



**Bruhat Bengaluru  
Mahanagara Palike**

**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE,  
BANGALORE**

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## 'Indian vaccines after phase 3 trials'

Emergency use authorisation in country similar to U.K., U.S. process, say experts

JACOB KOSHY  
NEW DELHI

With Pfizer/BioNTech's mRNA vaccine having been approved in the United Kingdom and being readied for about 80,000 of the country's most vulnerable people, India's own vaccines could be available "almost immediately" for public use after the phase 3 trials were completed and the drug regulator was convinced of a vaccine's potential efficacy, experts have said.

Emergency use authorisation (EUA) procedure in India is similar to that in the European Union, the United Kingdom and the United States, said Ram Vishwakarma of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-

## Committed to engaging with India, says Pfizer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
NEW DELHI

Global pharma major Pfizer on Thursday said it remained committed to engaging with the Indian government to explore opportunities to make the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine available in the country.

The U.K. on Wednesday became the first country to approve the vaccine with

Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM). He is currently involved in testing several novel and re-pur-

the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency granting temporary authorisation for its emergency use. "Right now, we are in discussions with many governments and remain committed to engaging with the Government of India and to make this vaccine available for use in the country," a Pfizer spokesperson said.

posed drugs for COVID-19.

"There is a harmony among drug regulators globally," said Dr.

Vishwakarma.

"So a drug or a vaccine approved by the U.S. FDA (Food and Drug Administration) is approved here with some bridging studies (limited trials on local population to establish equivalence and effect). Were Pfizer to apply in India to the regulator here, it could in theory be approved within days or weeks here, depending on whether the Drug Controller is satisfied with the data. If the situation so demands, the regulator has the power to waive or recommend more tests, and doesn't necessarily require Indian data," he added.

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'VACCINE BY JAN.' ► PAGE 10

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## 'India's vaccines will be available after phase 3 trials'

Covishield is based on the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine candidate, ChAdOx1 nCoV19, and is being tested in 16,000 volunteers across the country. Covaxin has just begun Phase 3 trials and is being tested in 28,500 volunteers across the country. SII CEO, Adar Poonawalla, has said that the company plans to approach the Central Drugs Standards and Control Organisation for an EUA within two weeks.

The EUA is not an approval. It is permission granted to a company for a limited

time to offer a vaccine or a drug to people to tide over a crisis. For a formal approval, the company must eventually offer all data on the drug's efficacy, side-effects and adverse events to the regulator for it to determine if the vaccine or drug ought to be approved in the country. Several drugs, like Remdesivir and Fapiravir, have been given an EUA but have been added or removed from recommended treatment guidelines by the Indian Council of Medical Research over time.

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# Release funds for Indira Canteens: Siddaramaiah

Former Chief Minister accuses the BJP of trying to scuttle the welfare scheme



Bills of contractors running the canteens, have not been cleared for several months. •SUDHAKARA JAIN

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU**

For the past several months, bills of contractors operating the 198 Indira Canteens in the city have not been cleared. Taking serious objection, former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has shot off a letter to Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa.

He has alleged that the BJP was trying to scuttle the welfare scheme by not releasing funds on time, making it difficult for the local bodies to

clear bills of contractors.

The Siddaramaiah government was responsible for setting up the canteens in Bengaluru in August 2017. Since then, thousands of citizens, especially those belonging to lower socio-economic groups, depend on the canteens for breakfast, lunch and dinner, which is made available at a subsidised cost.

The new tenders for the 198 canteens came into effect in August this year. As

per the new tenders, the government subsidy for three meals has come down from ₹37 to ₹30. With funds not being released to the BBMP, which manages the canteens, bills have not been cleared.

Mr. Siddaramaiah has pointed out that water connections to many canteens and 12 kitchens had been cut.

"Maintenance and operating the 198 canteens in the city, and the others across the

State, will not cost more than ₹250 crore. Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have lost jobs and are struggling for their livelihood. They are dependent on Indira Canteens for their sustenance," he said and pointed out attempts made to change the name of the canteens.

He urged Mr. Yediyurappa to release funds and help run the canteens in the interest of the poor and needy in the State.

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## COVID-19: State sees 1,446 new cases, 13 deaths



Health officials conducting COVID-19 tests in Bengaluru on Thursday. •E. MURALI KUMAR

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU**

The State on Thursday reported 1,446 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total number of cases to 8,89,113. With 13 deaths, the toll rose to 11,821. This is apart from 19 deaths of patients due to non-COVID-19 reasons.

As many as 894 persons were discharged on Thursday, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,52,584. Of the remaining 24,698 active patients, 299 were being

monitored in the ICU. While the positivity rate for the day stood at 1.33%, the case fatality rate (CFR) touched 0.89%.

Bengaluru Urban reported 758 cases, taking its tally to 3,71,962. With six deaths coming from Bengaluru, the toll in this district rose to 4,162. Active cases in Bengaluru touched 18,938. As many as 1,08,685 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, including 90,002 RT-PCR tests.

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# Detergent manufacturers told to limit phosphate content

Revised specifications by Bureau of Indian Standards follow National Green Tribunal directions relating to Bellandur, Varthur, Agara lakes

K.C. DEEPIKA  
BENGALURU

Signalling a significant step towards preventing frothing and excessive algal growth in water bodies such as lakes, the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) has directed manufacturers of detergents to adhere to revised specifications for phosphate content issued by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

This has been a long-pending demand from citizens, environmentalists and scientists since the frothing and fuming in lakes of Bengaluru became international news.

The revised standards limiting phosphate content were in turn issued as per directions given by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on a 2017 application pertaining to Agara, Bellandur and Varthur lakes, the KSPCB has said.

"All manufactures located in the State of Karnataka are



This has been a long-pending demand from citizens, environmentalists and scientists since the frothing in lakes of Bengaluru became international news. \*SOMASHEKAR G.R.N.

hereby informed and directed to adhere to the standards with immediate effect. Similarly, detergent powders, detergent bars and synthetic

detergents manufactured outside Karnataka are also required to adhere to the above specifications while being marketed in the State" the

recent notice by the pollution control board said.

According to the KSPCB, as per the NGT directions, the BIS has limited the phos-

phate content in household laundry detergent powders, detergent bars and synthetic detergents for washing woolen and silk fabrics as the presence of phosphorus in excess in water bodies is known to cause "eutrophication" (loosely defined as accumulation of nutrients), leading to algal growth. This poses risk to aquatic life.

### Implementation key to rejuvenation

Srinivasulu, Member Secretary, KSPCB told *The Hindu* that the notification from the BIS is applicable with immediate effect.

Prof. T.V. Ramachandra from the Centre for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Science, said the BIS restrictions would prove useful in the rejuvenation scheme as the present treatment options are not capable of removing the nutrients. But this alone would not help, he pointed out. "Along with

this, industry has to treat its effluents, and sewage needs to be treated too. Hopefully, all of these together will help in rejuvenation," he added. Nitrates and phosphates have a foaming effect, explained U.V. Singh, member of the NGT-appointed committee to oversee the protection and rejuvenation of Agara, Bellandur and Varthur lakes.

