



**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
BANGALORE**

**ENGLISH NEWS PAPER
CLIPPINGS**

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COVID-19 vaccination: Karnataka achieves 43% of target on sixth day

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Although, Karnataka continues to lead with the highest number of healthcare workers getting vaccinated compared to other States, the overall coverage is just a little above 55% so far.

As on Thursday, a total of 1,31,515 healthcare workers of the targeted 2,36,812 have been vaccinated. On Thursday, the sixth day after vaccination began on January 16, the State achieved a coverage of 43% with 14,108 of the day's targeted 32,773 coming forward to take the jab.

While vaccination was not held in Haveri, Uttara Kannada, and Yadgir districts, Chamarajanagar recorded the lowest coverage with 18% and Mandya recorded the



Vaccination drive under way at Rail Wheel Factory Hospital in Bengaluru on Thursday. ■ SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

highest coverage with 82%.

With vaccine hesitancy being one of the main causes for the targets not being met, sources said the use of Covaxin in six districts where healthcare workers have no choice (and will not be vac-

nated if they do not give consent) has added to the problem. The State received 20,000 doses of Covaxin and it was allotted to district hospitals in Chamarajanagar, Hassan, Chikkamagaluru, Shivamogga, Davangere,

and Ballari. This even as concerns over the lack of substantial efficacy data of Covaxin still exist. Sources said most healthcare workers in these district hospitals are hesitant to take Covaxin.

Members of Karnataka Association of Resident Doctors (KARD) had written to the Minister for Health and Family Welfare demanding that they be allowed to choose the vaccine. These resident doctors demanded that house surgeons, post-graduates, and super speciality residents of government medical and dental colleges should be provided vaccines that have shown results with respect to safety and efficacy. They have also stated that the vaccines which have got results of phase III should be given.

"As this is a new vaccine, the government should have introduced Covaxin only after the phase 3 clinical trials were completed. Maybe the response would have been much better if only Covishield was introduced," sources said.

According to the media bulletin released by the Health Department, a total of seven serious adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) have been reported in the State so far. No major AEFI was reported on Thursday. In BBMP limits, a total of 23 minor AEFI were reported on Thursday. These included 22 in West Zone and one in South Zone, BBMP officials said.

'Heart attack deaths not linked to jab'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The deaths of two healthcare workers – a Group 'D' employee in Sandur and a doctor in Shivamogga – two days after getting vaccinated cannot be linked to the jab, said C.N. Manjunath, director of Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences.

Dr. Manjunath, who took the vaccine shot on Thursday, told *The Hindu* that the vaccine against COVID-19 does not cause heart attack. However, some coincidental events can happen.

The doctor said: "During

the active phase of a COVID-19 infection or post COVID-19, there is inflammation of blood vessels with propensity for clot formation. This can cause heart attacks. However, as the vaccine contains inactivated virus, it is immunogenic and hence, produces antibodies but not the inflammation," he explained.

Asserting that both the persons who died had comorbidities, Dr. Manjunath said the doctor, who died in Shivamogga, had undergone a bypass surgery in the past.

"It is just a coincidence,"

he said. "Taking vaccine is the only way we can end this pandemic. I took it and nearly 85% of the day's target of 1,100 employees at our institute took it, and we are fine. Healthcare workers should volunteer for vaccination without fear and apprehension as it is safe. Mild fever, injection site pain, and fatigue are not side effects but effects of vaccine. If more and more people take it, public confidence can be boosted and thereby, we can achieve herd immunity on expected lines," Dr. Manjunath added.

THE HINDU

674 new cases, two deaths reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

The State on Thursday reported 674 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total to 9,34,252. With two deaths, the toll rose to 12,187. This is apart from 19 deaths of patients due to non-COVID-19 reasons.

As many as 815 persons were discharged on Thursday, taking the total recoveries to 9,14,492. Of the remaining 7,554 active patients, 171 are being monitored in the ICU. While the positivity rate for the day stood at 0.75%, the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) touched 0.29%.

Bengaluru Urban reported 371 cases, taking its tally to 3,96,140. With one death coming from Bengaluru, the toll in the district rose to 4,373. Active cases in Bengaluru reduced to 4,997. As many as 88,855 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, including 81,699 RT-PCR tests. With this, the total tests are 1,63,06,609.

Modi likely to get the jab in Phase 2

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

As the COVID-19 vaccination campaign continues with varying degrees of enthusiasm in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and many Chief Ministers are likely to get the jab in the second phase of the drive for those over 50 years of age.

Mr. Modi, in a videoconference with the Chief Ministers just before the launch of the nationwide drive, said politicians should not jump the queue for vaccination, as the first round was for frontline workers in the health and law enforcement sectors, government sources noted.

"In the same vein, he said politicians would get their turn in the second phase when senior citizens will be vaccinated," a government official said.

"There is nothing new in the plan that was originally thought up," the official added.

As the campaign progresses, optics of Mr. Modi getting the jab could go a long way in addressing concerns of vaccine sceptics. In the campaign since January 16, the target could not be achieved.

Slow offtake

Several reasons are being attributed to the slow offtake with software glitches, adverse events, and uncertainty over the efficacy of the vaccine being among the many reasons.

It is unclear whether the Prime Minister will take Covishield or Covaxin.

Meanwhile, under "vaccine diplomacy", assistance has been promised for Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal, Mauritius and Seychelles.

Sasikala tests COVID-19 positive

Aide to late Tamil Nadu CM Jayalalithaa shifted to ICU; condition stable, say doctors

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

V.K. Sasikala, aide to late Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa, who was hospitalised on Wednesday evening with fever, breathlessness and cough, tested positive for COVID-19 late on Thursday night.

Doctors said her condition is stable as of now.

The 63-year-old, who is serving a jail term at the Parappana Agrahara Prison here, is scheduled to be released on January 27.

She was earlier diagnosed with severe acute respiratory illness (SARI) and had been shifted to the ICU in Victoria Hospital. However, her CT Thorax showed features suggestive of severe respiratory infection. Although she had initially tested negative for COVID-19, doctors did further tests.



Testing times: V.K. Sasikala being taken to Victoria Hospital from Bowring hospital in Bengaluru on Thursday. •PTI

Victoria Hospital Medical Superintendent Ramesh Krishna K. told *The Hindu* that her general condition is stable. She has Type 2 diabetes, hypertension and hypothyroidism, apart from SARI symptoms. She was re-

ferred to Victoria Hospital from the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital on Thursday morning, he said.

C.R. Jayanthi, Dean and Director, Bengaluru Medical College and Research Institute, to which Victoria Hos-

pital is affiliated, said Sasikala's first COVID-19 test at Bowring Hospital was negative. "However, since her CT scores were high, we again did a rapid antigen test at Victoria, which was also negative. Following that, we collected samples for TRU-NAT and RT-PCR tests and they have returned positive."

