



**Bruhat Bengaluru
Mahanagara Palike**

**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE,
BANGALORE**

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Twin towers to come up in city at a cost of ₹1,251 crore

The towers housing offices will be linked to 3 metro stations

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The State Cabinet on Monday approved the construction of twin towers, housing government offices, at Anand Rao Circle at an estimated cost of ₹1,251 crore.

The proposed building would come up on the PWD land and is expected to provide skywalks from three metro stations located in the

vicinity. It would be developed on the PPP model, with not less than 25 floors in each tower. Sources said that the PWD was working out a project to link three modern skywalks, running up to a few kilometres, to ensure access to offices for metro commuters. These skywalks would link Kempegowda metro station at Majestic, Mantri Square

Sampige Road station and Vidhana Soudha metro station.

New Education Policy

Based on the recommendations of the task force of the State, the Cabinet, which met on Monday, approved the implementation of the New Education Policy.

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P1

Twin towers to come up in city

It has decided to refer three private university bills – New Horizon University Bill, 2020, The Atria University Bill, 2020, and The Acharya University Bill, 2020 – for its sub-committee for a detailed study.

However, the Cabinet approved the University of Horticultural Sciences (Amendment) Bill, 2020, and the Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Establishment Bill, 2020, to safeguard

the interest of the depositors, particularly in private limited banks. Both these would be tabled in the ongoing winter session of the State legislature.

Bhadra project

Among the major projects approved by the State cabinet is the revised detailed project report of the Upper Bhadra Project amounting to ₹21,473 crore.

The meeting presided

by Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa approved the establishment of Centre for Internet Ethical Things in collaboration with International Institute of Information Technology (IITB), Bengaluru, and World Economic Forum.

The cabinet reportedly granted three acres of gomala land for agricultural purposes to Nadoja Salumarada Thimmakka at Madigondanahalli village in Kuduru hobli, Magadi taluk, Ramanagaram dis-

trict. It also approved appointment of PPP concessionaires to implement the energy efficiency projects in streetlights in all urban local bodies and city corporations of the State where the estimated cost exceeds ₹10,000 crore.

The Cabinet has reportedly rejected granting permission to carrying out mining and transportation activities round the clock with respect of major minerals in the State.

P2

Resident doctors stage protest, demand risk allowance, stipend

Govt. says stipend hike includes risk allowance

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Demanding COVID-19 risk allowance, regular payment of stipend and exemption of tuition fee and complete functioning of non-COVID-19 care at Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI), resident (junior) doctors across the State have started an indefinite protest from Monday.

These doctors, who have come together under the banner of Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors' (KARD) held a symbolic two-hour protest demonstration in front of their respective medical colleges.

Association president Dayanand Sagar said resident doctors will hold two-hour protest demonstrations wearing black badges in their respective colleges everyday till their demands are met. "Although we have been working all through the pandemic risking our lives, we are not being paid any CO-



Doctors staging a protest at BMCRI in Bengaluru on Monday. • K. MURALI KUMAR

VID-19 risk allowance. We demand that this risk allowance be given to all residents, interns and undergraduates who were on COVID-19 duty," he said.

As all postgraduates, house surgeons and undergraduates have been involved in COVID-19 activities since the last nine months, no proper clinical academic activities have been happening in medical colleges across the State. "However, the government has been collecting regular tuition fees. We urge the government to give us fee exemption for

2020-21," Dr. Sagar said. That apart, senior residents who have been working in various institutes have not been paid their rightful salary in many institutes since their joining, a statement from the association said.

"Postgraduates in Sanjay Gandhi Institute of Orthopaedics and Indira Gandhi Institute Of Child Health have not been paid their revised stipend for the past six months. House surgeons have been working tirelessly for COVID-19 care. NEET PG as well as MBBS exams have been postponed and

there is uncertainty hovering around the current batch of house surgeons regarding extension of internship. As per the MBBS curriculum, internship has to be 365 days only and internship should not be extended," he said. The doctors met the Principal Secretary (Medical Education) on Monday and submitted their demands. "We will meet the Medical Education Minister on Tuesday and decide on the course of action," he added.

Government's response

P.G. Girish, Director of Medical Education, said the stipend of the medicos had been increased considerably amidst the pandemic and that included risk allowance. "Except for 'D' group employees, COVID-19 risk allowance is not being paid to anyone," he said.

He also refuted the claim that the doctors had not been paid their stipend in the last six months. "Let them show us their bank statements. There was a delay in releasing the stipend for October. However, that is also under process now," Dr. Girish said.

P2

More delay in resumption of non-COVID-19 care at Victoria

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Even as resident doctors from Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI) are on a protest demanding complete functioning of non-COVID-19 care at the institute, officials from the Directorate of Medical Education (DME) said the resumption of non-COVID-19 services will be further delayed due to logistic issues.

The DME had earlier announced that non-COVID-19 care will resume in BMCRI from December 1.

"While non-COVID-19 care has begun at all BMCRI-affiliated hospitals (Vani Vilas, PMSSY, Minto and Institute of Nephro Urology), it is getting delayed at Victoria Hospital owing to logistics. As the facility had been converted into a dedicated COVID-29 care one, no maintenance work had been carried out in the last nine months. We shifted the existing COVID-19 patients from Trauma and Emergency



Vani Vilas Hospital in Bengaluru. • FILE PHOTO

Care Centre (TECC) to the Tower Block in Victoria Hospital on Monday to carry out maintenance work at TECC," said P.G. Girish, Director of Medical Education.

He said the patients would

be shifted back to TECC after the maintenance work and following this, Tower Block and other wings of the hospital would be cleaned and fumigated for non-COVID-19 care.

"Although we had planned

to resume services from December 1, the process is getting delayed. However, medical students are being posted in other hospitals including Bowring, Lady Curzon Medical College and Broadway hos-

pitals," the doctor said, refusing to commit on the next date from when services would resume.

Fear of second wave?

Sources said the Medical Education Department was a little apprehensive about resuming non-COVID-19 care in the wake of an imminent second wave. "With experts warning that the second wave will be severe, we are worried if there will be an influx of COVID-19 patients. We will have to wait and watch," another senior official said. However, the Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors said medical students were losing out on their practical classes due to the delay.

"The hospital once had a staggering 3,000 outpatients a day and 75-100 surgeries were being conducted. But surgeons here have not touched the scalpel in the last nine months. We are at the risk of becoming unskilled doctors," KARD president Dayanand Sagar said.

P3

Come out with health scheme for seniors in view of COVID-19: HC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Monday asked the Union and State governments to come out with a scheme to extend medical help to senior citizens especially in the light of the plight of aged persons during COVID-19 pandemic.

While declining to issue any directions to public or private sector health insurance companies to issue specific insurance policies to

FROM THE COURT

senior citizens as sought in a PIL petition, the Court also directed both the government to inform the available schemes in relation to health of senior citizens.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice S.Vishwajith Shetty issued the direction during the hearing of a PIL petition filed by city-based Letzkit

Foundation.

Stating that the Court cannot pass orders to issue policies either free of cost or at affordable premium as the policies are issued based on various parameters, including commercial factors, the Bench reminded the Governments about apex court's verdict that right to health is a fundamental right of citizens while directing government to come out with a scheme to secure health of senior citizens.

P4

State registers less than 1,000 cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The State on Monday reported 998 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total number of cases to 8,94,004. With 11 deaths, the toll rose to 11,867. This is apart from 19 deaths of patients due to non-COVID-19 reasons.

Bengaluru Urban reported 501 cases, taking its tally to 3,74,525. It was in June last that the city had recorded around 500, after which cases spiked. With seven deaths coming from Bengaluru, the toll in this district rose to 4,190. Active cases in Bengaluru touched 19,269. As many as 1,601 persons were discharged

on Monday, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,57,351. Of the remaining 24,767 active patients, 279 were being monitored in the ICU. While the positivity rate for the day stood at 1.30 %, the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) touched 1.10%.

Tests reduce

The number of tests reduced to 76,471 as against the average over one lakh conducted daily. Sources said this was because the number of samples collected and tested are usually lesser on weekends. Monday's 76,471 tests include 69,999 RT-PCR tests. With this, the total number of tests rose to 1,17,89,715.