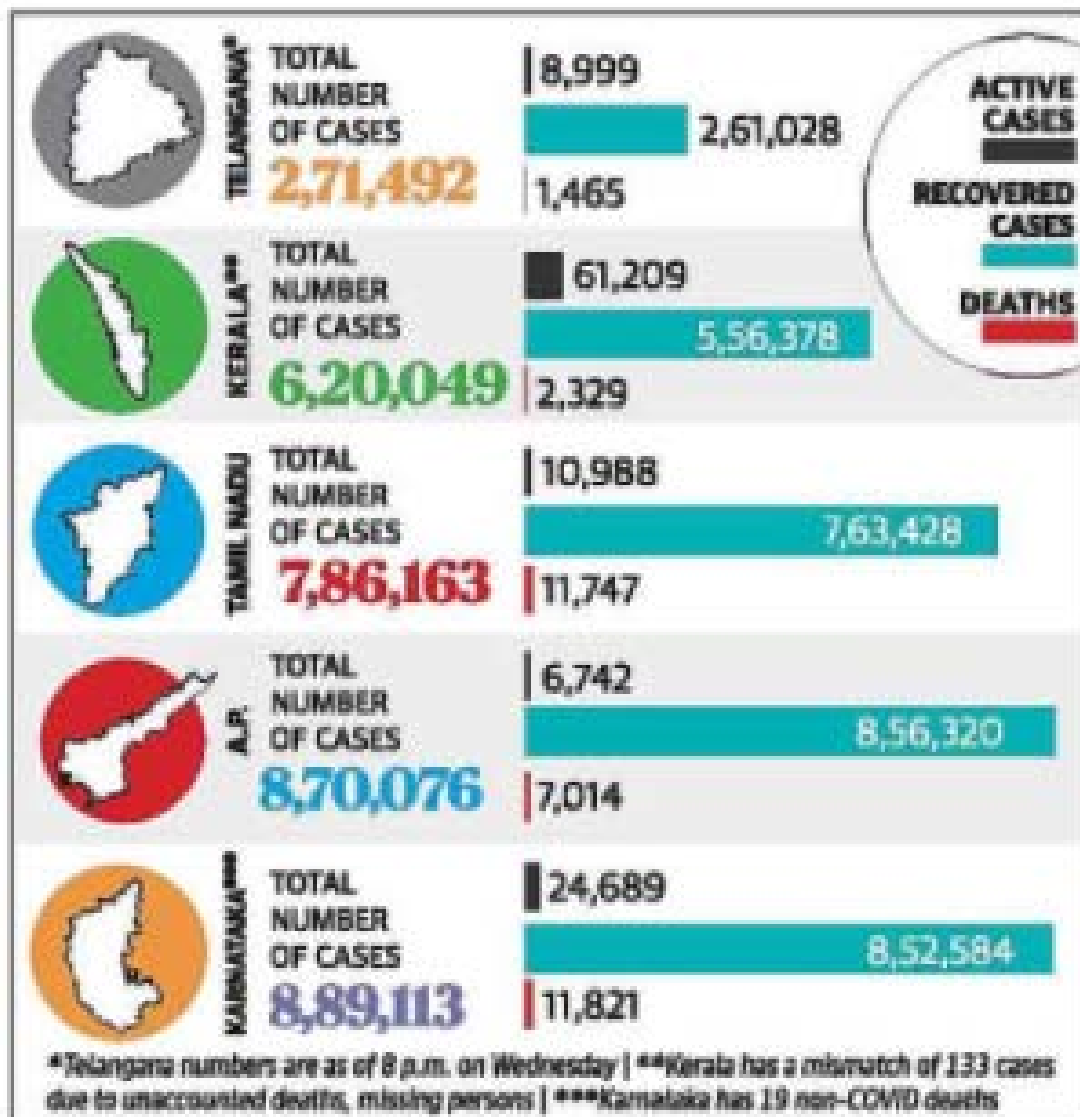
"Subsequently, due to the sluice gates, foaming has reduced. But the entry of phosphates has not reduced because the generation of phosphates is due to soaps and detergents and other such things. There was a proposal earlier too that the BIS should have limitations similar to those in developed countries," he said.

But he too said this cannot be a "spot-fix" process ending with the order. "There need to be some alternatives if industries have to switch to other remedies. This is a be-

ginning, but it needs to be collaborated with the industry and agencies implementing the directions. There are not many big industries in Karnataka, and most of them are coming from outside the State, over which the KSPCB has no jurisdiction. To make the BIS directions effective, it will take time, and the Central government's Ministry of Environment should also intervene. It should be monitored though, because without monitoring and continuous persuasion, it cannot be done. It has to be done in a time-bound manner," Mr. Singh added.

Asked about plans to implement the directions, Mr. Srinivasulu said, "We are abiding by directions of the NGT. We are communicating the BIS specifications to everybody. Not only the pollution control board, different agencies are looking at the quality of products, including the BIS."

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## Trash collection fee from Jan

**BBMP wants BESCOCOM to help it collect Rs 200 from each household**

NINA C GEORGE  
TEAM METROLIFE

**T**he BBMP is planning to collect an additional fee for garbage collection from the first week of January. It will seek BESCOCOM's help to collect Rs 200 from each household every month.

According to a survey conducted by BESCOCOM, Bengaluru Urban district has 60 lakh houses. The BBMP order was issued in July, but it had not started levying the fee. "This fee will be used towards paying the solid waste collection and transportation service providers who pick up the waste from doorstep," says Randeep D, BBMP Special Commissioner, SWM told *Metrolife*.

"This is a charge levied for the specific service provided by BBMP for picking up solid waste. The fines for not segregating waste will continue," informs Randeep. BBMP is talking to BESCOCOM to include the user fee in their billing software. "They would collect the fee on our behalf and transfer it to us. BESCOCOM's database is updated as they reach almost all waste generating households and commercial establishments," he says.

To include the BBMP user fee, BESCOCOM will have to change its billing software. "We are in talks with Infosys, which



**Tipper autos collect garbage from Bengaluru neighbourhoods. The additional fee of Rs 200 will be used to pay garbage collection contractors, say BBMP officials.** DH PHOTO BY S K DINESH

handles our internal software. Nothing is finalised yet," a BESCOCOM official says.

The last survey of Bengaluru, conducted by BBMP, was in 2017. It estimated 29 lakh houses, but the city has grown way beyond that number, officials say.

"Housing trends have changed. You see huge structures resembling apartment blocks and gated communities. Many buildings have been converted for commercial use. A fresh survey to ascertain the number of waste generators will be taken up soon," Randeep says.

Solid waste cess is part of property tax which goes towards general cleanliness

of streets. However solid waste user fee is specific to waste collection and residents who process and manage their waste within their premises may not come under its ambit, he explains.

"Unsegregated waste is often collected by unauthorised persons and residents are charged huge sums, even as the same waste comes back to be disposed at BBMP disposal sites. With this user fee being levied directly, we are actually ensuring BBMP becomes the sole waste collection authority (except for bulk waste generators); ruling out the role of such middlemen," he says.

**“ THIS FEE WILL BE USED TOWARDS PAYING THE CONTRACTORS WHO PICK UP THE WASTE. ”**  
D RANDEEP,  
BBMP SPECIAL COMMISSIONER

### MIXED RESPONSE

Citizens' groups are divided on the move. Nalini Shekar, co-founder Hasiru Dala, favours it. "The sum of Rs 200 is not big. BBMP will have to put this user fee into an escrow account and use it only for solid waste management and paying pourakarmikas," she says. Dhanya, a resident of apartment complex Horamavu Samhita Sarovar, wonders why residents should pay an additional user fee when they are already paying property tax and a solid waste management cess. "The BBMP has been collecting garbage using its own resources all these years, why should they levy a fee now?" she wonders.

Philip William George, former president of the Horamavu-Agra Resident Welfare Association, welcomes the user fee. He says that the fee collected must be utilized only for the purpose of garbage collection and maintenance of the same and not diverted for other projects. "BBMP must allot funds for definite works. The pourakarmikas need to be paid well. Sometimes, the auto tipplers that collect waste are seen overflowing with garbage. This could pose health issues not only for the workers, but the residents as well," says Philip.

PI



Footfall on Church Street has increased on weekends.

## Church St-style weekends planned across Bengaluru

**Motorised traffic will be banned, eateries allowed to set up tables on the street**

ANILA KURIAN  
TEAM METROLIFE

**M**ore streets in Bengaluru may follow the Church Street model, with motorised traffic being banned on weekends.

In November, the Directorate of Urban Land Transport (DULT) recommended 'no-traffic weekends' on Church Street as part of its 'Clean Air Street' initiative.

V Manjula, commissioner of DULT, told *Metrolife*, "We have identified a few more potential areas and are working on them. We will take into account the characteristics of an area before planning."

**“ WE HAVE IDENTIFIED A FEW MORE POTENTIAL AREAS AND ARE WORKING ON THEM ”**  
V MANJULA, COMMISSIONER OF DULT

Every weekend, Church Street turns into a slice of Europe, with restaurants setting up tables on the street, and music and culture coming outdoors. Restaurants dotting the smartly done-up street have been experiencing more footfalls since this new initiative was introduced on November 7.

### WHERE ELSE?

Seven more streets are likely to turn pedestrian-friendly on weekends: Gandhi Bazaar Main Road (KR Road-DVG Road), Malleswaram 8th Cross (between Margosa Road and 18th Sampige Road), 10th Main adjacent to Jayanagar shopping complex, Russell Market road, Commercial Street (Kamaraj Road-Jumma Masjid Road), Brigade Road (MG Road-Residency Road) and Malleswaram 7th Cross facing 10th Cross.

PI



# Easier to find pet foster homes, thanks to WFH

**Many animal lovers are opening their doors to dogs since they don't have to worry about leaving them home alone**

**ANILA KURIAN**  
TEAM METROLIFE

**M**ore people in Bengaluru have been offering to foster dogs since March, when the pandemic lockdowns began.

The main reason for the increase in foster parenting is that working professionals are at home, and can take care of animals without having to lock them up.

Ashwini Shetty, assistant manager in a corporate company, had decided against a pet as her apartment was small.

"But during the lockdown, when I heard about a pup, I stepped up since I was working from home," she says.