"We are shifting her to the COVID Block ICU at the Trauma and Emergency Care Centre, the dedicated COVID facility on Victoria Hospital campus. She is being continuously monitored and treated with antibiotics, antiviral drugs, insulin, heparin, steroids, and other supportive measures," the doctor said.

Sasikala was sentenced to four years' imprisonment in February 2017 in a ₹66 crore disproportionate assets case. She was later expelled from the AIADMK.

THE HINDU

Co-WIN platform gets upgrade

1,92,581 beneficiaries inoculated on sixth day of nationwide COVID-19 vaccination

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The cumulative number of healthcare workers vaccinated against COVID-19 has touched 9,99,065 (till 6 p.m. on Thursday) through a total of 18,159 sessions, according to a provisional report.

A total of 4,041 sessions were held till 6 p.m. on Thursday, and 1,92,581 beneficiaries were vaccinated on the sixth day of the nationwide COVID-19 vaccination, said the Health Ministry on Thursday, adding that there are no cases of serious/severe AEFI (adverse event following immunisation) attributable to vaccination till date.

The Ministry said that 187 minor AEFIs have been reported till 6 p.m. on the sixth



Day six: Healthcare workers in an observation room after getting vaccinated in New Delhi. •SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

day of the vaccination drive. It added that an enhancement in Co-WIN software has been introduced to cater to the creation of more session sites, more sessions per site, and a change in site location, which is now allowed.

"The enhanced version also allows planning and scheduling the sessions for entire week and works for the enhanced safety of the beneficiaries, tagging of contraindications. These new features are being enabled in vaccina-

tor module," the Ministry said. Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, on Thursday, unveiled an IEC (information, education, communication) campaign with a series of posters to address the issue of COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy, stating that India is one of the few countries to halt the march of COVID-19 and simultaneously develop a vaccine for COVID-19.

"A handful of vested political interests who are interested in spreading rumours and encouraging vaccine hesitancy among those vulnerable to such propaganda in the population. The paradox is that countries across the globe are asking us for access to the vaccines, while a section of our own is misinformed," he added.

Disaster management plan ready for Aero India

It'll help lessen time to mobilise resources

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

An Off-site Disaster Management Plan has been formulated by the Revenue Department for a structured and planned response to any emergency outside the Air Force Station premises, related to Aero India 2021.

The plan will help reduce the time taken to mobilise resources for an effective response and enable a harmonious relationship among all stakeholders, Karnataka State Disaster Management Authority (KSDMA) Commissioner Manoj Rajan has told *The Hindu*.

The plan identifies trigger points for various response actions and integrates such actions as per the SOP of the department/agency concerned. The plan was initiated through a series of meet-

ings by the Revenue Department with officers of IAF, HAL, BBMP, DCs of Bengaluru Urban and Rural Districts, Bengaluru City Police, Fire and Emergency Services, and other agencies. It was prepared based on the spatial analysis of the venue and the surroundings; probable hazards; resource mapping, SOPs, and Incident Command Control Centre (ICCC), the official said.

Mr. Rajan said an exclusive GIS portal has been developed by the Karnataka Remote Sensing Application Center [<http://dev.ksrsac.in/aeroshow/>] where the on-site and off-site plans are integrated. The deployment of teams and equipment by departments concerned will be uploaded on the portal for resource mapping and coordinated response.

‘U.K. will take measures to attract students, skilled labour’

India will benefit from these steps, says British Deputy High Commissioner

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

A year after the Brexit deal and amidst the vaccination drive against COVID-19, the United Kingdom will roll out measures aimed at attracting students and skilled labour from countries such as India.

Among these are post-study work visas and flexibility in points awarded to different aspects, such as English language ability and skills for work visas, said British Deputy High Commissioner to Karnataka and Kerala, Jeremy Pilmore-Bedford at a virtual press briefing here on Thursday.

“Points will be awarded for a job offer at the appropriate skill level, if they speak English and meet the appropriate salary threshold. This allows greater flexibility. Before, there were limited chances of obtaining a visa if, for example, you did well in English but had

no skills. About half of our entrepreneur visas are from India. So given the large share, India will certainly benefit,” he said.

According to the British Deputy High Commissioner, as far as work visas are concerned, Indians account for almost half (45%) of all tier 2 visas (skilled worker visa) granted, but the number of grants fell by 36% to 36,219 in the year ending September 2020. There were increases for Nigeria (+19%) and Egypt (+9%).

On the other hand, with regard to student visas, Indians saw a notable increase in the number of tier 4 visas granted. “India was the only one to see a large increase and now account for 26% of all tier 4 visas in the year ending September 2020, up from 11% a year earlier.

While tier 4 visas to Indians decreased by 6,444 or 48% from April-August

2020 compared to the same period in 2019 due to COVID-19, the significant increase in other months of the year ending September 2020 sustained a notable increase compared to 2019,” details shared by the commission said.

For the year ending September 2020, there were just over one million applications for visitor visas, a decrease of 61% compared to the previous year.

However, COVID concessions were doled out for students, with those starting their studies in the one year master’s degree courses in January 2021 still being eligible to apply for the Graduate Route even if they are studying remotely, provided they are in the U.K. by September 27, 2021 and complete the final semester of their studies in the U.K. Students who were starting courses in summer and autumn 2020 could still be

eligible for the Graduate Route, provided they are in the U.K. by April 6, 2021 and meet the other requirements of the route.

Speaking about the ongoing vaccination drive, Mr. Pilmore-Bedford said the U.K. is “very keen to ensure that the vaccine is available to most people around the world,” and that India is an ideal partnership for this because of its vaccine manufacturing capacity.

“For the U.K., the Prime Minister is working on getting sufficient people vaccinated by March. Most of England is in tier 4, but the hope is that by the end of March, people will move out of severe tierage. The goal is to have the whole of adult population vaccinated by summer,” he said. Though the emergence of new variants of the virus is certain, our scientists will be ahead of the game, he said.

HC notice on illegal construction in park

Culprits include government agencies, alleges petitioner

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court on Thursday ordered issue of notice to the State government on a PIL petition seeking action against constructions put up illegally in the notified Cubbon Park area by various organisations, including agencies of the government.

A division bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice Sachin Shankar Magadam passed the order on a petition filed by Cubbon Park Walkers' Association.

Pointing out that Cubbon Park is notified under the Karnataka Parks, Play Fields and Open Spaces (Preservation and Regulation) Act, 1985, the petitioner has stated that several constructions were carried out illegally despite the High Court in 2001 specifically directing the government not to allow any new construction in the notified area without taking clearance from the court before proceeding with the construction.

New structures

The Public Works Department permitted construction by Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage



Cubbon Park is notified under the Karnataka Parks, Play Fields and Open Spaces (Preservation and Regulation) Act, 1985. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

Board, the Century Club, the Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association, the Karnataka Government Secretariat Club, the Karnataka State Government Employees' Association, the Press Club of Bangalore, and the Young Men's Christian Association, who are operating in the area leased to them, the petitioner has alleged.