P4

COVID-19: Deadline cannot be set for making vaccine available to all: Sudhakar

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU**

Refusing to set any deadline for making COVID-19 vaccine available to common persons in the State, Health and Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar on Monday said that it was difficult to do so until WHO or ICMR approves the vaccine for public use.

"Vaccine protocol is yet to be arrived at. It is to be seen whether vaccine has to be given once or twice within a reasonable time. We are expecting the availability of the vaccine soon. But a specific dateline for public vaccination cannot be set," the Minister told the Legislative Council on the opening day of the winter session. While there has been no vaccine for many virus, 50 companies are involved in vaccine development for COVID-19 of which 25 companies have



Minister for Health and Medical Education K. Sudhakar in the Legislative Council on Monday, •K. MURALI KUMAR

reached the clinical trial stage, he pointed out.

Dr. Sudhakar said that anticipating the availability of the vaccine at the earliest, the State government has been preparing logistic support. "We have identified about 2.7 lakh persons from both public and private sectors to receive the shots in the first phase along with

those in vulnerable groups such as senior citizens and those with comorbidities," he said, adding that third phase trials for vaccine was underway in the State.

When Congress member P.R. Ramesh expressed his concern over involvement of private sector in distribution of vaccine, Dr. Sudhakar said that though vaccination will be started through government facilities, the private sector will have to be roped in. "About 66,800 public personnel and about 35,300 private sector personnel have been identified for vaccination purpose," he added.

To a question by Congress member M. Narayanswamy on whether patient details had been compromised since patients were receiving calls from agencies offering help, Dr. Sudhakar said no details had been given out.

Excess charge to be refunded

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU**

The government will ensure that private hospitals return any excess money charged for treatment beyond what is fixed by the government, Health and Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar has said.

As many as 122 complaints had been received by the Suvarna Arogya Suraksha Trust for overcharging and notices have been issued to them for action. "The practice of referring COVID-19 patients to private hospitals had been stopped since there were adequate beds available in government facilities," he added.

Air quality in Bengaluru better this November: Study

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) have revealed that pollution levels for November in Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chennai were comparatively better than that of November 2019, but still below the prescribed WHO standards. This conclusion was drawn by Greenpeace India, which analysed the data to find that Bengaluru recorded only 12 days in the month where the PM2.5 concentration remained under the prescribed WHO standards.

"The reduction in PM2.5 emissions ranged from 16-37%, however, the air quality in all three cities still remains higher than the prescribed WHO standards (25µg/m3)," said Greenpeace India in a press release.

In Bengaluru, the average

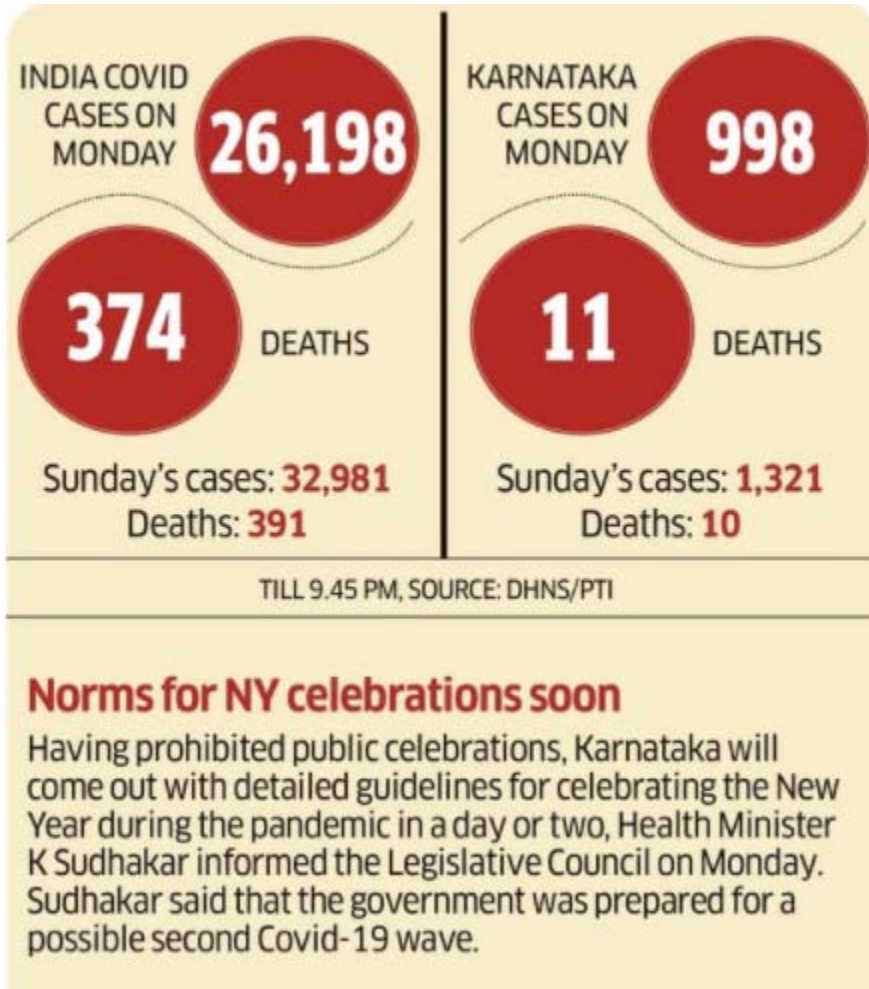
concentration of PM2.5 this November recorded was 33.49µg/m3 as compared to 40.33µg/m3 in November 2019, which means the average concentration of PM2.5 reduced by 16.96%, the release went on to note.

According to researchers, Bapuji Nagar and Jayanagar remained hotspots with an average PM2.5 concentration of 42µg/m3 and 39µg/m3 respectively. BTM Layout was the least polluted area with an average PM2.5 concentration around 20µg/m3.

The Greenpeace India report also linked deaths of air pollution levels. "According to an online tool developed by IQAir AirVisual and Greenpeace Southeast Asia, air pollution from PM2.5 and nitrogen dioxide were responsible for 7,577; 6,228; and 6,374 premature deaths respectively in Bengaluru, Hyderabad,

and Chennai from January 4 to September 4, 2020," read the release.

Climate campaigner at Greenpeace India, Avinash Chanchal urged government agencies to adopt clean energy reforms. "Apart from industries, vehicular pollution continues to be a major source of pollution in these cities. Expansion of the city area and population, along with growth in economic activities in the peri-urban areas, has resulted in high vehicle ownership rates. It's high time that the governments and local authorities adopt systemic reforms on clean energy and transport that includes promotion of decentralized model of renewable energy, generation of green jobs, measures taken to promote electric vehicles and rebuilding trust in public transport," he said.



P1

Docs on Covid grind not paid for months

Association says 69 hospitals across state have defaulted

SURAKSHA P
BENGALURU, DHNS

Senior resident doctors (SRs) in 69 government hospitals (district, taluk, superspeciality and commu-

nity health centres) and medical colleges across Karnataka haven't been paid salaries for the past four months of the pandemic, according to a list shared by the Karnataka Association for Resident Doctors (KARD).

Out of these, 16 hospitals come under the department of medical education while 53 are under the health department.

Holding a symbolic protest on Monday, the KARD said many doctors didn't receive pay for three months.

Salary within a week: Sudhakar

Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar assured resident doctors that their salaries will be released within a week. "The delay is due to technical

reasons," he said. Until then, the administrative bodies of the colleges have been instructed to pay the doctors.

Details on Page 3

As per the data shared by the association, 57 resident doctors at the Shivamogga Institute of Medical Sciences weren't paid for three months, 38

at the Chamrajnagar Institute of Medical Sciences (CIMS) weren't paid for two and a half months, 54 at the Bangalore Medical College and Research

Institute (BMCRI) didn't receive salary for two months, while 80 doctors of the KR Hospital, Mysore Medical College and Research Institute (MMCRI) went without pay for a month.

Dr C P Nanjaraj, Dean, MMCRI, told *DH* that the doctors haven't been paid only for November. "We have to compile the attendance from the places where they were posted. This will be done latest by December 15."

► **Doctors, Page 3**

P1

Active cases below 4L, a first in 4-plus months

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

For the first time in four and a half months, the number of active Covid-19 cases in India dropped below four lakh, as the declining trend in fresh cases continues.

According to the Union Health Ministry, India reported 3,96,729 lakh active cases on Monday. This is the lowest since July 20 when the number of active cases was pegged at less than four lakh (3,90,459).

