

## Bharat Biotech hits out at critics, says carried out '200 pc honest' trials of corona vaccine

HYDERABAD, Jan 4: Amid questions raised by industry experts and opposition parties on the emergency approval to its coronavirus vaccine without publication of efficacy data, Bharat Biotech's chairman on Monday hit out at critics saying his firm had carried out "200 per cent honest clinical trials".

At a media conference, Krishna Ella said his firm has a track record of producing safe and efficacious vaccines and was transparent with all data.

"We are not just conducting clinical trials in India. We have done clinical trials in more than 12 countries including the UK," he said. "Many people are just gossiping everything in a different direction to just backlash on Indian companies, that is not right for us. We don't deserve that."

Covaxin addresses an unmet medical need and has generated excellent safety data with robust immune response to multiple viral proteins that persist, he said.

Ella said his company had carried out "200 per cent honest clinical trials".

"Give me one week's time, I will give you confirmed data," he said.

Bharat Biotech has manufactured 16 vaccines, he said. "Don't accuse us of inexperience. We are a global company."

Without naming Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla, who had termed vaccines other than that of Pfizer, Moderna and Oxford-AstraZeneca as "just like water", Ella said, "We do 200 per cent honest clinical trials and yet we receive backlash. If I am wrong, tell me. Some companies have branded me like water."

He also said the Bharat Biotech vaccine is not inferior to that developed by Pfizer.

Ella said it was wrong to say Bharat Biotech was not transparent with data and went on to cite the number of publications by the company in comparison with industry peers.

"People should have the patience to read and see how

many articles we have published," he said. "We are the only company that has got such extensive experience and publication (in peer reviewed journals)."

The approval by the Indian drug regulator to Covaxin without revealing its efficacy results has been questioned by industry experts and opposition Congress.

"Don't accuse us of inexperience... We are not just an Indian company, we are truly a global company," Ella said, adding Covaxin Phase-3 efficacy data will be available by March.

No interim analysis of efficacy in Phase 3 has been done so far, he said.

Defending the decision to award Covaxin emergency approval, he said the emergency use authorisation was based on 2019 rules of the Government of India and went on to state that even the US grants emergency authorisation to a company with good immunisation data.

Bharat Biotech was the first to identify the Zika virus and the first to file global patents for the Zika and Chikungunya vaccines, he said. "It is not correct to say that we are not transparent with data... We don't deserve the backlash."

He further said the company has already produced 20 million doses of Covaxin and is aiming to achieve 700 million doses capacity in four facilities -- three in Hyderabad and one in Bengaluru by 2021. (PTI)

## Even one year after allotment PWD works worth crores yet to start: JMC Chairman

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: Chairman, Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC), Baldev Singh Billawaria today said that even after one year or more of allotment, several PWD works worth crores are yet to start in Gandhi Nagar Constituency, causing much inconvenience to the public.

"The Modi Government at the centre has opened doors for the development of J&K and as soon as any proposal of development project is sent to Centre, it is sanctioned without any delay but some departments in the J&K UT itself are hell bent on hindering the development" Billawaria said while addressing a press conference in the premises of Municipal Corporation.

He alleged that after getting allotment, contractors have been sitting on various development projects, particularly blacktopping of roads in Kunjwani, Digiana and Gangyal. There is huge resentment among residents of these areas over prolonged delay in execution of the projects.

Billawaria said that a delega-

tion of people living nearby Government Middle School Digiana, met him yesterday and expressed resentment over delay in completion of construction work of the school building worth Rs 30 lakh.

Similarly, he said a delegation of people from different areas like Kunjwani, Digiana and Gangyal also met him and threatened to block the national highway, while registering their protest over non-execution of blacktopping works worth Rs 5-6 crores, already allotted to the contractors.

The JMC Chairman said it is a matter of probe as to why the contractors are not executing the projects even after getting allotment and why the officers/officials of PWD are not taking action against them. Is there any collusion between the contractors and officers/officials, he questioned.