The Century Club had put up several structures, including a swimming pool, the Government Secretariat Club had built a generator room and tennis courts, the Lawn Tennis Association had built a swimming pool, an extra room and other structures, and the BWSSB had built a

tertiary treatment plant, the petitioner pointed out.

The bench decided to hear the petition again on Friday after petitioner's advocate Shankaranarayana Rao B.V. sought an interim order to restrain further construction by the Horticultural Department, which is maintaining the Cubbon Park, while the State Government Employees' Association has commenced construction of a new hall in addition to the "NGO Hall" built earlier.

The petitioner has also stated that all the constructions carried out in violation of the 2001 directions of the High Court should be demolished.

India to clear vaccine exports to Brazil today

Delay led to a flurry of messages from Bolsonaro govt.

SUHASINI HAIDAR
NEW DELHI

Brazil is set to receive the go-ahead from the Indian government on Friday to collect two million doses of the Covishield vaccine made by the Serum Institute, two weeks after Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi for their "urgent" clearance, sources confirmed to *The Hindu*. The consignment, which was due to be collected by a special Brazilian plane last week, was delayed as the government had not yet finalised its plans for exports of Indian-made vaccines.

The delay had led to a flurry of messages from Brazil, and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had spoken to his Brazilian counterpart Ernesto Araujo to reassure him on January 16. "The Minister assured [Mr. Araujo] of our support and confirmation that the [consignment] will be going as planned," a source said.

After the clearance of grant assistance of the vaccines to neighbouring countries, officials confirmed that Brazil is among the "key partners" who would receive export permissions for their orders next.

Brazil had first turned to India for the Covishield vaccine earlier this month to tide over the gap in production of its own units amid an emerging health crisis. In a letter to Mr. Modi on January 8, Mr. Bolsonaro asked him to "expedite the shipping" of the consignment contracted earlier, and his government had announced that it was sending a special plane to collect the vaccines on January 14.

However, after India re-



Urgent need: A Guarani indigenous man is inoculated with the Sinovac Biotech's CoronaVac vaccine in Brazil. ■ AFP

Nepal, Bangladesh thank India

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Prime Ministers of Nepal and Bangladesh thanked the Indian leadership and the people of India after Kathmandu and Dhaka received on Thursday two large

consignments of the Covishield vaccine made by the Serum Institute of India. The two South Asian leaders spoke as India prepared 1.5 million Covishield doses that will be flown to Myanmar in a special flight on Friday.

fused to give the "technical clearances" in time for the plane, Mr. Bolsonaro decided to go ahead with its vaccination programme using Chinese-developed Sinovac that had been manufactured at a local institute.

In an operation concluded on Tuesday, Brazilian Health Minister Eduardo Pazuello announced that the country had distributed six million doses of Sinovac, manufactured by the Butantan Institute to all of Brazil's 27 States in order to complete the first phase of vaccinating frontline workers.

The decision was a major U-turn for Mr. Bolsonaro, who earlier rejected the Chinese vaccine over concerns about its efficacy and vowed to cancel all contracts of Sinovac "on his watch", and signals the pressure he is un-

der about his government's handling of the pandemic.

Brazilian officials said they now await confirmation from India so that they could resend their special plane.

"We still do need the Indian-made vaccines that have been contracted for," one official said.

Brazil's first phase of vaccination will target 49 million people out of its total population of 212 million.

Health regulator ANVISA has cleared both Sinovac and the U.K.'s AstraZeneca vaccine, both of which will be manufactured in Brazil.

However, officials said the speed was of the essence, given more than 2,13,000 Brazilians have died of COVID-19, and the country has faced shortages of medical supplies, oxygen tanks and, now vaccines.



Smoke billows out from a facility at the Serum Institute of India, in Pune on Thursday. PTI

Five killed in Serum Institute fire

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

Five people were killed after a fire broke out at a facility of the Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune on Thursday.

The Covishield facility is safe as the incident happened at a multi-storeyed building in Manjri, which is a few

out at an under-installation complex, which was being ramped up for BCG vaccine production. SII CEO Adar Poonawalla reassured the government and the public that there will be no loss of Covishield production as multiple buildings are kept in reserve to deal with such contingencies

Vardhan slams rumours al

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

With more than 40% of the targeted population not turning up for the Covid-19 jabs even after six days, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan on Thursday blamed "vested political interests" for "spreading rumours and encouraging vaccine hesitancy".

"It is only a handful of vested political interests who are interested in spreading rumours and encouraging vaccine hesitancy among those vulnerable to such propaganda in the population," Vardhan said here after releasing publicity material featuring eminent doctors and medical scientists rooting for the vaccine.

On the ground, after six days, only the first million health workers precise —

INDIA COVID
CASES ON THURSDAY **14,38**

Wednesday's cases: **15,2**

KARNATAKA
CASES ON THURSDAY **674**

Wednesday's cases: **5**

plan of doing 100 vaccinations in each session, the shortfall is nearly 43%.

The trend is similar even on the day-to-day vaccination count. On Thursday, 2,33,530 people got the jabs at 4,043 sessions — a deficit of 42% from the target.

"Ideally, we should be reaching 3-4 million per day to keep the targets realistic. We need to be able to do about four million per day to have two doses delivered on a 300 million priority group of people by August," Rijo John, health economist and a

Vardhan slams rumour

VACCINE, FROM PAGE 1

"The paradox is that countries across the globe are asking us for access to the vaccines while a section of our own is fomenting misinformation and doubt for narrow political ends. Let us put a stop to these falsehoods. Truth is powerful and shall prevail," Vardhan said.

Neither Vardhan nor the Union Health Ministry, however, confirmed reports claiming Prime Minister Modi, the Chief Ministers and a large section of MPs will take the vaccine in the second phase when 27 crore Indians will be vaccinated.

people, the 70-year-old Minister, most of Parliamentarians to be eligible when the second round starts in a matter of months.

"The elimination of smallpox was possible by large-scale vaccination. Once immunity is the person protected from the disease, he is also unable to transmit the disease to others, thus saving on the social benefits to the larger society," the Minister said.

"The vaccination of Covid-19 will similarly protect persons incapable of

Vaccine doesn't cause heart attack: Dr Manjunath

BENGALURU, DHNS

Renowned cardiologist and director of Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research (SJICR) Dr C N Manjunath, 63, took the first dose of the Covid vaccine on Thursday. So far, 900 staffers at the heart hospital have been vaccinated.

After two cases of myocardial infarction (MI), commonly known as heart attack, in Karnataka, in individuals who took the Covid vaccine, Dr Manjunath cleared the air and said Covid vaccine does not cause a heart attack.

An MI occurs when blood flow decreases or stops to a part of the heart, causing damage to the heart muscle. The most common symptom is chest pain or discomfort which may travel into the shoulder, arm, back, neck or jaw. Two cases of MI were reported in Shivamogga and Ballari, in a doctor and group 'D' worker, respectively. Both of them were vaccinated and died subsequently.