Daily fatalities also fell below 400 on Monday after more than five months, even as there are no signs of a second peak yet.

As many as 391 Covid-19 deaths were reported in the past 24 hours, with Delhi reporting the maximum casualties (69), followed by West Bengal (46) and Maharashtra (40).

"The drop in cases and deaths compared to the daily trends over the last four-five months is definitely a relief," said Giridhar Babu, an epidemiologist at the Public Health Foundation of India. "With the daily cases in the 30,000 range and deaths in



A couple in PPE exchanges garlands after the bride tested positive for Covid-19 in Baran, Rajasthan. REUTERS

the four-hundred range, it's more of a plateau at relatively lower levels. The first wave hasn't hit the bottom yet. The good news is that the testing numbers are alright at the national level."

Not everyone, however, is convinced with such good news.

"I am surprised why the numbers haven't picked up in north India after Diwali and Bihar elections. States like UP and Bihar, that account for 22%-23% of tests nationally, report very few positive cases," health economist Rijo John, a consultant to the WHO and a visiting faculty at IIM-Kozhikode, told *DH*.

Cabinet clears Bengaluru 'twin towers' project

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka Cabinet on Monday is learnt to have approved the construction of 'twin towers' at Anand Rao Circle in Bengaluru at an estimated cost of Rs 1,251 crore. According to sources, the building will have up to 50 floors.

With an area of 15 lakh sqft, the twin towers will accommodate 40% central and 60% state government offices. There will also be 25 common meeting halls. It will be connected to both Kempegowda and Mantri Mall Metro stations.

An elevated pathway to Vidhana Soudha is also proposed, sources said.

Details on Page 4

Hosur line doubling a boost for long-distance trains

Work may be completed by 2022-end or early 2023

RASHEED KAPPAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

The bids opened recently for the doubling of the Yeshwantpur-Channasandra and Baiyappanahalli-Hosur lines by the Karnataka Rail Infrastructure Company (K-RIDE) could alter the dynamics of long-distance railway connectivity to Bengaluru. The new Baiyappanahalli terminal will play a big role in this shift.

It is estimated that the track-doubling will be completed either by 2022-end or early 2023. Work on the Baiyappanahalli-Hosur stretch has already begun.

"Doubling the line will ease schedules of trains bound for Palakkad, Coimbatore, Kan-

yakumari and other destinations," rail analyst Sanjeev Dyamannavar told *DH*.

Enhanced capacity of the Hosur line could help the railways introduce more trains towards Kerala and Tamil Nadu from the Baiyappanahalli terminal. Currently, many trains bound for Kanyakumari and Coimbatore are forced to take the Jolarpettai route to avoid the congested Hosur line.

The projects are to be executed in three packages inclusive of signalling outdoor works at the Yeshwantpur bypass, Lottegollahalli, Hebbal, Banaswadi, Bellandur, Heelalige, Anekal Road and Maranayakanahalli; major and minor bridges/Road Under Bridges (RUB).

Tenders for doubling the



48-km Baiyappanahalli-Hosur line were floated about three years ago.

But nothing much moved thereafter as the state government and the South Western Railway (SWR) could not strike

a cost-sharing agreement.

The track doubling will require the elimination of multiple Level Crossings (LCs). There are over 10 LCs on the Yeswanthpur-Hosur stretch, including the ones at Kagg-

dasapura, Carmelaram, Hebbal, Sanjaynagar, Nagawara and Chinnappanahalli.

These crossings have been a perennial source of severe traffic congestion, particularly during peak hours.

Enhanced capacity of this line will eventually boost the suburban rail project.

Besides aiding the introduction of more trains, additional stations will have to be built to maximise the track's true potential.

10 more stations

Rail activists had also sought at least 10 more stations on the line, including at Doddanekundi, Munnekolala, Huskur Road and KHB Layout Suryanagar.

Since K-RIDE is also tasked with the suburban rail implementation, Dyamannavar feels it could plan and ensure seamless integration between the two projects.

Besides, double-tracking will also help the future extension of the suburban rail network from Heelalige to Hosur, he said.

P2

998 new Covid cases in state, 11 fatalities

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka, on Monday, reported 998 new cases of Covid-19 and 11 related fatalities, taking the total number of infections to 8,94,004 and the death toll to 11,867. The day also saw 1,601 patients getting discharged after recovery. A total of 76,471 samples were tested on Monday alone. As many as 6,472 among them were rapid antigen tests.

Out of the fresh cases reported, 501 were from Bengaluru Urban alone. Seven out of the total deaths reported are from Bengaluru Urban. Among the districts where the new cases were reported, Chikkaballapur accounted for 48, Hassan 43, Mysuru 34 and Tumakuru 32.

P2

Protecting peri-urban areas key to saving Bengaluru, says study

BENGALURU, DHNS

For a city that is fast losing its greenery and natural landscape, Bengaluru needs to protect its peri-urban areas for a sustainable future, researchers from three universities have warned, stressing the need for a policy for the transition zones.

The work on the 'Structure and composition of field margin vegetation in the rural-urban interface of Bengaluru' was a collaborative effort between the Institute of Social and Economic Change, Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology and Universität Kassel, Germany.

The researchers studied 1.4 lakh-hectares in Doddaballapur where they found that the built-up area has increased from 7.10% in 1991 to 19.06% in 2018. They noted that it was high time to monitor the increased built-up area in former suburban towns such as Yelahanka, Hesaraghatta, Hoskote and Attibele.

The transition zones between rural and urban areas, the researchers said, might serve as repositories of bio-



The study shows peri-urban areas have rich biodiversity.

diversity, more specifically of indigenous species that are not available in the wild. The study found 75 species of flora in peri-urban areas of Bengaluru (like Yelahanka) as opposed to 48 species in the rural zone.

Sunil Nautiyal, the lead researcher and professor at the Centre for Ecological Economics and Natural Resources at ISEC, said urgent changes in the policy were needed to protect the transition zones. "Transition zones act as a big buffer to protect the core urban areas. They will play a major role in Ben-

galuru's environment, from its weather to the growing human-animal conflict. It is important to protect and conserve them," he said.

The study results also showed that peri-urban area had rich biodiversity. "The rural zone has 48 species, whereas the highly dynamic peri-urban area, which is the transition zone, contains 75 species," the researchers said, citing the shift from subsistence farming to commercial farming.

Nautiyal said monitoring was required to ensure that biodiversity was continued in those areas. He said various government agencies like BDA, BMRDA and BBMP must draw a master plan that would take into consideration the role of the transition zones.

"A lot of work is done to protect rural and urban local systems, but there is no policy on transition zones. The policy makers should decide whether the transition zone is a 10-km or 20-km area surrounding the city and draw up plans to protect its landscape, starting with regulations on the change of land use."

Norms on NY parties soon: Sudhakar

BENGALURU, DHNS

Having prohibited public celebrations, Karnataka will come up with detailed guidelines for celebrating New Year during the pandemic in a day or two, Health Minister K Sudhakar informed the Legislative Council on Monday.

Sudhakar said that the government was ready to tackle a possible second wave of Covid-19.

"We're taking all measures to prepare for such an event," he said, adding that restricting New Year celebrations will also be important to curb the spread of the pandemic.

On complaints of overcharging and related issues faced by Covid-19 patients and victims, he said that the grievance cell of Suvarna Arogya Suraksha Trust had received 122 complaints, adding that directions

were issued to initiate action against erring parties.

JD(S) member S L Bhojgowda noted that families of Covid-19 victims were being charged lakhs of rupees by hospitals and there were instances when hospitals had refused to hand over bodies, pending payment. Highlighting the plight of one Padmakshi, a teacher from Moodbidire in Dakshina Kannada district, Bhojgowda said she was charged Rd 6.5 lakh for hospitalisation and treatment.

Sudhakar said cases of overcharging generally pertained to cases where admissions to hospitals were made without the government referral system for Covid-19 patients.

To a question on appointment of doctors and medical staff during the pandemic, Sudhakar said the government was mulling over extending the services of 6,500 contract personnel.

Docs on Covid grind not paid for months

Doctors, from Page 1

Dr Caron Harshitha, Forensic Medicine SR at CIMS, told *DH* that the doctors were entitled to Rs 60,000 per month. "We are posted to rural areas where we have to fend for ourselves with no accommodation and pay."