Billawaria appealed Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to blacklist all the contractors who failed to complete the projects in a fixed time frame or are delaying the execution of developmental projects after bagging the tenders. He also demanded the LG administration to take action against the officers/officials responsible for delay of projects.

Billawaria appealed Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha to blacklist all the contractors who failed to complete the projects in a fixed time frame or are delaying the execution of developmental projects after bagging the tenders. He also demanded the LG administration to take action against the officers/officials responsible for delay of projects.



Families of two youth who were killed in Lawaypora encounter staging protest in Srinagar. -Excelsior/Shakeel

## Police releases videos asking 'ultras' to surrender Families of "militants" killed in Lawaypora protest

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Jan 4: The families of two youth who were termed as militants killed during an encounter between security forces in Lawaypora on December 30 today protested here demanding mortal remains of their wards be returned to them.

The families of two youth include Athar Mushtaq Wani from Pulwama and Zubair Ahmad Lone from Shopian districts assembled in the Press Enclave and asked for the justice to be delivered to them.

Father of Athar, one who was also killed during the encounter,

that their son was innocent and that they fail to understand that on what basis he has been "labelled as a militant."

Zubair's brother who is a cop by profession on the occasion demanded an inquiry into the matter to make sure that such incidents are not repeated in future.

The family said that he was not in Srinagar on the said day and was at Lassipora which is nearby. They also said that they have approached the concerned SHO concerned in this regard and who has told them to approach SSP.

And in the meantime, Police today released two brief videos in which army personnel can be heard offering surrender to "trapped militants" inside a house at Hokersar Lawaypora here on December 29 last and as also next day.

"On 29/12/20 evening after the cordon at Hokersar, troops are repeatedly appealing the trapped (militants) to come out and surrender with assurances that they will not be harmed," police said in the tweet. In the 27-second a drone can be seen outside hovering around house while an army man makes offer of surrender: "You are given a chance to surrender. Leave weapons and come out. We assure you that you will not be harmed. Hands up and come out."

Later, a 26-second video was released, dated 30 December 2020, and army is heard asking the militants: "Do you want to surrender?"

\* Watch video on [www.excelsiornews.com](http://www.excelsiornews.com)

while waiting said that the authorities should handover the body of his son to him so that the family can perform the last rites

Athar's sister, while giving details about her brother said that he (Athar) did not inform the family where he was going and left in the afternoon. She said that they called him in the evening when he did not return, "but we found his mobile switched off."

She added that the next day morning they got a call from a police officer who informed the family that their son has been killed in a gunfight. She impressed that her brother was innocent and that justice must be delivered to them.

The family of Zubair Ahmad who was among three killed in the gunfight also held a protest at the Press Enclave and impressed

## Samagra Shiksha, SWD observe World Braille Day

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: Samagra Shiksha J&K and Social Welfare Department (SWD) Jammu today observed World Braille Day to mark the 212th birth anniversary of Louis Braille, who had invented the Braille script.

The Day was observed by Samagra Shiksha by organizing



Director SWD Jammu, Smita Sethi addressing inmates and teachers at Residential School for Blind, Roop Nagar, Jammu.

a webinar on the theme "Quality Education for Visually Impaired". Around 100 Special Educators and Teachers participated in the webinar.

On the occasion, Kamalbir Singh Jaggi from National Institute for Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD) delivered an informative lecture. Jaggi, who himself is visually impaired, shared his experiences saying that no disability can stop an individual to achieve success in life provided the motivation is maintained.

In a message, Advisor to Lieutenant Governor, R R Bhatnagar, extended greetings on World Braille Day to teachers, parents and students. He said that Government is striving hard to provide barrier free access for all children with disabilities as per the RPWD Act.

Administrative Secretary School Education, B K Singh, revealed that focus of school

among children through DBT Mode. Moreover, different aids/appliances like daisy player, braille kits, smart canes, smart phones have also been distributed among eligible children during medical assessment camps," he added.

The Day was observed by Social Welfare Department Jammu in a function held here at Residential School for Blind, Roop Nagar, Jammu.