"Taking the vaccine is the only way we can end this pandemic. I took it today. I



Dr C N Manjunath
director of Sri Jayadeva
Hospital, gets the Covid
vaccine on Thursday

ache are not side effects, only effects of the vaccine," he said.

"With more people taking it, some more will take, which boosts public confidence. The way we can achieve herd immunity on expected timeline is if the vaccine does not cause a heart attack. But some coincidental events can happen. Taking the vaccine is a civic responsibility. We will complete vaccinating the rest of 1,200 Jayadeva staff in the next three

Follow-up calls to state Covaxin recipients to

Dist control rooms, vaccination site staff monitoring them

SURAKSHA P
BENGALURU, DHNS

Covaxin beneficiaries in the state who were vaccinated on day 1 of Covid vaccination, as many as 366 of them from six districts, will get calls from district level

plan published by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR - which collaborated with Bharat Biotech to develop Covaxin) on January 11 for 'Restricted Use of Covaxin Under Clinical Trial Mode,' a team will be set up at the district level to telephonically contact and

test (if any)'.
In Davangere, this role is being assumed by the district-level war room that is already functioning.

Dr Meenakshi K S, Reproductive and Child Health Officer (RCHO), Davangere said, "Over the past week, we have already started calling the 28 beneficiaries who were vaccinated last Saturday. We will call them again on Friday and once again on day 28." Four Covaxin beneficiaries in the district have so far seen minor Adverse Events Following Immunisation (AEFI).

I have had no side effects and have been doing fine."

30-year-old Prashanth A has been working as a lab technician collecting Covid sample since the start of the pandemic.

He told DH, "I have been receiving calls every alternate day since Saturday when I got vaccinated. When I developed a fever recently, a primary health centre doctor who works in the war room asked me to take Paracetamol (Dolo). The follow-up has been good."

Chikkamagaluru, however, will have doctors from the

Covid: 52% vaccination coverage on Day

BENGALURU, DHNS: Day six of the Covid-19 vaccination drive in the state achieved an overall coverage of 52% (till 8.30 pm). As many as 17,190 health workers were covered under the immunisation programme.

In Bengaluru Urban, 5,656 were vaccinated followed by Belagavi 2,901 and Dakshina Kannada 1,505. As per the dai-

seven adverse events as serious.

In the last five days, out of 2,36,812 target beneficiaries, 1,34,597 have been vaccinated. The overall coverage under the programme stands at 57%. As per figures released by the BBMP, In Bengaluru Urban, 5,410 beneficiaries have received jab, out of 10,469 target beneficiaries,

man and Chief Medical Officer, was admitted to Covid vaccine Hospital. "I am right. I have no problem with a small prick. I do not think healthcare workers need to take the need to get vaccinated. They don't go home unwittingly and put families at risk. Ever

Days ahead of release, Sasikala tests positive for Covid

She's being monitored at Covid facility in Victoria Hospital

BENGALURU/ CHENNAI, DHNS

Former AIADMK leader V K Sasikala, who was rushed to the Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital in Bengaluru on Wednesday evening following complaints of fever and breathlessness, was found to be Covid positive on Thursday. She was shifted to Victoria Hospital on Thurs-

day night. Sources said she was found to be positive in the second RT-PCR test which was taken after her CT scan showed signs of Covid-19 infection.

Sasikala, who has comorbidities of hypertension, diabetes and hypothyroidism, was admitted to Bowring Hospital with cough and fever after she



Former AIADMK leader V K Sasikala greets her supporters outside Bowring Hospital while being shifted to Victoria Hospital, in Bengaluru on Thursday. DH PHOTO

put on oxygen support since Bowring Hospital on Thursday

IT ministry has no information on Co-WIN development

As the vaccination drive started on Jan 16, app reported technical issues

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Co-WIN or the Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network may be an application crucial to the Covid-19 vaccination drive but the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has "no information" about who developed it and the money spent on it, if one goes by a response to an RTI query. Law student Aniket Gaurav had sought details of people who were behind the development of the app, the money

others. However, the MeitY said on January 19, "with regard to information sought, no information is available with Innovation and IPR Division, MeitY". Gaurav had initially filed the RTI with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, which transferred the query to MeitY.

As the vaccination drive started on January 16, there were reports of technical issues related to the Co-WIN app, which is used to register and acknowledge beneficiaries, allocate vaccination centres and monitoring recipients.

COVID-19 Tracker

States/UT	Active	Infected	Death	Daily cases	Daily deaths
Kerala	69,771	8,70,529	3,545	6,334	21
Maharashtra	45,622	20,00,878	50,634	2,886	52
Uttar Pradesh	7,717	5,97,823	8,597	195	6
Karnataka	7,554	9,34,252	12,187	674	2
West Bengal	6,565	5,66,898	10,089	416	9
Chhattisgarh	5,638	2,95,509	3,594	560	9
Gujarat	5,491	2,57,813	4,372	471	1
Tamil Nadu	5,196	8,33,011	12,299	596	9
Madhya Pradesh	4,599	2,52,767	3,776	301	6
Haryana	3,934	2,66,819	3,000	133	3
Others	25,282	3,749,849	40,933	1,823	40
1,87,369	1,02,84,240	1,06,26,148			
TOTAL ACTIVE CASES			TOTAL RECOVERED		
1,53,026			1,513		
TOTAL DEATHS			NON-COVID DEATHS*		

DHNS/PTI (10 PM, January 21)
*Patients dead due to non-Covid reasons

Modi likely to phase of va

BElect representative above 50 years of age are likely to be vaccinated against Covid-19 in the second round of the ongoing inoculation drive after over three crore health-care and frontline workers are vaccinated in the first round, report PTI. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, most of his Cabi-

platform for the roll-out of vaccine in the country. Union Minister Ravishankar Prasad had then announced Rs 1 lakh and Rs 20 lakh for two winners.

In late December, the MeitY

India's vaccine diplomacy a push back against China

Nepal and Bangladesh among the beneficiaries

NEW DELHI/KATHMANDU, REUTERS

India will give millions of doses of Covid-19 vaccine to South Asian countries in the next few weeks, government sources said on Thursday, drawing praise from its neighbours and pushing back against China's dominating presence in the region.

Free shipments of AstraZeneca's vaccine manufactured by the Serum Institute of India, have begun arriving in the Maldives, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

Myanmar and the Seychelles are next in line to get free consignments as India uses its strength as one of the world's biggest makers of generic drugs to build friendships. "The government of India has shown goodwill by providing the vaccine in grant. This is at the people's level, it is the public who are suffering the most from Covid-19," said Nepal's Minister

for Health and Family Welfare Hridayesh Tripathi.