Arthur came to her as an abandoned dog with separation anxiety.

"He needed to be assured every few minutes that he was not alone," she explains. After adopting him, she took him to Mangaluru, from where she now works remotely.

Online manager Sneha Patil is not new to foster care. She has fostered 10 dogs so far, and has one with her now.

"Lily was a six-month-old abandoned pregnant dog my family and I took care of. We had her till she delivered and now she and her three pups are adopted," she says.

Laila, adopted last week, was a paid foster. "Food expenses are mostly taken care of by us but in cases where the dog needs a special diet, we do ask for help," she says.

Fostering isn't easy,



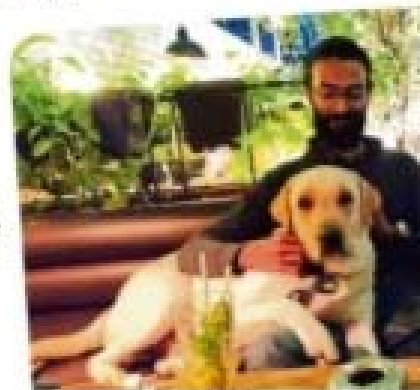
**Sneha Patil with Lily.**



**Ashwini Shetty has adopted Arthur now.**

especially when the dogs are ill. Marketing professional Nidhin Jacob George took care of Mickey only for a month before the dog passed away.

**Nidhin Jacob George with Terry.**



"He went through several treatments but nothing could save him," says Nidhin.

Nidhin has fostered a couple more dogs since. "I was fostering lab Terry who grew quite attached to me. But when a family wanted to adopt him, I visited them a couple of times to make sure everything was all right," he says.

Nidhin still follows up on the pets he's looked after. "I would request anyone who has the ability to foster to do it. Or help out financially as any help goes a long way," he says.

# K'taka tackled virus the best in November in south

**SURAKSHA P**  
BENGALURU, DHNS

**K**arnataka has registered the steepest fall in the rate of cases as well as deaths among the five southern states, an analysis of Covid-19 cases reported in November shows.

The good news comes amid anxiety over a likely second wave forecast in January. After battering the state for months, the unpredictable virus is currently in retreat across the state.

Karnataka saw the highest reduction in moving growth rate (a term used to compute percentage growth of cases and mortality compared



**Police fine people for not wearing mask in Bengaluru on Thursday.**

DH PHOTO/ JANARDHAN B K

to other southern states, according to Jeevan Raksha, a public-private partnership project analysing Covid-19 outbreaks.

Over the last one month, the state saw a 71% fall in the moving growth rate as cases fell from 2,11,575 in October to 61,485 in November.

Andhra Pradesh saw a 64% fall, while Tamil Nadu and Kerala saw 53% and 26% plunge in growth rate.

Apart from that, Karnataka's share of Covid cases in the south (including Puducherry) reduced to 18% in November from 31% in October.

Another positive sign was the fall in mortality growth rate in Karnataka, which nosedived by 72% — the highest compared with other states.

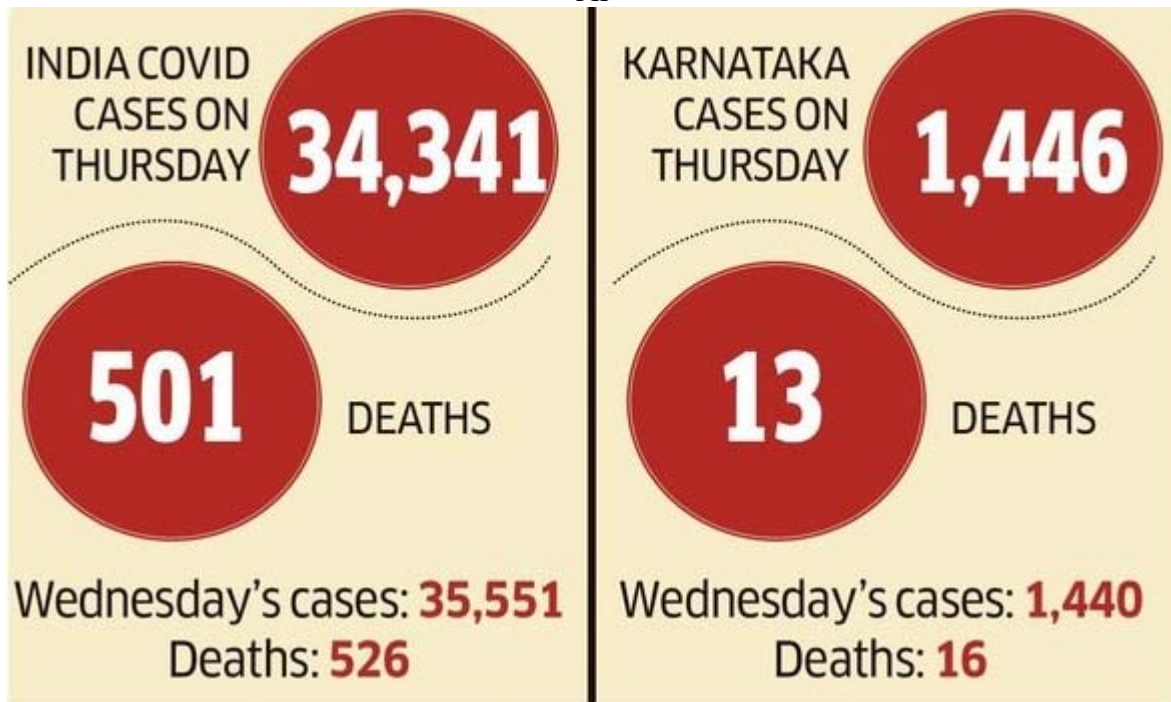
In October, the state accounted for 41% of Covid mortality (2,174 deaths) among southern states; it came down to 27% last month with 610 deaths.

Sanjeev Mysore, Convenor of Jeevan Raksha, who did the analysis, told *DH* that the challenge was to maintain these rates.

"The state is contemplating a night curfew in the last week of December. It is taking initiatives and mulling restrictions. In the first wave, the surge happened within two to three weeks," said Sanjeev, citing the example of Gujarat, where a curfew was clamped in Ahmedabad once a surge was seen.

Meanwhile, Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar is set to meet members of the state Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to discuss its recommendations on Covid-19 as well as the measures needed during Christmas and New Year celebrations.

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TILL 9.45 PM, SOURCE: DHNS/PTI

## SC stays HC order on mask penalty

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a Gujarat High Court order mandating those who did not wear masks to do five to 10 days of community service, including at Covid-19 hospitals, in addition to Rs 1,000 fine. A bench presided over by Justice Ashok Bhushan said the order was disproportionate and could lead to health problems. The court, however, asserted that masks were compulsory and violators should be penalised as per the law. **PAGE 8**



# State looks for export high with new plan

**Devises strategy to boost exports in the next five years, aims to be in top 3**

**SHRUTHI H M SASTRY**  
BENGALURU, DHNS

**K**arnataka is losing out on precious export revenue due to critical gaps in infrastructure, according to a new report, which has laid bare the problems and outlined a road-map for repairing the

strategy.

Take the case of cashews. Karnataka is India's fourth-largest cashew producing state, yet the state doesn't lead in exports. Reason? Manual processing of the produce which slows down the process.

As a result, the state loses out to countries such as Vietnam, which have embraced mechanisation and sell the produce at a cheaper price in Europe and the US.

This is just one example of how Karnataka is unable to harness its full export potential.

Now, the government wants to get its act together by boost-



ing exports across sectors over the next five years. To enable this, the state government has readied an 'Export Strategy'.

Prepared by the Federation of Indian Export Organisation (FIEO), the document aims to

make Karnataka among the top 3 exporters of merchandise in the country. Currently, Karnataka accounts for 18.83% of India's exports.

According to the document, delay in Integrated Goods and Service Tax refunds was severely affecting working capital for exporters and needs immediate attention from the government.

Speaking to *DH*, Gunjan Krishna, Commissioner for Industrial Development and Director of Industries and Commerce, said the report looked into problem areas hindering the growth of each sector, while suggesting meas-

ures to overcome them.

Gunjan said Karnataka has to focus on improving infrastructure, skilling, minimising logistics, providing warehouse facilities, ensuring international standards for export among others.

Some of the infrastructure issues bedeviling the state are surprising.

For example, mangoes grown in Kolar, Dharwad and Ramanagar districts are sent to Mumbai and Hyderabad for processing, as the state does not have pack-house facilities to store mangoes for a long time.

► **Export, Page 3**

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## State reports 1,446 Covid cases

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Karnataka reported 1,446 new Covid-19 cases and 13 related fatalities, taking the total number of infections to 8,89,113 and the death toll to 11,821 on Thursday. The day also saw 894 patients being discharged after recovery.