The file has not even moved in a few colleges, said Dr Dayanand Sagar, president of KARD. "Salaries haven't been credited even once. At BMCRI, we have been told that the stipend for two more

months will be credited soon," he said.

The doctors have also demanded allowance for Covid work outside hospitals. As academic activities came to a grind in the past nine months, they demand a refund of their fees (junior residents have paid Rs 1,20,000, superspeciality residents have paid Rs 2,30,000) for the current academic year.

For MBBS house surgeons who are doing compulsory rotatory internships, there are no guidelines on when their

internship will come to an end. They have been told that it may be extended by three to four months. These students have to prepare for MD or MS entrance exams but are engaged in endless Covid work, they say.

Dr Gayatri V, a BMCRI house surgeon, said, "Internship is a training period when we have to do undergo mandatory training in hospital services for 365 days, which we have competed. But here, we're doing only Covid.

We want the skillset that a normal merit student possesses. We want clarity on when our internship will end."

Dr Namrata C, a postgraduate student of BMCRI, said that in the past nine months, the government has failed to recruit doctors for Covid duties and has exploited postgraduate students. "We demand medical colleges to be exempt from Covid work," she said.

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P3



Resident doctors stage a protest in front of Bangalore Medical College on Monday, demanding payment of Covid risk allowance. *DH* PHOTO/S K DINESH

Resident doctors will be paid within a week: minister

BENGALURU, DHNS: It has come to the notice of the government that the salaries to resident doctors, who have been deployed on mandatory service, have not been credited, Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar said.

The delay is due to technical reasons, he said, and assured that the salaries will be released within a week. Until then, the administrative bodies of the medical colleges have been instructed to pay the doctors. The chief secretary to the department

has discussed the matter with the department of finance, he added.

Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI) Dean Dr C R Jayanthi, said, "Resident doctors have made a request for Covid-19 allowance and refund of fees for this academic year. We will have to forward it to the government to see what it decides."

She said the issue needs to be discussed with the Chairman of the Governing Council (Medical Education Min-

ister). "Online classes did go on during the pandemic. Final year MBBS exams are in March. The completion date for their internship has to be decided by the Vice Chancellor. I need to write a letter to him," she said.

As far as non-Covid services at Victoria Hospital are concerned, the new OPD work is on the verge of completion. "We are looking at December 20. The tower block should also be ready by then. Except Medicine and Surgery, all other OPDs are functional," she said.

twin towers project

**Rs 1,251-cr project
planned at Anand
Rao Circle**

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Cabinet on Monday is learnt to have approved the construction of 'twin towers' at Anand Rao Circle in Bengaluru at an estimated cost of Rs 1,251 crore.

According to sources, the building will have up to 50 floors. The twin towers, which will have an area of 15 lakh sqft, will accommodate 40% central government offices and 60% state government. There will be 25 common meeting halls. It will be connected to both Kempegowda and Mantri Mall Metro stations, and an elevated pathway to Vidhana Soudha is also proposed, sources said.

The project will be taken up under public-private partnership (PPP) model. The National Buildings Construction Corporation Ltd will implement this in consultation with the state government.

The 'twin towers' project was announced by Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa in his 2020-21 budget, for which Rs 400 crore was shown as expenditure. The idea is "to facilitate all the government departments to function in one building."

The Cabinet also cleared "planned and successful implementation of New Education Policy notified by the Central government," while Bills to set up three new pri-

vate universities - New Horizon University, Atria University and Acharya University - were referred to a Cabinet sub-committee.

Administrative approval for the revised detailed project report of the Upper Bhadra Project, which will cost Rs 21,473.67 crore, was also cleared, sources said. In a statement, Water Resources Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi said 60% of funding for the project will be by the Centre and 40% will be borne by the state. He also said that the Centre will soon declare this as a national project.

The Cabinet is understood to have deferred its decision on granting permission for round-the-clock mining and transportation of major minerals in the state.

Environmentalist Saalumarada Thimmakka will get three acres of gomala land for agricultural purpose, the Cabinet decided. The land is situated in Madigondanahalli in Ramanagara district. The Cabinet also cleared 101 acres land for the Tourism department to construct a ropeway between Kolluru and Kodachadri Hill in Udupi district.

The Protection of Interest of Depositors in Financial Establishment (Amendment) Bill, 2020, the Karnataka State Mental Health Care Rules, 2020, the University of Horticultural Sciences (Amendment) Bill, 2020 and the Karnataka Education Department Services (Department of Public Instructions)(Recruitment)(Amendment) Rules, 2020 were approved by the Cabinet, sources said.

TV actor Divya Bhatnagar succumbs to Covid-19

MUMBAI, DHNS: TV actor Divya Bhatnagar, who was diagnosed with Covid-19, passed away at the SevenHills Hospital in Mumbai on Monday.

Divya (34), who was part of teleserial *Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai*, *Udaan*, *Jeet Gayi Toh Piyaa Morre* and *Vish*, and reality shows, was living in Mumbai alone. She was suffering from pneumonia and last month was diagnosed as suffering from Covid-19. Over the past few days, she was critical and was on ventilator support. Actor Shilpa Shirodkar said: "I am so heartbroken...RIP my dearest Divya."

Her friend and actor Devoleena Bhattarjee wrote: "I know life was too hard on you. The pain was intolerable but I know today you must be in a better place and free from all the sorrows, pain, sadness, lies."

COVID-19 Tracker

States/UT	Active	Infected	Death	Daily cases	Daily Death
Maharashtra	75,767	18,55,341	47,774	3,075	40
Kerala	59,608	6,39,665	2,441	3,273	23
Karnataka	24,767	8,94,004	11,867	998	11
West Bengal	23,829	5,05,054	8,771	2,214	48
Delhi	22,486	5,93,924	9,706	1,674	63
Uttar Pradesh	21,732	5,56,397	7,944	1,453	20
Haryana	21,671	2,45,288	2,611	1,392	23
Chhattisgarh	19,589	2,48,232	3,010	1,423	21
Gujarat	14,493	2,20,168	4,095	1,380	14
Madhya Pradesh	13,443	2,15,957	3,347	1,452	10
Others	85,787	37,29,868	39,382	7,864	101

3,83,172

TOTAL ACTIVE CASES

91,78,621

TOTAL RECOVERED

97,03,898

TOTAL INFECTED

1,40,948

TOTAL COVID DEATHS

1,157

NON-COVID DEATHS*

DHNS/PTI (10 PM, December 7)

*Patients dead due to non-Covid reasons

HC to state: Come out with med insurance for elderly

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

The Karnataka High Court on Monday directed the state and central governments to come out with a scheme to extend medical insurance to senior citizens.

A division bench of Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice S Vishwajith Shetty was hearing a public interest litigation filed by city-based Letzkit Foundation.

Declining to issue directions as prayed by the petitioner to the authorities to issue medical insurance policies to senior citizens at a lower premium or at affordable cost, the

division bench said that it cannot pass such orders in this regard as the insurance policies will be issued based on various factors including commercial.

“As this court cannot issue a direction to issue insurance policy to senior citizens, we direct the state and central governments to come out with a scheme for senior citizens, especially in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic”, the bench said.

The bench observed that it is repeatedly held by the apex court that right to health is a right under Article 21 of the Constitution.

CONTINUED ON: P3

CHALLENGING HC

State govt to approach SC on BBMP poll

ENS @Bengaluru

THE Karnataka government is approaching the Supreme Court in appeal against the recent High Court direction on conducting BBMP elections at the earliest.

Recently, the high court directed the government to conduct BBMP elections within six weeks from the date of issuing reservation notification. A meeting was convened under the chairmanship of Law Minister JC Madhuswamy, along with MLAs from Bengaluru.

Madhuswamy said that a dedicated BBMP Act is planned for the city and it has to be kept outside the existing Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act. Besides this, the new caste census will be out in 2021, and will give a more accurate picture of the population of Bengaluru. "Based on the latest census report, it will be difficult for us to conduct elections soon, we need time and are planning to approach the apex court," the minister said.

The minister said that elections cannot be conducted for the existing 198 wards as the State government has already issued notification for 243 wards, and this has been approved by all party legislators. "We are also planning to bring in a separate BBMP bill in this session. Based on this, we will approach the Supreme Court," he added.