The gesture comes at a time that India's ties with South Asian neighbours have been strained by territorial disputes and China's growing political and economic influence in the region. India is a nation sandwiched between the Asian giants. China had promised Nepal to supply its Sinopharm shot.

Chinese rivalry

Bangladesh was to get 1,10,000 doses of vaccine free from China's Sinovac Biotech, but Bangladesh refused to accept it towards the development of the vaccine leading to a lock. Bangladesh then turned to India for supplies and on Thursday received 2 million AstraZeneca vaccines.

Meanwhile, India valued Pakistan on Thursday thanked China for providing half a million of the vaccine free of cost. India for years has been trying to match the pace of investment in Sri Lanka, Nepal and the Maldives. China is building power and power stations under its Belt and Road Initiative.

COVID-19 Tracker

COUNTRIES	INFECTED	ACTIVE
United States	2,44,55,537	96,40,053
India	1,06,26,148	1,87,369
Brazil	86,38,249	8,62,353
Russia	36,16,680	5,33,789

Healthcare workers are faking jab: BBMP

Nithya.Mandyam@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Healthcare workers across Bengaluru are reportedly faking getting the Covid-19 vaccine, BBMP officials admitted. A senior BBMP health officer said they have come across at least 20 instances where workers have not taken the vaccine, although they claimed to have.

Many healthcare workers still harbour doubts over the safety and efficacy of the jab and are hesitant to take it. Day 1 (January 16) of the vaccination programme saw 350 of the 475 targeted workers taking the vaccine, but the numbers have dropped significantly since. Technical glitches with the CoWIN portal have only compounded problems.

As of Thursday, 30,000 beneficiaries were vaccinated, but there are cases of fakes. This, despite healthcare workers having the freedom to say no to the jab.

A BBMP source said two medical officers working in a primary healthcare centre in East Bengaluru faked inoculation. "One medical officer said he did not trust the vaccine and did not want it, so he instructed the nurse to hold a small ball of cotton to his arm to make it look like he took the jab," said the source.

Kamala (name changed), a nurse at a PHC in Shivajinagar, said a health worker who was afraid of getting the jab, faked the act by getting her colleague to simulate injecting the vaccine. "Many are unhappy over being asked to take the vaccine as they do



NO FEARS: Dr CN Manjunath (right), director, Sri Jayadeva Institute and Dr Thomas Chandy, chairman, Hosmat Hospital take the jab on Thursday



SLOW WORK

Zone	Target	Vaccinated	AEFIs
East	594	301	0
West	2,780	1,428	22
South	3,543	2,101	1
RR Nagar	994	476	0
Bommanahalli	946	464	0
Dasarahalli	557	190	0
Yelahanka	855	428	0
Mahadevapura	200	22	0
Total	10,469	5,410	23

Source: BBMP

not trust it yet. The two deaths that were reported have added to fears," Kamala said. "We don't want the vaccine but there is pressure to take it. Our bosses are all taking the vaccine to set an example for us. In such a scenario, it's hard for us to opt out since we could draw their displeasure."

However, Manjunatha Prasad, commissioner, BBMP, insisted there is no pressure on anyone. "Everyone who is

registered on the CoWIN portal is eligible to be inoculated," Prasad said. "They can take the vaccine if they want to. It is not mandatory. There is no compulsion."

Only Serum Institute of India's Covishield is being used at vaccination sites in Bengaluru and he said it has been approved after due diligence at the highest level. All safety precautions

have been taken, he said. "No one needs worry about its safety," Prasad said. "Top officials should be a role model to others. There is no need for pretence."

Another official said, "If a health worker fakes taking the vaccine, their name will be marked as partially complete in the list. Even if they come around and take the second dose, it may not be effective. They will be the losers."

Docs demand clarity on post-vax deaths

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Belagavi: A section of doctors, especially those based in North Karnataka, are demanding that the government put out sufficient information on the post-inoculation deaths of two healthcare workers. They said this will build confidence and clear the air over safety concerns swirling around the Covid-19 vaccine.

A Group D worker in Ballari district and a doctor in Shivamogga district died two days after they were vaccinated. Both were administered Serum Institute of India's Covishield vaccine. The state government and the Centre have insisted that the deaths are not linked to the vaccine, but doctors are apprehensive and claim the government, perhaps, is not being completely forthright since a frank admission could sabo-

tage the vaccination drive.

Medical professionals say besides autopsy reports, the government must conduct extensive investigations to rule out side effects for people suffering from pre-existing chronic diseases like coronary artery disease. Both healthcare workers who died had heart ailments.

Dr Srinivas Kakkilaya, general physician, who co-authored a book on the SARS-CoV2 virus in a vernacular language, said neither of the vaccine makers has published any data on safety and effectiveness of their products.

"It is imperative for the state to transparently probe these deaths and put out all details," said Dr Kakkilaya. He said health minister K Sudhakar's statements that the deaths are not related to the vaccine is farcical since he spoke even before the au-



NEW SITE: A team from BBMP's health department began inoculating doctors, paramedics and other staff of Railway Hospital at Rail Wheel Factory premises in Bengaluru on Thursday. A vaccination site complete with observation room was set up on the campus

topsy report was out.

"The irony is that the government does not have enough data to establish anything," Dr Kakkilaya said. "There are so many

people suffering from comorbidities so it's the responsibility of the government to gather data and make it public."

Dr Satish Nesari who

works at Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences said the government must put to rest all confusion arising from the deaths. "The autopsy is an eye wash," he said. "While taking the vaccine is important, allaying fears and safety concerns is equally imperative."

Anil Patil, president, Belagavi Indian Medical Association, admitted there is a paucity of data since side effects could show up even six months or a year later. He said it happened with the hepatitis B vaccine.

"After a year some complained of multiple sclerosis," Patil said. But he insisted the Covid-19 vaccine was safe. "I have taken the vaccine and I advise others not to let the opportunity slip," Patil said. "However, at the end of the day, it is left to the individual as the process is voluntary."

Late reporting of deaths dogs pandemic data management

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Bengaluru: The number of Covid-19 deaths has dropped drastically in Bengaluru over the past few weeks but authorities continue to report mortalities late.

The daily Covid-19 bulletin issued by the health and family welfare department reported four deaths on Tuesday, but three of them had succumbed to the virus in December. On Wednesday too, one of the two dead had passed in December.

Officials say the delay is due to a lack of coordination between government agencies and private hospitals in

The daily Covid-19 bulletin issued by the health and family welfare department reported four deaths on Tuesday, but three of them had succumbed to the virus in December. On Wednesday too, one of the two dead had passed in December.

mobilising and tracking the data. Besides, those who were deputed to collate data have been repatriated to their parent departments.

The problem of reporting deaths late is not new, although in June and July officials could hide behind the fact that it was happening in the backdrop of a massive scale of infections. But it's inexplicable now, since the number of mortalities is

down to single digits.