Of the fresh cases reported, 758 were from Bengaluru Urban alone. The number of recoveries has reached

8,52,584. Of the 24,689 active cases, 299 are in ICU.

Six of the total 13 deaths were from Bengaluru Urban. Among the districts where the new cases were reported, Mandya accounted for 75, Tumakuru 68, Mysuru 53 and Chitradurga 40.

A total of 1,14,11,843 samples have been tested so far, of which 1,08,685 were tested on Thursday.

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# Ending an obnoxious practice

The Central government's move to amend the Manual Scavenging Act, 2013, to make mechanised cleaning of septic and sewer tanks mandatory will hopefully aid the efforts to put end to this obnoxious practice. The government also wants to replace the word manhole with "machine-hole" in all official usage and set up a round-the-clock helpline for reporting of violations. It has set a deadline of August 2021 to completely eliminate the practice. The deadline for mechanisation is April 2021, and it has been made clear that proper gear should be provided to workers if in emergency situations they are to enter sewers. The government plans to make the movement a success with the participation of states and civic bodies. The efforts are welcome, but past experience with the implementation of various plans which were launched to end the practice is not encouraging.

Manual scavenging is banned in the country since 1993 and it is a criminal offence to engage manual scavengers, force any one to do the work and aid anyone in the activity. But according to the government's data, it has led to 376 deaths over the past five years, including 110 in 2019. There was a 61% increase in the number of deaths in 2019 from 2018. The government has admitted that states have not reported any convictions for employing manual scavengers.



**Practice continues with awareness of authorities**

That shows how ineffective the law has been. Government organisations have themselves been found to be involved in the practice. Very often local bodies give sewer cleaning contracts to private agencies or individuals who engage manual scavengers for work. No one is held accountable for any mishap and the practice continues very much with the knowledge of the authorities who are expected to end it and take action against offenders.

It is clear that ending manual scavenging is not as easy as changing practices in areas like agriculture or eliminating hazardous work with the help of machines. Scavenging is mixed with caste, social hierarchies, economic deprivation and other factors, and many of those who work in sewers and septic tanks are unable to get out of their dire and demeaning situation. Though a scheme for rehabilitation of manual scavengers is in place, many have not benefitted from it. The government has now decided to give funds directly to workers to buy the cleaning machines instead of the municipalities. This will mean that existing workers will continue to do the cleaning work, though with the use of machines. Use of machines may not be possible in all septic tanks and sewers. In spite of these limitations, efforts must be made to make a success of the initiative to end the dehumanising practice.



# SC stays HC order on community service

NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court on Thursday stayed a Gujarat High Court order, mandating those who did not wear masks, to do five to 10 days community services, including at Covid-19 hospitals, in addition to Rs 1,000 fine.

A bench presided over by Justice Ashok Bhushan said the order was disproportionate and could lead to health problems.

The court, however, asserted that masks were compulsory and violators should be penalised as per the law.

"The people who do not wear masks are violating the fundamental rights of other persons," the bench, also comprising Justices R Subhash Reddy and MR Shah, said.

"The Centre comes out with SOP's and guidelines but what about their implementation? People are gathering in marriage functions, 1,000's of people," the bench said.

People are roaming in malls. People are getting together. What about the implementation, the bench asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who agreed strong measures were required.

Mehta mentioned the matter, sought an urgent hearing.

## COVID-19 Tracker

States/UT	Active	Infected	Death	Daily cases	Daily Death
Maharashtra	85,535	18,37,358	47,472	5,182	115
Kerala	61,342	6,20,049	2,329	5,376	31
Delhi	29,120	5,82,058	9,424	3,734	82
Haryana	25,544	2,39,239	2,520	1,635	32
Karnataka	24,689	8,89,113	11,821	1,446	13
West Bengal	24,106	4,93,316	8,576	3,246	49
Uttar Pradesh	22,990	5,49,228	7,848	1,920	31
Chhattisgarh	19,749	2,40,863	2,919	NA	NA
Rajasthan	15,516	2,74,486	2,370	2,086	20
Gujarat	14,913	2,14,309	4,031	1,540	13
Others	92,140	36,29,577	39,839	8,176	115

<b>4,15,644</b> TOTAL ACTIVE CASES	<b>90,13,654</b> TOTAL RECOVERED	<b>95,69,596</b> TOTAL INFECTED
<b>1,39,149</b> TOTAL COVID DEATHS	<b>1,149</b> NON-COVID DEATHS*	DHNS/PTI (10 PM, December 3) *Patients dead due to non-Covid reasons

The Union as well as the Gujarat governments challenged the order by the HC passed on Wednesday.

"Though the problem of people not wearing masks is serious but this is not the solution," Mehta said, indicating the punishment to them with service in Covid wards.

He highlighted that the harm of not wearing masks was much less than sending such person to Covid centre.

"This is very difficult to execute this, you are right," the bench, adding "However, there is a lack of will though so far as implementation is concerned and the HC has taken note of this".

Mehta agreed that the problem has to be addressed on a war footing. He said each state has to issue directions for strict implementation of the order on social distancing and wearing of masks.

## Treat scribes who lost lives as warriors

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Press Council of India (PCI) has urged the Centre to include journalists, who succumbed to Covid-19, in the category of 'Covid-19 warriors' like doctors and others and provide them with the same benefits.

Press Council Secretary Anupama Bhatnagar has written to the Union Information and Broadcasting as well as states after the Council passed a resolution in this regard.

The Press Council also directed the Centre and states to include journalists in Group Insurance schemes in the line of the schemes already made by the Haryana government.

"The Council recommends to the Central government to include the journalists, who died due to Covid-19, in the category of Covid warriors like the doctors and others and confer them with the same benefits," the letter said.

The Centre had announced Rs 50 lakh as compensation to doctors and others who are fighting the epidemic.



## No night curfew for Xmas, New Year, hint ministers

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
@Udupi/Bengaluru

HOME Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Thursday said the State Government is looking at options other than imposing a 'night curfew' ahead of Christmas and New Year celebrations. Health Minister Dr K Sudhakar concurred that curfew may not be necessary, but questioned the need for any celebrations.

Speaking to reporters in Udupi, Bommai said, "The draft advisory prepared by the Health Department based on recommendations of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), suggested a night curfew, but we may not opt for it. However, Covid-19 guidelines

should be followed during the New Year celebrations," he said.

"Revellers should ensure that no crowds gather. The Health Minister will come up with the guidelines to be followed during the celebrations in the coming days," he said.

On his part, Dr Sudhakar said that enforcement measures will be discussed with experts. "Social distancing will be difficult to maintain as people will congregate in small spaces. We do not know experts' opinion on the second wave in January. Considering all issues, we will discuss what steps can be implemented across the state during Christmas and New Year," he said.

CONTINUED ON: P2

P1

## REMDESIVIR BENEFICIAL IF USED AT THE RIGHT TIME: K'TAKA EXPERTS

WHO has advised against using the drug for Covid care, regardless of patients' condition

CHELANA BELAGERE @Bengaluru

ALTHOUGH the World Health Organisation recently advised against the use of remdesivir for the treatment of Covid-19 patients regardless of how ill they are, medical experts in Karnataka maintain that in their experience, the drug is beneficial and has high recovery rates across the state.

"In pandemics such as this, we will have to go by our own data and the experiences of our pulmonologists and physicians. We have found very good recovery rates when the drug was administered at the right time," said Dr C N Manjunath, director of Jayadeva Institute of

Cardiology and member of the state's Covid Taskforce.

Released on November 20, WHO's recommendation is part of a set of living guidelines on clinical care for Covid-19. It was developed by a global group comprising 28 clinical care experts, four patient partners, and an ethicist. The guidelines are an innovation that match scientific standards with the speed required to respond to an ongoing pandemic.

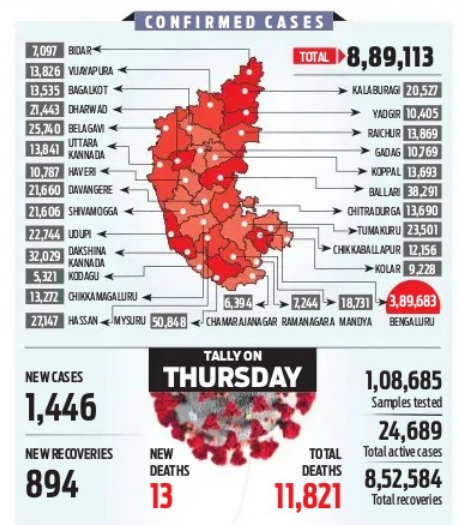
"WHO's recommendation was based on the Solidarity Trial's interim results. We did have a discussion regarding this among the experts on the

State's expert committee. Our experts are of the opinion that remdesivir has been one of the very few antiviral drugs which has played a role in recoveries, especially when given at early and moderate phases of Covid 19," Dr Nagaraja C, director of Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases, and a member of the State's Covid Taskforce.