BBMP joint legislature committee chairman S Raghu, and MLAs Satish Reddy, SR Vishwanath, N Munirathna, Aravind Limbavali and Ramalinga Reddy were present.



EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

NINE months into the pandemic, the Karnataka government has not looked into the demands of ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists) workers, and their financial stability remains largely ignored by the State and Central governments.

Though they are at the forefront of the State's fight against

Covid, several have not received their monthly wages of ₹4,000 for several months. Their main demand of hiking their honorarium to ₹12,000 remains unfulfilled, as they have failed to meet Health Minister K Sudhakar.

Mallikeshwari, an ASHA worker at Sultanpalya Primary Health Centre in RT Nagar, has not received her wages from September 2019 to August 2020, but has continued with her duties.

"Ever since Covid hit, we have been identifying houses, taking down details of Covid-positive patients, conducting door-to-door surveys of primary and secondary contacts, and also carrying out our regular health duties," Mallikeshwari said. She, like many others, did not receive the paltry sum of ₹1,000 per month, promised by the Centre for Covid-related work.

Rama TC, state committee

member, All India United Trade Union Centre, said, "Owing to technical problems on the RCH portal, several women have not received their pay for months. Though an ASHA worker caters to a population of 2,500 in a city like Bengaluru, they are expected to serve in other areas of the city as well. They conduct 56 odd health surveys for the health department."

Sudhakar told TNIE that

Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa is committed to ensuring the welfare of Asha workers. "I met representatives from ASHA workers association. Government guidelines clearly mention that they are volunteers/activists and not contractual or outsourced employees. Incentives are paid based on performance. But in Karnataka, we pay ₹6,000 per month, apart from incentives," he said.

MAIN DEMANDS

- Hike salary to ₹12,000, as opposed to variable honorarium, incentive-based pay
- Provide masks, hand sanitiser and PPE kits to all ASHA workers

Nine months on, ASHA workers still unpaid, demands ignored

B'LURU WATCH			
Covid figures for Dec 7			
Cases	Deaths	Cured	Active
501	7	861	19,269

P1

KARNATAKA COVID TRACKER CASES IN 24HRS: 998 DEATHS IN 24HRS: 11 TOTAL: 8,94,004 TOTAL DEATHS: 11,867	Bengaluru Urban 501 Chikkaballapura 48 Hassan 48 Mysuru 34 Tumakuru 32 Kalaburagi 27 Yadgir 26 Kolar 25 Chikkamagaluru 23	CASE BREAK-UP ON MONDAY 4 women and 7 men succumbed to Covid on Monday. 6 of the 11 the casualties (55%) were senior citizens - aged 60 or above. The average fatality age was 63.	ON MONDAY DISCHARGED: 1,601 TOTAL DISCHARGED: 857,351 ACTIVE CASES: 24,767	PATIENT STATUS A total of 76,471 tests were conducted in the state on Monday. Of these 6,472 were Rapid Antigen Detection tests. RT-PCR and other tests made the rest. A total of 1.18 crore tests have been conducted so far.	Bengaluru Urban 7 Dakshina Kannada 3 Ballari 1	FATALITIES ON MONDAY	Bengaluru Urban 19,269 Tumakuru 466 Hassan 389 Dakshina Kannada 387 Mandya 346 Bengaluru Rural 325 Mysuru 316 Belagavi 279 Chitradurga 215
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OFFERING HOPE Docs Say Even If Antibodies Disappear Six Months On, Immune Cells Remember First Attack And Mount A Response

P2

Missing antibodies does not mean loss of immunity, say experts citing study

Sunitha.Rao@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: A US-based study that individuals exposed to Covid-19 can have a fairly long immune response has sparked guarded hope among experts involved in managing the pandemic in the state, as they feared immunity would be short-lived since many infected people had no antibodies.

Dr V Ravi, former head of neurovirology, Nimhans, said the study revealed most people — not everybody — showed an immune response against the infection after recovery. However, the study is awaiting peer review and publication in a scientific journal.

“The study shows that while antibodies wane, the immune cell response is present and this is very encouraging,” said Dr Ravi. “We hope it will last long.”

Conducted by researchers at the Centre for Infectious Diseases and Vaccine Research, La Jolla Institute of Immunology, California, the study claims memory cells help people who have recovered from an infection fend off another attack even six months after the initial infection.

In 90% of the respondents of 185 recovered patients, immune memory consisting of three immunological compartments was measurable even five months later, indicating that durable immunity against Covid-19 is a possibility.



LONG-LASTING: Experts say Covid-19 is similar to SARS outbreak and studies show that people who contracted SARS had immunity for two years

Although there have been suspected reinfections across the state, they comprise less than 1% of the total cases, points out Dr Giridhara R Babu, epidemiologist and member of the state's Covid-19 technical advisory committee.

“Although the study is pending peer review, I am relieved that immunity lasts long and it will settle at least some unresolved questions,” Dr Babu said. “It's wrong to say the absence of antibodies implies no protection. Antibodies will wane, but memory cells will remain intact.”

He said this means that the immune system will remember the

previous infection and mount a response when next exposed to the virus. “That's a sign of real protection,” Dr Babu said. “Antibodies for any disease will not remain in the blood forever.”

Dr Deepak Sehgal, professor and head, department of Life Sciences, Shiv Nadar University, Greater Noida, concurred with Dr Babu, saying there is a high similarity between SARS that broke in 2002 and the ongoing pandemic.

“Though antibodies may reduce over the years, memory cells in the immune system are activated when there is an exposure for the second time,” Dr

LONG-TERM IMPLICATIONS

Gautam Menon, professor, departments of physics and biology, Ashoka University, Haryana, who has been working on computational models of the Covid-19 spread in the country, says that in models, it is easy to account for the slow loss of immunity from infection and to project what this might imply for the pandemic in the long term.

“The most likely consequence is annual waves of infection if Covid-19 is not completely eliminated,” Menon said. “But, for Covid-19, we don't

know whether a significant number of those infected will indeed be susceptible to infection six months to a year later. We also don't know just how long immunity offered by vaccines will last.” However, this could be true of other infectious diseases too and influenza is an example, says Menon. “Catching it [influenza] once guarantees a person only immunity in the short term. However, if you catch measles when you are young, your immunity lasts a lifetime,” Menon said.

Sehgal said. However, he admitted the US-based study does not have scientific reference yet to prove its point.

Different strains

Dr Sehgal quotes a 2007 study by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), US, that said reinfection was possible for severe acute respiratory syndrome after three years. Researchers had studied 176 people who had SARS and noticed that they harboured specific antibodies for an average two years. There was a significant reduction in immunoglobulin in the third year. The study suggested people may be susceptible to rein-

fection after three years of initial exposure, he said.

Dr Sehgal said Covid-19 reinfections are possible since the chances of different strains of the virus infecting people in different episodes are high. He said different strains will have different levels of infectivity.

“There are similarities between SARS and the current pandemic,” Dr Sehgal said. “It is said that there are 16 different strains of SARS-CoV2 across the world so far. Though there is no proof, it is possible reinfections can occur. The strains of the virus affecting a person in two different episodes could be different.”

P2

Active cases increase in B'luru over past week

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The Covid-19 active caseload in Bengaluru may have fallen from more than 50,000 in October to less than 20,000 by the end of November, but there has been a slight increase in the number of people recovering from the disease over the past few weeks.

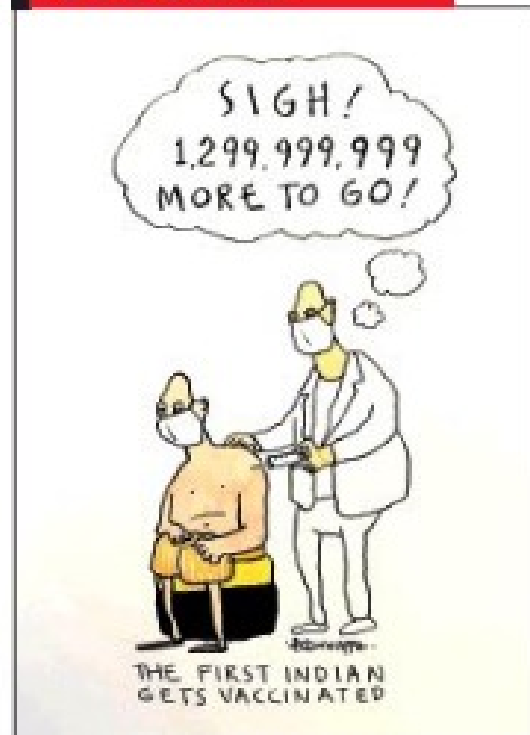
A report titled 'Covid-19 mega cities: Trend analysis', compiled by Jeevan Raksha, states that on November 28, Bengaluru had 18,366 active cases, which increased to 19,185 by December 5 — a 4% rise. In a week's time, active cases increased by 819. Jeevan Raksha is an initiative of Proxima, a management consultant firm.