As of Thursday, 4,375 people had died in Bengaluru due to Covid. Of these, 25% had no other health ailments, while the rest had comorbidities. There were also a few deaths due to suicides or natural causes, said a BBMP health official. "Most fatalities were due to a combination of Covid-19 and comorbidities," the official said.

Asked about the delay in

reporting deaths, the official cited two reasons: Delay in preparing the list and lack of officials dedicated to the task.

"When cases were rising, most officials were assigned Covid duties," the official said. "A 12-member team monitored deaths and categorized cases under Covid, those with comorbidities and others etc., but many on this team have resumed routine duties."

The second big reason is lack of coordination between hospitals. Two special Google forms, which included details of the deceased besides cause of death, were created to report mortalities: Form 4

for institutional deaths and Form 4a for deaths at home or dead on arrival.

"These forms were sent to all government, private and other institutions handling Covid cases so that fatalities would be immediately reported," said the official. "When cases dropped, monitoring management teams were disbanded and coordination between hospitals dropped to zero." Cases reflecting today are either pending cases or being uploaded late.

Rajendra Cholan, BBMP health commissioner, admitted there is a coordination and communication gap and it would be fixed soon.

Schools' dilemma: To add masks to uniform or not

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Bengaluru: With schools increasingly focusing on the new academic season, the big question in discussions on safety measures is whether masks should be a part of school uniform.

While some schools have decided to make it part of the dress code — complete with logo — others have decided to leave the decision to parents.

"We decided to give each student two blue masks with the school emblem in white," said Jayant Gauri, founder, Raintree schools. "The student's name will be embroidered to avoid mix ups. Each mask could cost Rs 30."

GEAR Innovative International School is planning a similar approach to ensure



PERFECT FIT: Some school managements have left the decision of fabric and size to parents

"sanctity of the uniform". "Students should wear at least a single plain-coloured mask with no prints on it," said M Srinivasan, founder principal, while Shivkumar K Swamy, secretary, Manasa Public School, Tannisandra,

said, "We are yet to decide on the colour. Details will be decided after we see the turn-out of students."

Uniform vendors too are receiving queries. Schoolay, an online uniform company, has said it has received orders

EXPERTSPEAK

The important thing is for the mask to be of appropriate size. It should cover the nose, mouth and chin. For children who have no underlying chronic medical conditions, a fabric [non-medical], double-layered mask will do. For children with medical conditions, a medical mask is recommended. Excessive physical activity with masks on should be prohibited. UNICEF and WHO recommends masks only for those above 6 years. Mask hygiene must be taught in school.

Dr Bharath Reddy | PAEDIATRIC PULMONOLOGIST AND DIRECTOR, SHISHUKA CHILDREN'S SPECIALITY HOSPITAL

for protection kits for classes 9 and 10 this year and other classes next year.

"We work with 12 schools in Bengaluru and 10 of them have placed orders," said Kiran Hiriyanna, co-founder. "One of our biggest clients

with 2,000 students has tested these products on pupils attending exams. We are also exploring new ranges like sports uniform with turtle necks that can be pulled up and turned into a mask."

However, many schools prefer to leave the choice of fabric and size to parents.

Orchids - The International School said that while it has made it mandatory for students to wear masks throughout their time on campus, it will not introduce them as part of the uniform. "Parents will decide the kind of masks for their wards," an official said.

Delhi Public Schools said they will also leave the decision to parents, while some schools say they will wait to see how things unfold before taking a call.

Mock vax video: DHO says it was photo-op after shot

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Bengaluru: A video of the Tumakuru district health officer and a government college principal taking a mock Covid vaccine injection and flashing a thumbsup sparked a furore in the state, after which both authorities clarified that they had taken the shot and the filming was only to encourage others to go for it too.

The clarification, too, riled some quarters, who alleged that such portrayal was in poor taste, given prevailing fears over the vaccine.

"On January 16, I took the vaccination. Later, staff and media asked me to 're-enact' the injection it as it would

The clarification riled some quarters, who said such portrayal was in poor taste, given prevailing fears

infuse confidence in others, so we did it. The deputy commissioner has asked us to promote the vaccination drive to instil confidence among people. But we are now being wrongly portrayed," said DHO Nagendrappa.

The 43-second video shows a nurse pretending to inject with a syringe that has no needle. Dr Rajani M, principal of the Government Nursing College in Tumakuru, is seen flashing a victory sign and thumbsup

soon after. Rajani told TOI that she was mapped on the beneficiary database and vaccinated on January 16 privately but in order to create awareness, she posed for the cameras.

Sources said both had received the vaccine on the first day of the national vaccination drive and posed for the video later. Incidentally, the DHO's name was missing from the list of beneficiaries due to a technical error. Keshav Raj, reproductive and child health and immunisation officer, admitted that DHO's name was dropped due to a glitch but he was vaccinated in order to create awareness among the public.

Covid concerns as health, medical edu are split again

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Bengaluru: Health minister K Sudhakar was relieved of the charge of medical education on Thursday and the portfolio was reassigned to JC Madhuswamy. The move comes in the middle of the first phase of Covid-19 vaccination, prompting concerns that separate command for two closely linked departments may once again lead to coordination issues and political one-upmanship in the pandemic fight.

The state's Covid-19 management had suffered these problems initially, when Sudhakar held the sole charge of medical education and B Sriramulu headed the health department. In October last year, chief minister BS Yediyurappa reallocated the health portfolio to Sudhakar for better coordination between the departments and made Sriramulu the social welfare minister. The deci-

DEPT BREAK-UP

Facilities under medical education dept

- 10 super-speciality hospitals
- 18 district hospitals attached to medical Colleges
- 2 dental schools

Facilities under health and family welfare dept

- 15 district hospitals
- 146 taluk hospitals
- 207 community health centres
- 2,359 primary health centres
- 8,871 sub-primary health centres

sion was well-received among health officials and doctors who are part of the pandemic fight. Thursday's change has left them concerned.

But Madhuswamy, who earlier headed law and parliamentary affairs and minor irrigation departments, said that he would ensure

things, especially the vaccination drive, continued to run smoothly. "Though I personally believe that Sudhakar is best suited for the portfolio (medical education) in the present circumstances, the CM in his wisdom, has allocated it to me," he added.

Sudhakar seemed upset about the decision. "Three months ago, when there was talk of portfolio re-allocation, I urged the CM not to withdraw medical education till the pandemic was fully under control. He has taken a decision and I will see what best can be done to ensure everything remains smooth," he told TOI. More than 50 per cent of district hospitals attached to government medical colleges come under the medical education department. "As these medical colleges and hospitals are no longer under me, I won't be able to make certain decisions quickly. I can't answer questions on vaccination at these places," Sudhakar said.

Nearly 10 lakh vaccinated, CoWIN software enhanced, says Centre

Campaign To Address Vax Hesitancy; PM To interact With Recipients, Vaccinators

TNN & AGENCIES

New Delhi: As many as 1,92,581 beneficiaries were vaccinated against Covid-19 on Thursday during inoculation drive in 27 states and UTs, taking the total number of beneficiaries who received jab to nearly 10 lakh, said Union health ministry.