Dr Sacchidananda, Vice Chancellor of Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences, agrees. "Our experts' opinions are different. Remdesivir has worked very well with our patients' recovery and early response. It has prevented

progression from mild to moderate, and moderate to severe illness, when instituted at the right time," he said.

Head of the department of medicine at Dr TMA Pai Hospital in Udupi, Dr Shashikiran Umakanth, also held similar views. "Our experience is that remdesivir is useful and hastens recovery when used at the right time - that is, early in (the course of the) disease, as soon as the patient starts requiring oxygen. If used after the patient has developed further complications, it may be futile. However, this is information is based on our clinical observation and not on a controlled research study."



P3

# STILL NOT IN FAVOUR OF NY REVELRY: BBMP CHIEF

Says will wait for govt's decision; mulls implementation of Sec 144

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@Bengaluru

EVEN as Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said on Thursday that nothing was certain on the New Year celebrations in the state, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad said his and the Palike's stand is very clear.

Prasad said no New Year celebrations should be held on roads, pubs, bars and restaurants, in the wake of the Covid situation. "Our stand was the same when the government had asked for our opinion earlier and it is the same even now. However, the final decision is with the government and it will be adhered to," he added.

BBMP officials are now contemplating enforcing Section 144 to make sure social distancing is maintained and that there is no rise in cases as the expert committee had informed that a second wave will soon begin.

The BBMP officials said Chief Secretary T M Vijay Bhaskar, in the recently-issued guidelines, had said that the BBMP Commissioner and district commissioners have the powers to enforce Section 144 to manage crowds and ensure social distancing. Prasad said that he does have that power before him to exercise, and if required, he will. "A meeting will also be held with the police and health departments

## Sudhakar questions need for celebration

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"WHILE some restrictions are needed, enforcing curfew does not seem necessary. However, all the matters will be decided only after holding a meeting with experts and the Chief Minister," Dr K Sudhakar said.

Stressing on the complicated economic situation in the country and loss of jobs, he asked if there is a need to celebrate in the backdrop of Covid. He even went on to say that Ugadi is the new year as per the Hindu calendar.

A decision on the precautionary measures for controlling the spread of Covid, in the backdrop of a report of a possible second wave in the state, will be taken after a meeting with experts and

senior officials on Friday.

Sudhakar said experts' opinion that mask, social distancing and hygiene, which are referred to as "social vaccine," are more effective.

Regarding salary dues of resident doctors who have been deployed on mandatory service, he said the delay is due to technical reasons, and assured that salaries will be released within a week. Until then, the administrative bodies of the colleges have been instructed to pay the doctors. The principal secretaries of the departments have discussed the matter with the department of finance, he added.

The minister said that several rounds of discussions have been held on storage and distribution of vaccines.



to decide the final course of action," he added.

BBMP officials said many citizens had suggested during ward committee and other meetings that New Year celebrations should not be permit-

ted. "However, some citizens had said that when other religious celebrations were low-key, then New Year celebrations can also be held as private affairs," a senior BBMP official added.

P2

## As Covid fear subsides, people opt for elective surgeries

RANJANI MADHAVAN @Bengaluru

PEOPLE who had put off elective surgeries due to the pandemic, especially during the lockdown, are trickling in to hospitals, deciding not delay them further.

During the lockdown the government and also doctors had urged people to delay elective surgeries if possible, due to the increasing spread of SARS-CoV-2, and the burden on the health care system.

Things have changed now, says Dr Mahesh Chikkachannappa, senior consultant for general, laparoscopic and bariatric surgery at Aster CMI Hospital. People are coming in for

surgeries for gall bladder, hernia, bariatric surgery, colon cancer, breast cancer, and for benign diseases. "We are seeing that people are slowly leaving behind the fear of contracting Covid," Dr Mahesh said.

The eight-month delay has worsened the condition of some patients, Dr Mahesh said. A patient, recently came with multiple gall stones and infection, which had increased complications and made the surgery longer and tougher for doctors, Dr Mahesh said.

A patient with hernia who suffered severe pain for the past few months and managed with medication, sought treatment recently when things had



A technician sanitises his hands before collecting samples at Majestic Bus Stand in Bengaluru on Tuesday | ASHISHKRISHNA HP

gotten much worse. The hernia had gotten bigger and instead of doing a keyhole surgery, sur-

geons were forced to use the cut-open method, from which patients take longer to recover.

Dr Yatheesh Govindaiah, assistant director for medical services at Apollo Hospitals, has also come across cases of people seeking emergency care for hernia after they began vomiting and developed severe abdominal pain.

Even people who need neurosurgery are seeking treatment, turning up to hospital by taking precautions against Covid-19, said Dr Praveen M Ganigi, neurosurgery consultant at Manipal Hospitals.

The hospital is now doing surgeries for brain tumour, spinal disc disorder, hydrocephalus (fluid accumulation in the brain), Moyamoya disease (where blood vessels supplying

blood to the brain become narrow), etc, Dr Praveen said.

He has also come across elderly or diabetic people who recovered from Covid and delayed treatment for sinusitis to the point where it spread to the brain. Outcomes for such patients is poor and they may not survive, compared to those who obtain surgery early.

However, things are still a long way from normal, said Dr Govindaiah. "People are still anxious, waiting and watching... While some patients such as those with malignancy have been coming for surgery, those who require joint replacement, cataract, hernia surgeries, tend to postpone them," he said.

P3



## COVID CURVE

# State tally touches 8.89 lakh

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

@Bengaluru

WITH 1,446 more people contracting SARS-CoV-2 on Thursday, Karnataka's Covid-19 tally has touched 8,89,113 cases.

Covid claimed 13 lives on Thursday, taking the death toll in the state to 11,821. Of the 24,689 active cases in the state, 299 are high risk patients in the ICU. As many as 894 were discharged, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,52,584 cases. The recovery rate stands at 96% as per war room data.

Five districts with the highest number of cases reported on Thursday are Bengaluru (758), Mandya (75), Tumakuru (68), Mysuru (53) and Chitradurga (40).

It is taking Karnataka 81 days to double its Covid cases. The majority of cases are asymptomatic, with the symptomatic positivity rate a mere 0.2%. The overall positivity rate is 8%.

The category worst affected is the 30-39 age group with 1,93,416 patients. The highest mortality, is in the 60-69 age group with 3301 deaths. Figures show that more men than women have died of the disease, a pattern observed across the world, although its causes are still being studied. The mortality rate is at 1.3%.





# At 1.6bn doses, India No. 1 in deals for Covid vaccine: Study

'EU Close 2nd With 1.58bn, US Orders 1bn'

Chethan.Kumar @timesgroup.com

As of November 30, India was leading the world in the number of "confirmed Covid-19 vaccine doses" for which orders have been placed, having "concluded contracts to get 1.6 billion doses". The latest global vaccine procurement analysis by Duke University, which has

► Govt plans big vaccine awareness campaign, P 16

been tracking advanced commitments between countries and vaccine developers, put the European Union second and the US third.

The EU will get 1.58 billion doses and the US will get over a billion doses, provided

## WHO'S BUYING FROM WHOM

Makers	India	EU	US	Canada	UK	Total
Oxford Univ	500m	400m	500m	20m	100m	1.5bn
Novavax	1bn	NA	110m	76m	60m	1.2bn
Gamaleya	100m	NA	NA	NA	NA	100m
Sanofi-GSK	NA	300m	100m	72m	60m	532m
Pfizer-BioNTech	NA	300m	100m	20m	40m	460m
Moderna	NA	160m	NA	56m	5m	221m

Source: Duke University (Only top vaccines listed | Figures rounded off)

## Hope for India nod by Dec-end, says AIIMS dir

AIIMS director Dr Randeep Guleria is hopeful of emergency-use authorisation for a vaccine in India by the end of this month or early next month. The vaccine developed by Pfizer was cleared for emergency use by the UK on Wednesday and will be rolled out to the public early next week. P 16

all the vaccine candidates they have struck deals to buy prove efficient in trials and are certified for use.

Union health minister Harsh Vardhan had said in November that India was in talks with vaccine makers to

get up to 500 million doses by July-August 2021.

The analysis doesn't include China and Russia, both of which have their own vaccine programmes for citizens.