Director Social Welfare Jammu, Smita Sethi was the chief guest on the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, the Director emphasized on the need to provide best possible facilities to the specially-abled persons/children for their holistic development and stressed on the development of suitable infrastructural facilities for their assimilation in the society.

District Social Welfare Officer Jammu, Ajay Salaan also apprised about the various achievements of the inmates of the Residential School for the Blinds Jammu. He was informed that the intake capacity of the RSFB has been increased from 25 to 50 inmates and efforts are being made to ensure that benefits of various schemes and programmes reach the specially-abled persons.

The Children of the participating school and other artists showcased their talent and mesmerized the audience with their performances.

Among others present were Chief Account officer, Archani Kumara; Deputy Director Social Welfare, Afsan Massod; Deputy legal remembrance Jammu, Shabana Durrani; Assistant Director Social Welfare, Kailash Devi and Assistant Director (ADM) Ranbireswar S Jamwal.

education is gradually moving towards Inclusive Education. He said that 21 disabilities have been identified as per RPwD Act, 2016 and every possible effort is being made to identify and enroll these children into mainstream education.

Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, Dr Arun Manhas, while addressing the webinar, apprised that National Education Policy-2020 focuses on inclusiveness in schools. He informed that Samagra Shiksha J&K have distributed 42 Laptops among all the districts for enhancing the capacity of Braille Tactile Readers.

"Besides, more than 3500 spectacles have been distributed among Low Vision Children of the Union Territory and reader allowance @ Rs 2000 disbursed

## JKAP resents erratic power, water supply, dilapidated roads

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Jan 4: The Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party (JKAP) leaders and DDC members from Tangmarg and Kunzar today expressed deep concern over the pesky power situation, water scarcity and dilapidated condition of roads across Kashmir division especially in three tehsils of Tangmarg area.

In a joint statement issued here, Mir Tajamul Ishfaq DDC member from Tangmarg and Nazir Ahmad Sheikh DDC member from Kunzar said that though some appreciable agreements on power generation have been signed by the J&K Government but the same have long term effect.

They said that such measures cannot deal with the prevailing power crisis and the administration should take some immediate short term measures to mitigate the sufferings of the people who are already suffering from the chilling winter.

"The power supply is playing hide and seek with the people across the Kashmir division especially in Tangmarg, Karhama and Kunzar tehsils where people are suffering immensely for want of hassle free power supply. The inhabitants of these areas are hardly receiving one to two hours of power supply in unscheduled intervals," they remarked.

The two leaders of the Apni Party urged the Lt Governor to take up the power crisis issue with the Union Government so as to provide some sort of relief to the people of Kashmir who are presently braving a biting cold. "The power supply across the Valley needs to be augmented particularly in three tehsils of Tangmarg subdivision," they demanded.

Decrying the water supply scarcity in these areas, the two leaders remarked that the natives of these tehsils are immensely suffering from acute shortage of water supply.

"Inhabitants of these areas, especially the womenfolk are facing a woeful situation as they are supposed to fetch the drinking water from far off places to address their daily needs," they added.

The two leaders also asked the administration to clear the snow from roads connecting these three tehsils and the link roads with their adjoining areas. "Most of the roads, especially the connecting links have developed dilapidated conditions. The patients and elderly commuters fear to use these roads to reach their respective places. The R&B Deptt should address this grave issue so as to enable the commuters to use these roads in a hassle free manner," they demanded.

## 62 bovine animals rescued, 7 smugglers arrested

Excelsior Correspondent

UDHAMPUR, Jan 4: Udhampur Police foiled a major attempt of bovine smuggling and rescued 62 animals besides arresting seven smuggler at near Thard, here today

Based on reliable information regarding bovine smuggling, Police party of Police Station Udhampur, led by SHO Vijay Singh Choudhary, laid a naka near Thard National Highway area and intercepted seven accused, who were trying to smuggle 62 bovine animals by foot.