The data research and analysis team, which has been working on compiling Covid data from all metro cities, points out that the active case burden in Bengaluru is gradually increasing.

As per data available, over the past two weeks, Delhi has been successful in bringing down its active caseload by nearly 15,000 and in the past week alone and the lockdown in the national capital reduced it by almost 10,000. Active cases have dropped in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, and Ahmedabad too.

As on Monday, there were a total 19,269 active cases in Bengaluru. The city has so far seen 4,190 Covid fatalities. Bengaluru has been successful in substantially reducing the number of deaths in November when compared to October, says Mysore Sanjeev, convener, Jeevan Raksha.

OFFSIDE



As per the report, 75% of the four million tests conducted by mega cities between November 7 and December 5, were conducted by Bengaluru (1.3 million) and Delhi (1.6 million) alone. It further adds that Delhi's gross test positivity rate (including retests) of 9.8% reflects the high symptomatic tests and also strained testing capacity. Bengaluru's gross test positivity rate stood at 1.9%, indicating improved testing capacity and high testing of low risk people.

The report also says Bengaluru tops the list among five mega cities on tests per million people (TPM) with 3.7 lakhs tests. The corresponding TPM data from other mega cities are: Delhi 3.5 lakh, Ahmedabad 2.8 lakh, Chennai 1.8 lakh and Mumbai 96,000.

Cluster outbreak fears as 45 garment workers in Maddur test positive

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mandya: Forty-five workers employed in factories located in Somanahalli Industrial Area in Maddur taluk tested positive for Covid-19 on Monday, sparking fears of a cluster outbreak similar to one in Nanjangud during the nationwide lockdown in March-April and spreading jitters among factory workers.

The situation in the industrial area remained tense for a few hours as employees struck work, voicing fears that they would catch the infection. Factory managements threatened workers with severe action, including termination of services if they did not return to work.

Employees finally resumed their

duties after factory managements agreed to increase safety measures, including extending 10-days paid leave for those who catch the infection.

The management of Gill Wood factory, where the 45 workers tested positive, said they will conduct Covid-19 tests on all employees before restarting operations.

Factory managements say more than 7,000 people are employed in different garment factories in the area and the fear of the virus spreading to the entire industrial area is palpable as it would become a Covid-19 hotspot.

Garment workers say they are caught between the devil and the deep seas as they are under pressure to continue work or face retrenchment. Many of them had no income

during the lockdown. "We don't have much choice," one worker said. "District authorities have to take appropriate action and save us from this precarious situation."

A senior government official from the labour department said a team from the health and labour departments will visit the industrial area on Tuesday. Depending on the situation a decision on whether to shut down all factories or keep them open will be taken.

"Factory managements have been directed to strictly follow Covid-19 safety protocols," the official said. "It is a serious matter that such a large number of garment workers have contracted the virus. We will take an appropriate decision soon."

P2

Allow non-Covid services in hosp: Medicos

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: More than 200 medics of Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute staged a protest in the college campus on Monday, demanding complete resumption of non-Covid services in hospitals associated with their institution.

Students said they were missing out on practical training at outpatient units since April, when Victoria Hospital began treating only Covid cases. All other medical colleges in the state except Victoria have resumed non-Covid treatment.

Following the protest, authorities called for a meeting and non-Covid services are now slated to begin from December 21 at Victoria hospital.



Syed Asif

BADLY TRAINED? Bangalore Medical College and Research Institution medics on Monday staged a protest, demanding resumption of non-Covid services

Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors (KARD) has demanded exclusive non-Covid care at all government medical colleges in Karnataka. "The pandemic has led to collateral dam-

age for non-Covid patients who are being made to run around for treatment. Patients are missing out on treatment and we are missing out on training. It could have been managed better," pro-

testing doctors told TOI.

Except for first-year MBBS students, all medics are trained for a minimum three hours in the clinic every day, but the pandemic has disrupted that.

KARD representatives also met authorities in the medical education department and sought exemption from paying tuition fee for the academic year.

"Classes have not been held since March, but we are made to pay Rs 1.1 lakh tuition fee for MD/MS course," said Dr Dayanand Sagar, president, KARD. "We have also missed out on seminars and case conferences."

KARD members also demanded the state clear pending stipend payment of senior resident doctors in government hospitals and medical colleges.

P2

Govt plans to cover 80 cr people in second phase of vaccination

Sushmi.Dey@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: In the second phase of vaccination against Covid-19, the government plans to significantly scale up operations to cover around 80 crore people — 60% of the country's population — in an exercise aimed at achieving herd immunity. The first phase, which will cover health and frontline workers as well as "vulnerable" sections, is expected to roll out from January and end latest by July.

The second, more ambitious phase in terms of targets, could start even before the priority group has been fully covered, depending on improved availability of vaccines. The first phase it-



The first phase will cover health and frontline workers as well as vulnerable sections

self could reduce mortality by 80-85% from the highly infectious disease, official sources said.

This is intended to cover sections of the population where prevalence of comorbidities is higher. The age criteria for second pha-

se is likely to be 35 and above while there will be further differentiation of vulnerable sections. According to the framework being drawn up, categories like teachers, drivers and media personnel will be considered.

"Vaccination has to be a strategic exercise, particularly in a country with a large population. So, we have decided to first inoculate 30 crore people. This will cover the high risk population," an official told TOI.

"In the second phase, we are expecting a scale up in vaccine availability. As soon as that happens, we can cover 60% of the population to achieve herd immunity by breaking the chain of transmission," he added.

Review of applications by Serum, Pfizer on

► Continued from page 1

The vaccine is based on a two-dose schedule and its efficacy is determined 14 days after the second dosage.

While US drug maker Pfizer has offered its vaccine, developed along with German firm BioNTech, SII has sought the approval for Covishield which has been developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca in the UK. SII has conducted only bridging studies in In-

dia but is manufacturing the shots. The Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has already started an internal review of applications submitted by SII and Pfizer, seeking emergency authorisation of their respective vaccine candidates in India.

The regulatory authority will examine the applications based on three parameters — safety, quality and efficacy — before providing its recommendations to the Subject Expert

Committee (SEC). The SEC, likely to meet this week, will evaluate the suggestions and advise the drug regulator, Drugs Controller General of India, on whether emergency authorisation should be granted or not. It may also recommend conditions that may apply to companies manufacturing or marketing the vaccines in India. Usually, the recommendation from the SEC — which comprises domain experts — is accepted by the DCGI, which grants final approval.

HC questions 'murder attempt' charge against Tablighi participants

Rajesh Kumar Pandey | TNN

Prayagraj: The Allahabad high court has observed that filing a chargesheet for "attempt to murder" against a person for attending the Tablighi Jamaat meet at New Delhi, even though that person tested negative for the novel coronavirus infection, prima facie reflects an abuse of the power of law.

"The matter needs consideration," Justice Ajay Bhanot said while directing the counsel for the applicant, Mohammad Saad of Mau district, to implead the UP DGP, Mau SSP and Mau circle officer as respondents in the case.

The court also stayed criminal proceedings registered against Mohammad Saad at police station Kotwall, Mau district, under IPC Sections 307 (attempt to murder) and 270 (malignant act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) in the court of the Juvenile Jus-

tice Board, Mau, till further orders.

The counsel for Mohammad Saad contended that the prosecution said in the chargesheet that the applicant had visited a religious congregation organised by Tablighi Jamaat in New Delhi but did not intimate the administration of his arrival after returning nor undergo voluntary quarantine. The counsel added that the applicant had tested negative and contended that even if evidence collected during investigation and in the FIR were taken at face value (though denied as incorrect), no offence was disclosed against the applicant. He said that the original chargesheet was drawn up under IPC Sec 270 and another IPC section, and even presented in the court, but it was then recalled and a fresh chargesheet was submitted under IPC Secs 307 and 270 as per the orders of the Mau circle officer.



