Stimac told reporters during a virtual interaction.

"Here we are now, not in great conditions. This is far away from a proper preparation for the World Cup qualifiers, but it is what it is. This is not a proper football work which needs to be obtained before the World Cup qualifiers."

Frustrated with the arrangements, Stimac continued: "I'm well aware that Qatar is future host of the World Cup, and we all know about the great facilities for football teams.

"But, as a coach, personally I expected a lot more from this organisation. I know that we changed all our plans due to the pandemic. I say a big thank you to Oatar government for allowing us to come over here." Under the current circumstances, the In-

dian players are forced to practice on the corridor, in front of their respective rooms, the 53-year-old Croatian World Cupper said. "I didn't expect this. I expected as a coach that we're going to have a possibility of using

"We are doing our morning sessions in the hall in front of our rooms, and our players are eating delivery food, which is left in front of our rooms. That's not proper preparation for a football players, I'm quite sure that the Qatari team is not in the same position.'

Stimac said they are forced to go through all this despite being tested COVID-19 negative three times. "We were tested three times already, all the tests are negative. Why we don't have a proper meeting hall, so we can discuss and analyse our opponents, why we don't have a possibility of spending more time together, eating together. Instead of that we have one chance going out in the evenings for the training session, that's all."

With India reeling under a second wave of the pandemic, most of the players, barring the ones from Bengaluru FC and FC Goa who were involved in the AFC club tournaments, have not played any match since the ISL got over earlier this year.

But Stimac is hopeful that they would make the Asian Cup. Currently placed third with three points, India still have a bright chance to make the continental showpiece even if they finish last in their group. "I'm very confident that at the end of this journey, we will be in the AFC Cup. I know that our actual situation at the moment is far from ideal. The Qatar team is fully prepared.

"The Bangladesh side was playing in their league until recently. They will be much better prepared. 23 out of 28 players in the Afghanistan side are playing in Europe or in the United States, so they will be in full

"On the other hand, you know the situation of our team. But what I can promise to all of you we're going to give everything we have at the moment, playing these games. Our

players will leave each atom of energy on the field, will do everything to get as many points as possible in these matches to qualify for the for the AFC Asian Cup. We can judge ourselves after that."

Stimac said they are eying a third-place finish in the group to make the cut. "We will try everything to finish third but if it's not possible, from whichever position we start further, we're going to do everything and qualify for the AFC cup."

The Indian team is bolstered by the return of their talismanic captain Sunil Chhetri who missed the two international friendlies in March due to COVID-19.

"Having Sunil Chhetri back is great for all of us. But we also need to be clever here, because there are three games in few days, so I need to be careful in where I use him."

The former Croatian coach's contract is up for renewal having served a two-year tenure already. "I'm not thinking about that (renewal). I'm fully concentrated on the job I need to do here. Everybody knows that in last 12 months we didn't have any action." (PTI)

### **World Test Championship Final**

### India, NZ to be adjudged joint winners in case of draw or tie

**D**UBAI

KOLKATA

LIVID with the strict guarantine arrange-

ments in Qatar, Indian football team head

ration is "far from being ideal" for the up-

coach Igor Stimac on Friday said their prepa-

coming World Cup and Asian Cup Qualifiers.

Already out of contention for a World Cup

berth, India will face Asian champions Qatar

on June 3 before taking on Bangladesh (June

7) and Afghanistan (June 15) in their remain-

ing group E matches, with an aim to qualify

The Sunil Chhetri-led Blue Tigers, who

were originally slated to reach Qatar on May

30, advanced their arrival to May 19. As per

the strict quarantine, they are not allowed to

train in gym, use the meeting hall or even eat

for the 2023 Asian Cup in China.

INDIA and New Zealand will be adjudged joint winners of the inaugural World Test Championship if their final clash in Southampton ends in a draw or tie, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Friday.

According to the playing conditions unveiled by the global body, "a draw or a tie will see both teams crowned as joint winners..." The ICC has also allocated a Reserve Day to make up for any lost time during the regular days of the Final, scheduled to be played from 18 to 22 June, with 23 June set aside as the Reserve Day. "Both of these decisions were made in

June 2018, prior to the commencement of the ICC World Test Championship." The Reserve Day has been scheduled

to ensure five full days of play, and it will only be used if lost playing time cannot be recovered through the normal provisions for each day. "There will be no additional day's play if a positive result is not achieved after five full days of play and the match will be declared a draw in such a scenario," the ICC stated.

In the event of time being lost during the match, the ICC match referee will regularly update the teams and media about the way in which the Reserve Day may be used. The final decision on whether the Reserve Day needs to be used will be announced at the scheduled start of the last hour on the fifth day. While India play at home with SG Test and New Zealand use Kookaburra at home, the final will be played with Grade

The final will also feature the implementation of three changes to international playing conditions, which were brought into effect with the ongoing World Cup Super League series between Bangladesh and Sri Lanka:

Short Runs -- The Third Umpire will automatically review any call of a 'short run' by the on-field umpire and communicate the decision prior to the next ball being bowled.

Player Reviews -- The fielding captain or the dismissed batsman will be able confirm with the umpire whether a genuine attempt has been made to play the ball prior to deciding whether to initiate a review for LBW. DRS Reviews -- For LBW reviews, the height margin of the wicket zone has been lifted to the top of t h e stumps to ensure the same Umpire's Call margin around the stumps both for height and



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