Police also seized two vehicles, bearing registration numbers JK02BW-1969 and JK02CG-9128, which were also being used by smugglers for illegal transportation of bovine animals

In this regard the Drug and Food Control Department issued a order wherein all the street food vendors of district Srinagar were informed to register them-



Residents including children during protest at Jagti.

## Residents hold protest, appeal LG admn to intervene

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: A protest was held by the residents of village Jagti against the closing of Tanda Simble Lehar link road for the locals by the IIM Jammu's authority.

According to the protestors, the said link road was a foot path which was later turned into concrete Tanda-Simble Lehar link road under PMGSY scheme in 2008.

"A small stretch of road nearly 400 meters fall in between the land area acquired for establishment of IIM Jammu and as per the reliable sources, the said road portion is going to be closed for the public use and forcing the public to go via four lane national highway having distance nearly 4 kilometres for their day today activities", the residents said.

They informed that the matter was brought into the notice of Divisional Commissioner

Jammu and Deputy Commissioner Jammu and they assured that the said road will not be closed for the locals, adding that the file was marked and sent to the Assistant Deputy Commissioner Jammu and later sent to the Tehsildar Nagrota.

"Since then the locals were kept in dark about the decision for the closure of the said road and forcing them to use the alternative road which is not convenient for them", they added.

The residents have appealed to the Lieutenant Governor to rethink the unilateral decision for closing the said road connectivity for the locals and forcing them to use alternative road.

They appealed to the Lieutenant Governor administration to pass on the directions to the concerned to review and resolve the decision in the interest and for the convenience of the local people.

## CBI books DARE scientist, US firm for irregularities in procurement of radar components

NEW DELHI, Jan 4:

The CBI has booked a Defence Avionics Research Establishment (DARE) scientist and a US-based firm for alleged irregularities in the import of radar components worth about USD one million in 2009, officials said.

The agency registered the case after getting clearance to lodge FIR against Priya Suresh, a scientist then posted at DARE, Bengaluru, they said.

Besides her, the CBI has named AKON Inc based in California in the US in its FIR for allegedly sending incomplete equipment even after receiving payments for 35 VCO-based RF Generator used in radar-based electronic warfare for USD one million (Rs 7.3 crore) as per present exchange rates, they said.

It is alleged that the company was selected for supplying the equipment through a global tender and 90 per cent of the payment was made in three tranches in February, 2009, they said.

The CBI has alleged that she had accepted these 35 units even after having knowledge from AKON representatives through emails that these units were in developmental stage, they said.

The agency, which did a pre-

liminary enquiry into the matter before filing the FIR, found that 24 units were sent back for "upgrade" without stating the nature of upgrade, 11 remained in DARE store till 2011 unused and untested, they alleged.

She allegedly allowed balance payment to be made to AKON certifying that units were working satisfactorily knowing that 24 units are still with the USA-based vendor, they said.

In 2011, after ensuring payment to the vendor, the scientist recommended that 11 units held in store are not working at all and should be sent back to the vendor for repair, they said.

The CBI has alleged that even now only 13 units are held by DARE and the remaining are with AKON, it said.

The units supplied by the vendor did not meet the specifications of the order and their weight were approximately three times more than the dummy provided by it, they said.

Testing of VCO-based radar threat simulator could not be completed by a Bengaluru-based vendor even after full payment of Rs 9.5 lakh because of non-supply of the component by AKON, it said. (PTI)

## No instruction to close tuition centres: Srinagar admn

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, Jan 4: The Srinagar administration today clarified that there is no order or instruction directing the tuition centres in the district to close operations.

The clarification follows an order issued on 31 December 2020 instructing the tuition centres in the district to report COVID-19 positive cases to the district administration.

Chairing a meeting with the tuition centres association of Srinagar, the Additional Deputy Commissioner Srinagar M. Haneef Balkhi clarified that there was no instruction to close the tuition centres, adding that the aim of the order in question was to ensure that positive cases if found were reported to the administration in order to make sure the required action like sampling and sanitisation was taken to prevent spread of COVID-19.