The ministry also said that enhancement has been made in CoWIN software (Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network) to strengthen the process of vaccination. "Creation of more session sites, more sessions per site and change in site locations now allowed. Planning and scheduling of the sessions for the entire week enabled. For enhanced safety of the beneficiaries, tagging of contraindications is being enabled in the vaccinator module," Ma-



DON'T HESITATE: A total of 1,92,581 beneficiaries were vaccinated on Thursday

nohar Agnani, additional secretary, health ministry, said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will speak to vaccine recipients and vaccinators in Varanasi through video conferencing on Friday and is likely to address "vaccine hesitancy" which is seen to be impeding the anti-Covid inoculation drive launched on January 16.

"The world's largest vac-

nation drive is underway in India. Our frontline warriors are getting vaccinated across the nation. At 1.15 pm tomorrow, January 22, I would interact with beneficiaries and vaccinators of Covid vaccination drive in Varanasi," the PM tweeted on Thursday evening.

"This interaction would give first hand opportunity to hear their experiences as

well as feedback. I would urge you all to watch tomorrow's interaction," Modi said.

The interaction, coming in the background of doubts and fears over vaccination resulting in lower turnouts among health workers currently being given shots, seems intended to speed up the drive and reassure those on the vaccine shortlist that the shots are safe. The PM's outreach comes as almost 10 lakh people were vaccinated till Thursday evening.

The health ministry has also prepared an awareness campaign to dispel fears and misconceptions about efficacy and safety of vaccines against Covid-19. "Kuch to log kahenge, logon ka kaam hai kehna (people will say things, it is their habit to do so)," — goes one of the creative posters prepared by the health ministry

in a bid to combat rumour-mongering and allay hesitancy among healthcare workers.

The campaign includes a digital media package with impactful messages from key technical experts who have taken Covid-19 vaccines. Leading doctors like Dr V K Paul and Dr Randeep Guleria have been roped in to build confidence among the general population through this campaign.

"Let us put a stop to these falsehoods," health minister Harsh Vardhan said, urging people to counter the vested campaigns of "untruth and misinformation".

The campaign will primarily focus on three crucial messages — vaccines are safe and efficacious, do not believe in rumours and misinformation, and the critical role of vaccines in controlling the pandemic, an official said.

Sasikala tests +ve for Covid-19, admitted to ICU

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Bengaluru: Former AIADMK general secretary VK Sasikala, who was slated to be released on January 27 after serving a four-year term at Bengaluru Central Prison in a disproportionate assets case, has tested positive for Covid-19.

She is being treated in the Intensive Care Unit of Victoria Hospital, said medical superintendent Dr Ramesh Krishna K.

The repeat RT-PCR test of Sasikala, who had tested negative on Wednesday on admission at Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital and shifted the next day to Victoria Hospital following persistent fever and breathlessness, came positive on Thursday night.

"She is in a stable condition and not on a ventilator. She is suffering from severe lung infection and her CT severity score is about 16/25. She is on oxygen support; 10 litres of oxygen have been given though her saturation level is 98%. As she is diabetic, we're monitoring her," he said. She is suspected to be suffering from Severe Acute Respiratory Infection (SARI).

She has been diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes mellitus, hypertension, hypothyroidism and urinary tract infection.

The hospital said she is "stable" and examination revealed "bilateral crepitations".



5 killed in fire at SII's Pune facility, vaccine unit not hit

Compensation Of ₹25L For Each Victim's Kin: SII

Asseem Shaikh & Umesh Isalkar | TNN

Pune: Five people died in a major fire that broke out at Serum Institute of India's (SII) vaccine manufacturing plant at Manjari, near Hadapsar here, around 2.30pm

► Some health workers faking jab, say BBMP officials, page 2

on Thursday. "Five charred bodies were found at the site. We are probing the matter," Pune police chief Amitabh Gupta told TOI.

Police said preliminary information revealed that the five victims were among the workers hired by a contractor for some civil work,



Pune cops say the victims were among workers hired by a contractor for electrical and plumbing work on the sixth floor

including electrical and pipe fitting jobs, on the sixth and topmost floor of the facility. After the fire brigade put out the blaze, the contractor reported that some of his men were missing. Their bodies were found during a search.

SII CMD Cyrus Poonawalla announced that the company will be offering compensation of Rs 25 lakh to each of the victim's family, in addition to the mandated amount as per norms.

► Vaccine production, P 20

Welding work at Serum plant caused the fire, says minister

► Continued from page 1

Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope, who was updated by district collector Rajesh Deshmukh, told TOI, "Prima facie, welding work at the plant firing up installation material has been ascertained as the cause of the fire. I want to reiterate that the Covishield vaccine plant is far away from the site that caught fire. There are absolutely no losses of the Covid vaccine."

Adar Poonawalla, owner and chief executive officer of SII, posted on his official Twitter handle: "We have just received some distressing updates; upon further investigation we have learnt that there has unfortunately been some loss of life at the incident. We are deeply saddened and offer our deepest condolences to the family members of the departed." He later told TOI, "The rotavirus vaccine facility, where the fire broke out, was an additional manufacturing unit that got damaged in the blaze. Covishield production will not be affected as our plant has multiple manufacturing units."

Rotaviruses are the most common cause of diarrhoeal disease among infants and young children.



Workers leave Serum Institute's factory in Pune after the fire

SII CMD Cyrus Poonawalla said in a statement: "Today (Thursday) is an extremely sorrowful day for all of us at SII. Regrettably, there were losses of lives in the fire that broke out in our under-installation facility situated at the special economic zone at Manjari. We are deeply saddened and offer our condolences to the families of the departed."

On Thursday evening, deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar, who is also Pune's district guardian minister, visited SII. "The Pune police commissioner has been told to conduct a thorough inquiry into the fire incident," he said.

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray was updated about the incident by Poonawalla and would visit the fire-hit plant on Friday, a release issued by the former's

officesaid. The blaze engulfed floors three to six of the building. There were conflicting versions about whether the fire started from the third or the sixth floor. The authorities were verifying these details. A crowd of local residents and onlookers gathered around the facility as plumes of thick smoke billowed out of the building.

"The charred bodies were found on the sixth floor during a search operation after the fire brigade personnel put out the blaze (it took more than two hours)," Pune mayor Murlidhar Mohol told reporters at the site.

Factory manager Vivek Pradhan said the fire broke out in the rotavirus laboratory on the third floor where BCG vaccine stock was stored.

89-year-old gynaec takes jab in Gujarat

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Vadodara: At a time when many are sceptical about taking the Covid-19 vaccine, 89-year-old Dr Rohit Bhatt set an example on Thursday by taking the shot. Bhatt is a gynaecologist who still practises.