► 3 vax candidates, P 6

## AstraZeneca in contracts to sell 2.5 billion shots

The latest analysis of contracts by Duke University, based on publicly available data, puts the Oxford-AstraZeneca candidate on top of the table, with 17 countries signing deals to procure 2.5 billion doses, reports Chethan Kumar. This is followed by the US's Novavax, which had deals for 1.3 billion doses of its vaccine as of November 30, while Sanofi-GSK has deals for 732 million doses. The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which this week became the first in the world to be approved for emergency use, has deals for 646 million doses.

Overall, 19 vaccine makers have confirmed deals for 7.1 billion doses cumulatively.

► 1 billion for India, P 6

P1

## NY's eve curbs: Ministers sing different tunes

After Karnataka's Covid-19 technical advisory committee suggested night curfew from December 26 to January 1, home minister Basavaraj Bommal and health minister K Sudhakar voiced conflicting views on the issue of imposing restrictions on New Year celebrations. Bommal ruled out night curfew; Sudhakar said, "Our New Year is Ugadi. So why should there be celebrations on December 31?" Justifying the need for possible curbs on movement of people during the last week of the year, Sudhakar said the recommendation was made keeping in mind lack of space for celebrations. P 2

## Covid recoveries top 90L, highest in world

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

India on Thursday became the first country to log 90 lakh (nine million) recoveries from the Covid-19 infection.

The milestone was crossed on Thursday, when more than 43,000 positive patients were declared cured of the virus in the country, even as the count of fresh confirmed cases continued its gradual slide.

India has the highest number of recovered patients of Covid-19 in the world, accounting for 94% of all cases recorded in the country till date.

The US, with 14.3 million cases as opposed to India's 9.5 million, has recorded fewer recoveries at 8.4 million.

## No Covid deaths in 23 K'taka districts

Karnataka reported 1,446 new Covid-19 cases on Thursday and 758 of them were from Bengaluru. With 1,08,685 tests conducted in 24 hours, the state's daily positivity rate stood at 1.3%. Thirteen new Covid-19 deaths, including six from Bengaluru, were reported from across the state. No fatalities were reported from 23 districts in the state. TNN

Meanwhile, 36,746 new cases were recorded on Thursday, around 1,000 less than the previous day's tally.

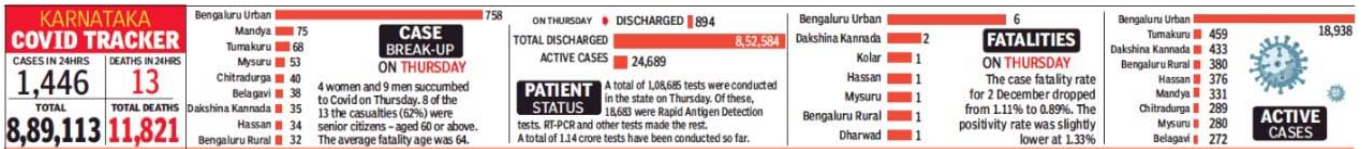
► Daily cases below 40k, P 9

P1

# No nod for bandh on Saturday, says B'luru top cop

Tight and elaborate police arrangements have been put in place in Bengaluru for Saturday's Karnataka bandh called by pro-Kannada organisations to protest the government's decision to constitute the Maratha Development Board, said police commissioner Kamal Pant. He said no permission has been granted for observing the bandh on Saturday. "If anyone tries to force shops to shut down or disturb the public in any manner, s/he will be dealt with sternly." P 2

P1



P2



Syed Asif

**DEFYING LOGIC:** A man eating ice-cream argues with police after he was fined for not wearing a mask in Bengaluru on Thursday



# Wedding season on, experts moot virus tests on caterers

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Bengaluru: With the wedding season unfolding — it runs from December to February — experts have raised concerns over these gatherings turning into Covid-19 super-spreader events.

Caterers hopping between weddings and attending to guests who may have come from across the country, are the most vulnerable to infection, said Dr CN Manjunath, Covid task force nodal officer for testing and labs.

“Wedding caterers must be tested once every 15 days,” said Dr Manjunath, who added that he has placed his suggestion before the technical advisory committee. “They are the ones who spend the most time amidst crowds in dining halls. Most dining halls in choultries in urban areas are in the basement which lack proper ventilation. Since they are also involved in preparing food, they must be tested regularly.”

Going by hall bookings, December 7, 9, 14 and 17 will witness several weddings. The season is expected to peak in Magha masa (February), when experts expect the second wave of infections to hit.

“Shoonya Masa, believed



Photo for representation

**DIFFICULT TO IMPLEMENT:** Hall owners admit not many guests wear masks, but say marshals don't enter since weddings are private events

to be inauspicious for weddings, begins from December 14 and continues till January 14,” said T Vasan, advisor, Karnataka Kalyana Mantapas Association. “Not many weddings are held during this period. Most weddings are post January 14 and especially during February and March.”

He said, considering the pandemic, seating arrangements in halls are made in such a way that there is distance between two seats and guests are advised to use hand sanitisers and wear masks.

Permission from respective zonal joint commissioners in BBMP limits is mandatory. “Once permission is given by the engineering wing, we in-

form local police,” said N Chaidananda, joint commissioner, BBMP (west). “Conditions are imposed to ensure Covid-appropriate behaviour.”

West zone is said to have the most banquet halls in the city. In November, over 10 permissions were issued for weddings in the zone.

The number of guests allowed to attend a wedding is based on the size of the hall. “As per current guidelines, a maximum 200 people can be allowed in a closed space or 50% of the hall capacity whichever is lesser. In open spaces, depending on the size of the lawn and seating area, the number can exceed 200,” said N Manjunatha Prasad,

commissioner, BBMP.

The chief secretary, in November, had issued guidelines which said the BBMP/ district administration can limit gatherings at weddings to 100 if the situation warranted it.

Krishnamurthy NP, who caters food for weddings from South Bengaluru, welcomed the proposal to test caterers.

“We will follow it if the government makes it mandatory,” he said. “But usually, workers who are mostly from Dakshina Kannada and Shivamogga districts return to their hometowns as there is no continuous work. Awareness should be spread. We do follow precautions while serving, but wearing a mask while cooking is unsafe since workers are close to a fire.”

## Masks missing

BBMP officials claim marshals do visit wedding halls to ensure guests do not exceed the permitted number, while hall owners say guests rarely adhere to the mask rule.

“As it is a private event, marshals do not enter wedding halls. But people are not wearing masks at weddings since the proceedings are photographed or videographed. We cannot force people,” say banquet hall owners.



# New Year revelry: Ministers sing different tunes on curbs

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Bengaluru/Mangaluru:** While the state's Covid-19 technical advisory committee has suggested the government impose night curfew from December 26 to January 1, home minister Basavaraj Bommai and his cabinet colleague, health minister K Sudhakar, voiced diametrically opposite views on the issue of imposing restrictions on New Year celebrations.

While Bommai, in Mangaluru, said the government has no plans to impose night curfew to prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV2 virus during New Year celebrations, Sudhakar favoured restrictions, saying, "This is not our New year. Our New Year is Ugadi. So why should there be celebrations on December 31?"



**NOT THIS YEAR?** File picture of New Year Eve revelry on MG Road-Brigade Road in Bengaluru

Bommai said the government will chalk out safety plans to prevent the spread of the virus during celebrations. "We have not discussed imposing night curfew," the home minister said. "However, our advisers have suggested large gatherings should be avoided. The government will take necessary measures in this direction soon."

Bommai also said Sudhakar will hold meetings to discuss curbs to be imposed and he will take a final call. "Overall, the government wants to ensure all safety measures are in place, based on suggestions from experts," Bommai said. "There are many measures other than night curfew that the government may adopt to prevent large gatherings."

Sudhakar, who left Congress and joined BJP a year ago, said the government is studying the need and necessity for curfew in the state during Christmas and the run up to New Year as suggested by the technical advisory committee.

"I am yet to get their report," Sudhakar said. "Once I get it, I will look into and discuss with the chief minister and cabinet colleagues before taking a decision."

Justifying the need for possible curbs on movement of people during the last week of the year, Sudhakar said the recommendation was made keeping in mind lack of space when celebrations happen. He said hundreds of people crowd in places like Brigade Road and MG Road in Bengaluru on New Year's Eve. "We will take cognizance of these matters while taking a decision," he said.

# Cong ex-corporator nabbed in east B'luru violence case

Bengaluru: Sleuths from Central Crime Branch on Wednesday night arrested former Congress corporator **Rakib Zakir** for his alleged role in setting the house of Congress MLA Akhanda Srinivasamurthy on fire on August 11.

The arson had turned into large-scale rioting in east Bengaluru in which four men were killed while 60 vehicles were damaged.