Additional District Magistrate Masarat Hashim who is the Nodal Officer for COVID-19 Mitigation Operations Srinagar while speaking on the occasion informed that the closure instructions in the 31

December order were in line with the J&K DMRRR order dated 29 November 2020 which directs for 48-hour closure of institutions or buildings where two or more COVID-19 positive cases are reported in order to carry out their disinfection.

He said the order is a reiteration of the J&K DMRRR order instructing strict adherence to all preventive guidelines and SOPs issued for preventing spread of the COVID-19 disease. He said the focus on tuition centres becomes important in view of a large number of students in a class and regular interaction of the same group adding that this necessitates more precautions to prevent emergence of COVID-19 clusters.

Meanwhile the district administration said that detailed guidelines for tuition centres will be notified soon adding that the District Disaster Management Authority in coordination with the Department of Social & Preventive Medicine will notify the guidelines. The administration also said that there will be regular inspections of tuition centres by health teams to ensure adherence to preventive guidelines.

The two leaders of the Apni Party urged the Lt Governor to take up the power crisis issue with the Union Government so as to provide some sort of relief to the people of Kashmir who are presently braving a biting cold. "The power supply across the Valley needs to be augmented particularly in three tehsils of Tangmarg subdivision," they demanded.

Decrying the water supply scarcity in these areas, the two leaders remarked that the natives of these tehsils are immensely suffering from acute shortage of water supply.

"Inhabitants of these areas, especially the womenfolk are facing a woeful situation as they are supposed to fetch the drinking water from far off places to address their daily needs," they added.

The two leaders also asked the administration to clear the snow from roads connecting these three tehsils and the link roads with their adjoining areas. "Most of the roads, especially the connecting links have developed dilapidated conditions. The patients and elderly commuters fear to use these roads to reach their respective places. The R&B Deptt should address this grave issue so as to enable the commuters to use these roads in a hassle free manner," they demanded.



SP Headquarters Doda Master Popsy and other officials distributing COVID kits among the villagers on Monday.

## SP Doda distributes COVID kits among villagers

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: Master Popsy SP Headquarters Doda today distributed COVID-19 safety kits among the needy and poor people of Doda, Kastigarh and Bhagwah.

The kits contained various items like facemask, mask, sanitiser, hand gloves, oxymeter and digital thermometers.

These kits were distributed

under the civic action program of district Doda and was aimed to check the further spread of COVID-19 in the district. A total of 65 kits were distributed among the various families after displaying, how to use the various items contained in the kit.

While speaking on the occasion, the SP Doda also briefed the general public regarding the COVID-19 infection and how to check it from further spreading.

## 'We The Human' demands ban on sale & use of single use plastics

Excelsior Correspondent

JAMMU, Jan 4: Chairman of "We The Humans Forum for Nature and Mankind", K Y S Manhas (Retired Principal District & Session Judge) today demanded a complete ban on sale and use of single use plastics to save life on the earth.

"During last one decade, we witnessed an upsurge in use of single use plastics by the soft drinks, packaged water, cooking oil, milk, & milk products, rice and wheat flour manufacturers and suppliers in Jammu and Kashmir. Earlier these day to day necessary consumables were either supplied in glassware and sacks made of jute or eco friendly material," Manhas said.

He was addressing few needy families which were provided with extreme weather blankets by 'We The Humans' in collaboration with Swasthya Evam Shiksha Charitable Trust (New Delhi) in a small function

at Sun Rise Public School.

"This shift from eco friendly to non-biodegradable packaging's to increase profit margins has resulted in devastating affects on our environment. Not only drains remained choked with single use plastics but we witness piles of plastic garbage on roads, dumping sites, on peripheries of cities, highways, in rivers, ponds and lakes," he added.

Manhas said as an estimate, more than forty per cent single use plastics remain uncollected and remain in our environment for hundreds of years without any changes. This is high time the Government should consider a complete ban on use and sale of single use plastics in J&K UT, he asserted.

Mohinder Kumar (founder member of the NGO), Sanna Khan (office secretary) and Narinder Kumar (Principal of the School) also addressed the gathering.