COVID-19 DEATHS
(IN LAST 24 HRS)

IN BENGALURU **7**

Total deaths **4,190**

ACTIVE CASES: 19,269

REST OF KARNATAKA **4**

Total deaths **11,867**

ACTIVE CASES: 24,767

Stumped over BBMP's road widening plans

Trees were cut to widen the road but
tree stumps are creating a traffic jam

ANANTHA SUBRAMANYAM K



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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

The residual stumps of around 10 trees that were chopped one month ago have become a hurdle for the smooth flow of traffic near the Adugodi Main Road traffic junction. Ironically, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) had cut down these trees to facilitate widening of the road.

“The trees were cut following the direction from Karnataka Lokayukta a month ago. There was a long-pending dispute before the Karnataka Lokayukta on these trees,” said BBMP South Range Forest Officer Chidanand.

When the residual tree stumps on the road were brought to his notice, Chidanand said that the forest department had given permission to a contractor to cut down the trees. “It is the responsibility of the major roads department of the BBMP to remove the residual stumps of the trees,” the RFO said.

Mallikarjuna Swamy, a resident of Adugodi, blamed the inefficiency of the BBMP authorities for the traffic jams caused due to the tree stumps.

“The traffic police have put up barricades around the residual tree stumps. The road was widened and trees were cut to make the traffic junction free from traffic snarls. What is the use of widening the road and cutting those well-grown trees if the traffic slows down due to the barricades around the resid-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>

This November, B'luru could breathe a bit easy

Greenpeace India's study says that though PM2.5 emissions reduced by 16.96 per cent from Nov 2019, it is more than WHO's prescribed limits

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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Air quality in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad in November 2020 has been better as compared to November 2019, according to an analysis of Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data by Greenpeace India. The reduction in particulate matter (PM) 2.5 emissions from November 2019 to November 2020 ranged from 16 to 37 per cent among the three cities. However, the air quality in all three cities still remains higher than the prescribed World Health Organisation (WHO) standards of 25 micrograms (μg)/ m^3 .

In Bengaluru, the average concentration of PM2.5 this November was 33.49 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ as compared to 40.33 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in November 2019; implying that the average concentration of PM2.5 reduced by 16.96 per cent. Bapuji Nagar and Jayanagar remained hot-spots with an average PM2.5 concentration of 42 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and 39 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ respectively.

According to the analysis, Bengaluru only observed 12 days in November 2020 where the PM2.5 concentration remained under the prescribed WHO standards. BTM layout in the city was the least polluted area with an average PM2.5 concentration of around 20 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

Chennai's air quality was much better than Hyderabad and Bengaluru. Chennai's average concentration of



In November this year, Bengaluru recorded an average PM 2.5 emission of 33.49 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$

“ Expansion of the city area and population growth, along with growth in economic activities in the peri-urban areas, has resulted in high rates of people owning vehicles

—Avinash Chanchal, climate campaigner at Greenpeace

PM2.5 was 34.11 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ as compared to 54.75 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in November 2019.

According to an online tool developed by IQAir AirVisual and Greenpeace Southeast Asia, air pollution from PM2.5 and nitrogen dioxide (No_2) were responsible for 7577, 6228, and 6374 premature deaths respectively in Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Chennai from 1st January to September 4, 2020.

Avinash Chanchal, a climate campaigner at Greenpeace India, said: “Apart from industries, vehicular pollution continues to be a major source of pollution in these cities. Expansion of

the city area and population growth, along with growth in economic activities in the peri-urban areas, has resulted in high vehicle ownership rates. “It's high time that the governments and local authorities adopt systemic reforms on clean energy and transport that includes promotion of decentralised models of renewable energy, generation of green jobs, measures to promote electric vehicles and rebuilding of trust in public transport.

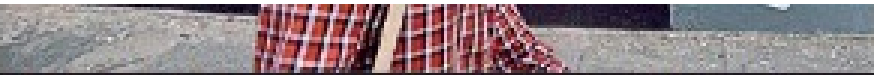
If we don't act, these cities will follow the fate of the top polluting cities in terms of health and economic impact.”

Get testing, say experts with an eye on rise

Increase in active cases over the last week



Covid-related artwork has cropped up in several parts of the city, reminding people to stay cautious



Covid-related artwork has cropped up in several parts of the city, reminding people to stay cautious

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TWEETS @sridharVMIRROR

It is true that the surge has receded, but the last week or so has been taxing as far as covid cases go. The city is seeing a small yet a gradual increase in the number of active cases. The city that had the highest active cases in the country with 65,000 cases had got the number of cases under control. By November 1, there were 30,958 active cases, which reduced to 16,716 on November 5. But, since then, there has been a slow upward movement with the active cases reaching 19,636 on December 6.

A study by Jeevan Raksha (during November 7 to December 5) shows that Delhi has been successful in bringing down its active cases by nearly 15,000. The last week alone, it reduced the number of active cases by almost 10,000. On the other hand, Bengaluru after successfully bringing down the number of active cases to fewer than 20,000 by early November is now slowly reversing that trend. The number of active cases have dropped in Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, and



Of the four million tests in mega cities during November 7 to December 5, 75 per cent was done by Bengaluru and Delhi

—Mysore Sanjeev, Jeevan Raksha

Ahmedabad. Experts said that the marginal increase in active cases in Bengaluru called for an immediate reviewing and strengthening of the testing process.

Jeevan Raksha coordinator Mysore Sanjeev said, “Seventy-five per cent of the four million tests conducted by mega cities during November 7 to December 5 were carried out by Bengaluru and Delhi (1.36 million and 1.6 million tests respectively). Delhi’s Gross Test Positivity Rate (including retests) of 9.8 per cent reflects high symptomatic tests and also strained testing capacity. On the other hand, 1.9 per cent of Bengaluru GTPR reflected improved testing capacity and high testing of low risk people.”

When it comes to testing, Bengaluru has tested 3.78 lakh per million population (TPM) which is the highest among the five mega cities.

Bengaluru is now followed by Delhi with 3.56 lakh TPM, Ahmedabad at 2.88 lakh, Chennai 1.87 lakh and Mumbai 96,000. Till date, 3.2 per cent and 3 per cent of the total population of Delhi and Bengaluru have tested positive for covid. The caseload in the six megacities of India is so much that they contribute to the 17 per cent of the total covid cases in India.

During the study period, the mega cities have added 2.51 lakh new covid cases. While Delhi added 1.58 lakh (63 per cent) of the cases, Bengaluru added the least with 9 per cent of the cases in the said period, added Sanjeev.

Green warrior gets early Christmas gift

It's just what he needed to help water trees and saplings he had planted

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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Green warrior Sreeram M, who along with other volunteers had planted hundreds of saplings along the Mannam Nagar Road and nurtured them, got an early Christmas gift. The Aikya Foundation donated a trolley fitted to a TVS 50 moped to Sreeram to help him water the plants. Sreeram M used to carry pots of water on his bicycle everyday to water the plants and trees, even in the harshest of summers. When it would rain, Sreeram and other volunteers would ensure percolation pits around the saplings and remove weeds to facilitate the growth of plants without any hurdles.

Now, with the moped and trolley, Sreeram won't have to exert himself everyday making multiple rounds on his bike.

"We are impressed with Sreeram's contribution to ensuring greenery in and around KR Puram. All these years, Sreeram was carrying water on his bicycle. And to facilitate him we have donated a trolley attached with a moped so he can carry water easily," said Paramesh S, President of Aikya Foundation.

The volunteers of Aikya Foundation have also helped Sreeram in his efforts to beautify black spots on Mannam Nagar Road.



The volunteers of Aikya foundation have also helped Sreeram in his efforts to beautify black spots in the area



"His selfless service is an inspiration to the members of Aikya Foundation," said Kubera S, secretary of Aikya Foundation.

Apart from this, the Foundation has also organized a felicitation function for Sreeram on Sunday. Thanking the Aikya Foundation for their donation, Sreeram said that it would be of great help. "This vehicle will be of great use and I will now be able to carry around 300 litres of

“His selfless service is an inspiration for the members of Aikya Foundation. And to facilitate him, we have donated a trolley attached to a moped

—Kubera S,
secretary of Aikya Foundation

water at the same time, instead of in just two pots. It will also be helpful to carry saplings and other tools around," said Sreeram.