Zakir had appeared before the CCB for questioning but later turned elusive and switched off his phone after the arrest of an aide of former mayor Sampath Raj R.

Joint commissioner of police (crime) Sandeep Patil said: "After initial questioning, we've handed over Zakir to judicial custody on Wednesday night. We'll move the court on

Friday seeking his custody."

One of the close associates of Raj, Zakir was named among the prime suspects in the preliminary chargesheet submitted to the court by the CCB on October 12. Raj was arrested on November 16 and is in judicial custody at Central Prison after his bail plea was rejected on Tuesday. The CCB has arrested 45 suspects in the case.

Police said Zakir, directed by Raj, mobilised around 50 men, including members of Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI), and sent them near Srinivasamurthy's residence.

"Zakir and others led the group that barged into the house and set it on fire. At no point of time, they tried to pacify the mob or stop them from rioting," an officer said. **TNN**





# Byappanahalli ROB may be ready only by June

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Bengaluru: It's been more than a decade since a rail over bridge was proposed to connect the upcoming Third Coaching Terminal at Byappanahalli (TCTB) and Swami Vivekananda Metro Station. However, it has been delayed for multiple reasons, including land hurdles and Covid-19, and is only expected to be ready by June 2021, according to South Western Railway.

Work on the 900m-long ROB began in 2010-11 but was halted in 2012 after the defence ministry refused to hand over its land. It resumed in June 2019 after the ministry's nod and was supposed to be completed by June 2020. The deadline was later postponed to November 2020. The railway terminal is likely to be operational by February 2021.

"In 2012, work was stopped due to delay in receiving permission from the Army's Madras Engineers' Group. Though it restarted last year, it got delayed due to Covid-19 as there was a shortage of workers. Also, defence authorities were apprehensive of commencing the work during pandemic. We have resolved all is-



**AT SNAIL'S PACE:** The ROB will connect the upcoming Third Coaching Terminal at Byappanahalli and SV Road Metro station

sues now and work is progressing," said an official.

The ROB will connect areas like Maruthi Seva Nagar and Old Byappanahalli to Old Madras Road. It will also eliminate two level-crossing gates on the busy Bengaluru-Chennai railway line, which sees frequent passenger and goods train movement—people used to wait 72 times a day at the gates. SWR is also planning to provide a subway for two-wheelers and pedestrians.

TCTB will have seven platforms but only a few will be functional in the beginning. Work on TCTB, sanctioned in

2015-16, was supposed to be over in December 2018. However, it missed several deadlines: December 2018, March 2019, January 2020, March 2020, May 2020, October 2020, November 2020 and December 2020.

## 'Expedite doubling work at 2 sections'

Karnataka Railway Vedic member T P Lokesh said: "There is a delay in commission of doubling work at Yelahanka-Guntakal and Bengaluru-Arsikere sections. Both were supposed to be completed in 2019. Yelahanka-Makalidurga route sees heavy freight

## Activists oppose train route

Southern Railway's move to operate 6339/40 Mumbai CSTM-Nagarcoil special from December 7 with new timings and route has not gone down well with rail activists in Karnataka. Railways has decided not to run the train via KR Puram in Bengaluru and has instead opted for the Katpadi, Chittoor, Kadiri and Dharmavaram route.

"Railways' decision to bypass SWR will affect people travelling from Bengaluru to Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Raichur etc. The train also provided good connectivity to Tamil Nadu and other places like Bangarpet. It was running for around two decades and was popular between the Bengaluru and Mumbai route. We don't know why they took this decision," said Karnataka Railway Vedic member KN Krishna Prasad.

movement and Gubbi-Banasandra has several trains from Bengaluru to places like Belagavi, Hubballi and Pune. Completion of doubling work will reduce journey time on both routes." SWR officials said the doubling of Yelahanka-Doddaballapura-Makalidurga (36km) will be over by January. They said there is a decapitlay in Gubbi-Banasandra as contractors are finding it difficult to source workers and it's likely to be over by June.



# Any vaccine hesitancy will impede fight against Covid-19, say experts

## Awareness Drives Planned To Dispel Fears

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**New Delhi:** The rapid development of a vaccine against Covid-19 will be useful only if people accept it as distrust or hesitancy may impede a major public health initiative, experts and doctors said while emphasising that the benefits of vaccination hugely outweigh the side-effects, if any.

With concerns over adverse effects in some vaccine trials catching the public eye, the government feels the risks should be understood and not end up fuelling "vaccine hesitancy" on a wider scale. Accounts, often unverified or exaggerated, that speedy trials may have overlooked adverse events or compromised on efficacy and safety are circulating in social media in particular, prompt-

ing the Centre to consider a massive awareness campaign roping in celebrities and prominent political leaders.

Dr Randeep Guleria, Director, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, said concerns related to adverse events are misplaced because a large number of patients have been administered vaccines globally and there are no significant adverse events reported from any major trials so far to signal an alarm.

"The safety signals are very strong in the data that have emerged so far from the global clinical trials. None of the vaccines have shown any significant side-effects although a total of 70,000-80,000 people have been vaccinated if you put together the three major trials globally including that by AstraZeneca," Dr Guleria said.

The health ministry is keen to ensure that vaccines are not subject to adverse publicity, given the urgent need to arrest the disease and the gravity of the situation that has led to close to 15 lakh deaths globally. Offi-

cials said there is no way to prevent further "waves" without use of vaccines and safety measures like mask-use and sanitation.

"For any disease, you have to do a risk-benefit analysis. The benefit of the vaccine in breaking the chain of transmission and reducing mortality among the high risk group is much more," Dr Guleria added.

Highlighting that vaccines have played a key role in eliminating various diseases, Apollo Hospitals

**PREPARING FOR THE VACCINE** 

Group Medical Director Dr Anupam Sibal said, "It is through vaccination that diseases have been eradicated, starting with smallpox and then polio. It goes without saying that vaccines against several diseases have saved millions of lives and resulted in less severe manifestations... Vaccinology is a very

advanced scientific discipline that has resulted in the creation of amazing life-saving vaccines."

Vaccine experts say when there is a serious adverse event, it is important to determine its relationship to the vaccination.

"When thousands of people get vaccines in trials, some rare events are likely to only be picked up in Phase III or later. But also some illnesses are bound to happen to vaccinated people even if the vaccine is safe," said vaccine expert Gagandeep Kang. She explained that if an association cannot be ruled out, the researchers, sponsor and data safety monitoring board will take extra care to follow up on what might be an early safety signal.

In case of adverse events that have recently come to light from the clinical trials of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine candidate by Serum Institute, the DSMB (data and safety monitoring board) has not found the effects linked to the vaccine.



## What did the BBMP buy for ₹28 crore?

# SWEEP NOTHINGS

### Palike bought mechanical sweeping machines for city, but didn't think of a way to monitor them: CAG report

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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

It seems a lot more than dust is being swept away by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's mechanical sweeping machines it procured in 2017.

The Comptroller and Auditor General's report has found the absence of a mechanism to monitor the operation of eight mechanical sweeping machines that the BBMP purchased for Rs 27,73,80,000 in 2017.

"It is observed that the Solid Waste Management subdivision has not made any arrangements to monitor the usage of machines despite engaging a machine of high value. The reply from the BBMP is awaited," said Deputy Accountant General in an audit report.

As per the agreement between the BBMP and the supplier of the mechanical sweeping machines, each of the mechanical sweeping machines has to sweep a minimum 50 km per day and each of the machines is equipped with GPS. The BBMP Control Room has to do GPS monitoring. For claiming the operation and maintenance (O&M) cost, the supplier of mechanical sweeping machines has to submit daily sweeping videos and the engineer concerned has to certify and confirm that sweeping was done in his report.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 »



ANANTHA SUBRAMANYAM K



The CAG report has noted that although "the agency has submitted bills for period between October 2017 and December 2018 and this works out to ₹61,26,037" there is no evidence of work for the payment to be made





## Metro depot in Kothanur to stand on grave of trees

Thankfully, most of them are eucalyptus trees

| Naveen.Menezes@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

**A**bout 700 trees are set to be axed for the construction of Metro depot in Kothanur, off Bannerghatta road. Fortunately, about 629 are eucalyptus trees, which are considered to be one of the causes for the depletion of the groundwater table. Another 118 trees are also proposed to be axed to build a depot in Kadugodi. Both these depots are part of Namma Metro's Phase II project.

Over the last week, the Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) approached the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike and the Forest department to cutting down these trees. As per the directions of the High Court, the civic body has sought public opinion and has also uploaded all details related to trees on its website.

The BMRCL has cited that 629 trees, located in Kothanur depot area, fall under the exempted category as per section 08 sub-clause (7) of the Tree Act, 2015. That means the BMRCL is free to clear the trees as and when required for the project without holding public consultation. Various studies say eucalyptus trees deplete the nutrients and moisture reserves of the soil. The state

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>**

P1

**COVID-19 DEATHS** in last 24 hrs **Bengaluru** **6** Total deaths: 4,162 ACTIVE CASES: 18,938 **REST OF Karnataka** **7** Total deaths: 11,821 ACTIVE CASES: 24,689

P1



## Metro depot on grave of trees

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

government had also banned cultivation of such trees in the dry region of Karnataka.

The remaining trees – which are needed for the project – belong to species such as cashew, sapota, amla, jack fruit and honge. The transport utility has sought permission of the BBMP to axe these trees. In addition to these, the BMRCL has request axing of 15 trees at the entry line of Kothanur depot. In May this year, Noida-based ISGEC Heavy Engineering Ltd had emerged as the lowest bidder for constructing the depot. It will be used to facilitate stabling and maintenance of trains that run on the Gottigere – Nagawara section of Phase II. Although the contractors have already begun the work, the tussle over cutting down trees is holding up full-fledged work.

At the Kadugodi planta-

tion where the BMRCL plans to build a depot, about 118 trees are set to go. Other than these, the transport utility has promised to translocate 33 trees and retain about 47 trees. Some of the trees that will be axed are: hunase, honge, neem, rain tree and eucalyptus.

“For acquiring forest land, all that the BMRCL is required to do is provide an alternate land for compensatory afforestation and funds to the Forest department to maintain the newly planted saplings. The same procedure can be followed by the BBMP. We do not know why the BMRCL is wasting its time on trees, building roads, widening roads, drainage, building apartments etc., which is not their core responsibility,” Naveen, who tracks Namma Metro closely, said.

BMRCL Managing Director Ajay Seth was not available for a comment.



# What did the BBMP buy for Rs 28 crore?

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1**

During the audit, it was found an amount of Rs 8 lakh was paid under the O&M charges for the period between July 2017 and September 2017.

“Further, the agency has submitted bills for the period between October 2017 and December 2018 and this works out to Rs 61,26,037 and no evidence about payment of this amount was forthcoming from the records. A review of the files revealed that there are two sets of photographs of the machine with one bunch for December 2018 and the other bunch has no details of the month,” the CAG report stated.

On December 2, 2020, the CAG audit enquiry No. 7 directed the BBMP to provide the details of arterial and sub-arterial roads proposed for sweeping by the mechanical sweeping machine (KA41 C 1032) and the details of the arterial and sub-arterial roads where this mechanical sweeping machine was deployed during 2017-18 to 2019-20. It has also sought for copies of log books, match-out reports, details of landfills/places identified for dumping the waste collected by this sweeping machine. BBMP Garbage Contractors’ Association general secretary SN Bala-subramaniam told Bangalore Mirror that the BBMP paid extra money for purchasing eight mechanical sweeping machines. “The Tender was to purchase self-propelled

machines but the agency supplied vehicle mounted machines. The BBMP has accepted the mistake but has not taken any measures to recover the extra amount paid to the agency,” said Balasubramaniam.

Vehicle-mounted machines cost less than a self-propelled machine. The operation and maintenance of vehicle-mounted machines is much higher than self-propelled machines because a vehicle-mounted machine is fitted with two diesel engines – one for the vehicle chassis and another for driving the blower and other related hydraulic systems of the equipment and therefore the diesel consumption is high.

Emphasising the need to recover the extra amount paid to the agency, Sai Datta, a social activist, said that he had lodged a complaint with Karnataka Lokayukta seeking a probe into illegalities in purchasing mechanical sweeping machines.

“I demand the BBMP authorities recover the extra amount paid to the agency and punish the engineers responsible for this scam,” said Datta. Coming down heavily on the BBMP for not monitoring the functioning of mechanical sweeping machines, HM Venkatesh, a social activist, said that most of the flyovers and roads are full of dust and weeds. “I never come across mechanical sweeping machines working on flyovers and roads around Yelahanka and other areas,” said Venkatesh.



## No decision yet on NYE night curfew

The State Government is yet to decide on a night curfew to prevent large numbers of people from gathering on New Year's eve. A technical expert committee set up by the Health Department has suggested tightening of the rules to prevent the spread of the pandemic. Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said no decision has been taken on introducing a night curfew. "We will think of ways to prevent crowd gathering and reduce the risk of infection. No decisions have been taken so far," he said. Meanwhile, Health Minister D Sudhakar said that he will hold a meeting on Friday and take a final call on how to curb crowds after consulting Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa. BBMP Commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad has urged the State government to cancel New Year even revelry.

## Vaccination must be on priority basis: Docs

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After 'free vaccination for all' promises made during election campaign, comes the latest statement by the union government on 'selective vaccination'. So, what is it going to be? In the city, a few doctors say that the government should go for vaccination of at least 70-80 per cent of the population as the efficacy of Covid vaccines ranges from 60-94 per cent. Dr Deepak Balani (Chief of Medical Services at Sakra World Hospital) said that it is necessary to vaccinate as many as possible. Safety, efficacy, cost, availability and logistics (procurement, storage, cold chain, transport, distribution, and administration) are factors to consider. "Two doses of anti-Covid vaccine are needed for each of us which would mean India needs more than 240 crore doses of the vaccine," Dr Balani said. He was of the opinion that prioritising would become necessary. "We could possibly give it first to healthcare professionals and frontline workers who would help undertake the vaccination. Next the vulnerable populations such as the elderly and people with serious

conditions. Meanwhile, the vaccine development would hopefully evolve to develop more effective, temperature-stable vaccines that can be mass produced," he said.

Dr. Sunil Kumar K (Lead and Senior Consultant, Interventional Pulmonology, Aster CMI) said that currently close to 8-10 per cent of the people in the country were exposed to the covid-19 virus. He said in Bengaluru, around 44 per cent of the population could have been exposed to Covid. "To attain herd immunity, 67 per cent of the population will have to be Covid-free. We will have to choose which people or segments from our society who will benefit from the vaccine. So, we need to focus on the groups that are vulnerable and health workers," he said. Dr Subramanian Swaminathan - Director, Infectious Diseases, BGS Gleneagles Global Hospital) added that rather than vaccinating everyone and going for a mass roll out, it should be provided to people in a staged manner as it can help reduce the mortality and can benefit the vulnerable groups. "Trying to vaccinate everyone at one go may become a haphazard process and the most vulnerable people may be left out. So, the current plan makes sense and is a logical approach."



## State Sees Low Covid Infection for another Day



Our Bureau

**Bengaluru:** Karnataka sustained its low Covid-19 infection rate on Thursday too, reporting a total of 1,446 cases, and 13 Covid-19 deaths.

This takes the total reported Covid cases so far to 8.89 lakh, and 11,821 covid deaths. The total active cases have remained below 25,000, even as the tests have crossed one lakh a day. The government reported a positivity rate of 1.33% and case fatality rate (CFR) of 0.89%.

**1,446**  
Cases seen  
in state

**13**  
Covid deaths  
in state

Bengaluru Urban district reported 758 new cases and six deaths. The new cases both across Karnataka and Bengaluru Urban, however, exceeded the number of discharges. Except Bengaluru Urban, no other district has crossed two digits in fresh cases. Only seven districts reported deaths, while 24 districts did not report any death.



### CORONA METER

Global count reaching **65m**, fatalities cross **1.5m**

**TOTAL CASES IN INDIA**  
**9.54M (+1,064)**

<b>Active</b> 0.42M (+149*)	<b>Recovered</b> 8.98M (+907)	<b>Deaths</b> 138,694 (+8)
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Source: covid19india, 6:00 PM. \*net of recoveries/deaths (Change since 1.2am, December 03)

**Samples Tested so Far\***

**143.56** MILLION  
**1.11M** In last 24 hours\*

**POSITIVE TESTS<sup>^</sup>**

**6.64%**

Source: ICMR, \*02 Dec, ^ 3-day average

**5 Main Metros\***

[Total Cases]

■ Active ■ Recovered  
■ Deaths

Share  
In Total  
**16.33%**

<b>Delhi</b>	<b>[578324]</b>
30302	
<b>Bengaluru Urban</b>	<b>[371204]</b>
18394	
<b>Mumbai</b>	<b>[282818]</b>
14912	
<b>Chennai</b>	<b>[216119]</b>
3587	
<b>Kolkata</b>	<b>[108381]</b>
6203	

Source: covid19india.org [\*districts/metros]

### GLOBAL COUNT

<b>Total Cases</b>	<b>Deaths</b>
<b>64.99 M</b>	<b>1,502,253</b>

**Recovered 45.10 M**

Source: worldometers.info (6:00pm)