Additionally, Anthony Swamy, former nominated corporator to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Council from KR Puram, has announced a donation of Rs 50,000 for purchase a four-wheeler for Sreeram, so he can spread his greening efforts to more areas in KR Puram.

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After long, energy push for waste at Kannahalli

Facility will be converted into Waste-to-Energy plant over next 2 yrs
 Facility will be converted into Waste-to-Energy plant over next 2 yrs

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Could this be the year, when the grand plan to set up a waste to energy (WtE) plant at Kannahalli finally kicks off? There seems to be hope on the horizon for the waste processing plant in Kannahalli near Magadi Road, where the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) sends about 350 tonnes per day of mixed waste. Over a year after signing a deal with a Switzerland-based firm, the state government has scheduled to lay the foundation stone for the waste-to-energy plant on Wednesday.

The firm, Satarem Enterprises Pvt Ltd, had first showed interest in establishing a waste to energy facility at the area in July, 2011. The State High Level Committee had also given a go-ahead in the same year. It, however, took nearly a decade for the company to start the ground work due to multiple regulatory clearances, initial resistance to such facilities in the form of litigations and protest by the villagers.

As per the agreement, the BBMP will provide a tipping fee of Rs 253 per tonne to process about 500 tonnes of waste till the company establishes the WtE plant. The firm is allowed to sell about 18 per cent of the compost (after processing the waste) to the farmers through the agriculture department. Each tonne of compost is expected to generate about Rs 1,200, including a subsidy of Rs 800.

The civic body, which has granted about 20 acres of land on a 30-year lease, will start getting payment in



The BBMP sends around 350 tonnes of mixed waste per day to the Kannahalli plant

BBMP will provide a tipping fee of ₹253 per tonne to process about 500 tonnes of waste till the company establishes the WtE plant. The firm is allowed to sell about 18% of the compost to farmers

the form of 'royalty' based on the income the plant operators generate by selling the energy to

Karnataka Electricity Regulatory Commission (KERC). Officials said KERC has offered to purchase power by paying Rs 7.9 per unit. The

company that is making an initial investment of about Rs 250 crore is hopeful of generating about 14 MW of power.

This is going to be the second waste-to-energy plant being established in the City. Recently, the Karnataka Power Corporation Ltd (KPCL) established a similar facility in Bidadi on a similar agreements.

"We would start accepting mixed waste of 500-700 TPD after a month of signing the concession agreement and thereafter establish the waste to energy in 21 months. Till the waste-to-energy plant is established, we would want a processing fee paid to us on similar lines to what is being paid to the existing concessionaries. After establishing the facility, the tipping fee could be stopped," the company had said in an undertaking to the government.

The plant adopts multipurpose co-combustion technology to convert biodegradable waste into compost. Bottom ash will be used to make construction material.



BM had reported about the barriers to WtE plants, and about the first such plant to come up in the city in Bidadi

Tree stumps create road blocks again

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

down due to the barricades around the residual tree stumps?" Swamy asks.

Arun Prasad, an environmentalist, has blamed the BBMP major roads department for not preparing a plan to save the trees while widening the road. "What will happen to the green cover in Bengaluru if the BBMP authorities continue cutting trees for one reason or the other? The BBMP authorities should have planted around 100 saplings on the road side for cutting 10 trees but nothing has been done till date," said Arun Prasad.

Meanwhile, Adugodi Traffic

Police Inspector Ashok Kumar said that the BBMP engineer had directed the contractor to remove the residual tree stumps with the help of an earth moving machine but the plan had to be abandoned due to the live electric underground cables.

"A few electric cables were damaged while removing one of the residual tree stumps. The contractor had to pay Rs 40,000 for damaging the electric cable. Now, the contractor has been asked to remove the residual tree stumps manually. All the hurdles on this road will be cleared within a few days to ensure smooth flow of traffic at this junction," said Ashok Kumar.

K'taka Farmers Back Bandh; B'luru Spared

Our Bureau

Bengaluru: Nearly 300 farmer groups in Karnataka have pledged support to the nationwide bandh called on Tuesday in protest against the new farm laws deregulating the sale of crops, saying they would hold demonstrations against the NDA regime's farm sector policies at all district headquarters and block movement of traffic at all highways.

The farmer groups, however, spared Bengaluru from Tuesday's bandh as they plan to hold a rally in the city on Wednesday.

In any case, Karnataka may not see much impact of the bandh as the ruling BJP is expected to ensure normal life in the state.

WEDNESDAY RALLY



More than 10,000 farmers plan to gherao Vidhana Soudha on Wednesday

"We will stage protests and block the highways in all districts except Bengaluru. More than 10,000 farmers will come to Bengaluru to gherao Vidhana Soudha a day after," said Kodihalli Chandrashekar, president of Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha.

He said the bandh will be peace-

ful and appealed to the state government to cooperate with the protesting farmers.

Though the farmer groups have spared essential supplies from the bandh, any disruption in movement of goods carriers would delay arrivals of essential stuff including vegetables in Bengaluru city, the largest consumption centre in the state.

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president DK Shivakumar announced his party's support to the bandh call as a mark of his party's solidarity with the issues farmers have raised. The recent agriculture laws have created confusion and the sector is being passed on to businessmen and others, he told media persons.

Poliloquy R PRASAD

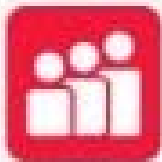


We invited the farmers to the dining hall, but they chose to squat in their socialist comfort zone to have their lunch!

P2

EIGHT DISTRICTS REPORTED NEW CASES IN SINGLE DIGITS

State Continues to See a Dip in Cases



Bengaluru: Karnataka on Monday reported 998 Covid-19 positive cases. The state also reported 11 new deaths due to the infection. Bengaluru Urban district reported 501 cases and seven deaths. Eight districts reported new cases in single digits, while several districts were free of covid-related deaths. The positivity rate for the day was 1.30%, and the case fatality rate (CFR) was 1.10%, slightly higher than the government's target of keeping it below 1%. —Our Bureau

P3

K'taka may Move SC to get B'luru Civic Polls Postponed

HC has said govt's move to increase no of wards cannot apply to the present election

HC has said govt's move to increase no of wards cannot apply to the present election

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COURT ORDER

Bengaluru: Karnataka will most likely challenge the High Court order that requires the state election commission (SEC) to hold polls to Bengaluru's civic body, BBMP.

The court, acting on writ petitions, directed the Commission to hold polls in two months to 198 wards. The order has thrown a spanner into the works of the state BJP regime which wants to increase the number of wards from the present 198 to 243 to align the council size with the increase in population.

Law minister JC Madhuswamy was quoted in sections of the media confirming that the government was planning to move the apex court.

The government would require time to redraw 243 ward boundaries based on population, official sources said. They added the government would require at least one year to complete the exercise, and they would submit the same before the apex court.

The tenure of the 198-members council ended three months ago. The BJP regime has been trying to put off the civic body polls, without, however, committing to a date on when it is likely to hold the polls.

Boundaries of wards, at present, are drawn based on the 2001 census which scores of elected representatives, across party affiliations, view as unscientific in view of the population growth in the past two decades – steep in some pockets, moderate in several others.

A joint select committee headed by BJP legislator S Raghu that was tasked to suggest the way forward for the BBMP's governance structure, has proposed to increase the number of wards from 198 to 243. The government even amended the Karnataka Municipal Corpo-



HC has told the SEC to announce the election schedule within six weeks from the date of notification of ward-wise reservation list

ration Act, 1976, in the last session to provide for the increase.

The court has told the SEC to announce the election schedule within six weeks from the date of notification of ward-wise reservation list. The court said the government's move to increase the number of wards cannot apply to the present election, a view that could virtually put off the BJP's plans by another five years.

It was pretty well known even before the council term expired that the government would delay the BBMP polls as much as it could as most Bengaluru MLAs, regardless of their party affiliations, are not in favour of an elected council. A fresh set of corporators mean erosion of their powers and clout in their respective Assembly constituencies.

Political leaders and citizen groups are seeing the recurrence of the 2010 and 2015 scenario when the elections were held only after the court's intervention. The BBMP polls were held in 2010, two years after the council's term expired as the ruling BJP had cited expansion of the corporation and delimitation exercise for the delay. In 2015, the ruling Congress postponed the election by six months citing its efforts at restructuring the BBMP.