Bhatt was inoculated at the Bhallal Amin General Hospital (BAGH) where a vaccination drive was organised by the Vadodara Municipal Corporation (VMC). He is a consultant with the hospital and is the oldest person to be vaccinated in the city and probably the state so far. Speaking after being vaccinated, Bhatt said that the pandemic had instilled fear in the minds of people, but they should not be afraid of the vaccine. "I believe we can defeat Covid-19 with the vaccine. We should all take the vaccine," he said. After undergoing the observation period as per vaccination guidelines, Bhatt said that he had not observed any side effects so far.

Trustee of BAGH, Barkha Amin, also took the vaccine. She said that she did so to encourage other Corona warriors to take the vaccine. "We have fought against the disease together and I decided to take the vaccine with them to motivate them to do so," she said.

The vaccination drive was held at six hospitals. The number of vaccinations on Thursday surpassed the target with 611 persons being vaccinated against a target of 600.

Vax recipients may get to choose time and place

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New Delhi: Vaccine recipients in the second round of the anti-Covid immunisation — people above 50 and those who are younger but with co-morbidities — are likely to get an option to fix an appointment at session sites with a choice of place, time and date for immunisation.

The request for an immunisation appointment is expected to require identity authentication through Aadhaar to eliminate proxies and duplications, said Ram Sewak Sharma, chairperson of Trai and head of the empowered group on technology and data management in India's anti-Covid campaign.

"We have to provide freedom to people to get their vaccinations at the place and date of their choice. This will be facilitated through Aarogya Setu portal and other platforms," Sharma said.

These platforms will be linked with the Co-WIN app for recipient details and recording of other vaccination-related information. Co-WIN will remain the IT

Vaccine recipients in the second round are likely to get an option to fix an appointment at session sites with a choice of place, time and date for immunisation

platform through which the government will track vaccinations at thousands of sites as also the supply management chain. Asked about software glitches faced at session sites, Sharma said these were minor hiccups and would be fixed completely by the end of this week.

The idea is to better plan and manage vaccination sessions, while also facilitating recipients to get vaccinated at their preferred location. States will have the option to reserve a certain percentage of slots through appointments and keep some slots open for those who want to walk in for inoculation.

"Authentication of the person receiving the vaccine is extremely important because of two factors: eligi-

lity and establishing identity. It is to avoid a situation like if you are at a polling booth and realise somebody else has cast your vote," Sharma said, underlining that Aadhaar was a robust instrument to authenticate identity and eliminate any leakages and loopholes in the system.

The government is currently inoculating 3 crore health and frontline workers, who are likely to be covered by March end. The next round will cover 'priority' population groups including those above 50 years of age and those younger but with co-morbidities with the number estimated at 27 crore.

While the data for health and frontline workers was pre-populated in Co-WIN, the government has said other people will have to mandatorily register themselves before vaccination.

Those with co-morbidities will also be required to upload a physician's certificate verifying the disease condition and eligibility for receiving vaccination on priority.

Vax phase 2 to cover PM, 50+ politicians

New Delhi: In response to reports of Prime Minister Narendra Modi being likely to receive the anti-Covid vaccine in the next round of inoculation, official sources said those above 50, including many politicians, would automatically be covered in the second phase.

They said the PM had recently told a meeting with CMs that politicians need not jump the line and should wait their turn. "The PM and most CMs are obviously in this age bracket, and might be covered, but there is no confirmation about when exactly he or chief ministers will be vaccinated," a source said. **TNN**

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2 docs collapse after jab, anxiety is the cause

Hyderabad: Two senior doctors, including a head of department, at the Osmania General Hospital (OGH) collapsed minutes after they took the vaccine on Thursday. The duo was put up in respiratory intensive care unit, and it turned out that they had fainted due to anxiety. "They were kept under observation for just two hours for boosting their confidence. They are absolutely fine now. They were anxious which had led to a shooting up of the blood pressure," said Dr B Nagender, superintendent OGH. **TNN**

95% of vaccines used in just 10 countries: UN

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) has said that the World Health Organisation is struggling to raise \$4 billion for securing Covid-19 vaccines for the low and middle-income countries to combat the worst disaster to have hit humanity.

"It is a troubling situation that 95% of the vaccines that have been administered so far have been used in just 10 countries," said Mami Mizutori, head of the UNDRR.

The UNDRR has urged rich nations to contribute generously while pointing out how even during the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, which affected just 14 countries, more than \$6 billion was raised to help people.

As on January 20, 53.8 million vaccine doses have been administered to people across the world. The US leads with 16.53 million doses already administered to its population, followed by China at 15 million, UK (5 million), Israel (3 million), UAE (2.16 million) and Germany, Italy, Turkey, Spain and Russia, each having administered over a million to its population, according to Our World in Data, a Covid-vaccine monitor run by researchers from the Oxford University.

"The roll-out must start somewhere but low and middle-income countries

Gift vaccines reach Dhaka, Nepal

As vaccines gifted by India reached Kathmandu and Dhaka on Thursday, it was the culmination of a series of steps by the government to keep the focus on the immediate neighbourhood as the world struggled with a pandemic.

On Friday, a consignment containing 1.5 million doses of Covishield vaccines will reach Yangon. On Thursday, one million doses of vaccines landed in Nepal and 2 million doses landed in Dhaka. Except for Sri Lanka and Afghanistan (which have not yet given regulatory clearances), India has supplied the first doses of vaccines to almost all its immediate neighbours.

Pakistan gave emergency authorisation to the AstraZeneca vaccine last week, but it's not yet clear where it would source the vaccine from. Nepal had requested India for supply of vaccines, which was made by PM KP Sharma Oli to Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Official sources said India had given more than 25 tonnes of essential medicines, equipment and medical supplies to Nepal. "This includes supplies of paracetamol, hydroxychloroquine, PPEs, diagnostic test kits, ventilators and Remdesivir injections under grant assistance worth \$2 million," a source said. **TNN**

with large exposed populations are being overlooked. I urge the international community to fund the COVAX initiative without delay so that immunity is not the privilege of the few but the right of all," Mizutori said.

She expressed concern for the fact that not many countries are "as forthcoming in the generous way that we saw after the Indian Ocean tsunami which killed 2,28,000 people". Mizutori called for increased support for poor nations which are finding it difficult to manage the pandemic in absence of resources.

The Covid-19 has already claimed more than two million lives in less than a year. The poor nations need furt-

her support to strengthen their public health systems to prepare for future epidemics and pandemics, the UNDRR chief said.

The Oxford researchers have pointed out that no one wins the race, unless the entire humanity is brought under the anti-Covid shield, immunised and herd immunity created to weaken the mutating virus. As they say: "Only if we end the pandemic everywhere can we end the pandemic anywhere." The 1918 Spanish flu had shown us, shutting down borders may be of little help in controlling the pandemic. The world was less connected then, still it had huge casualties, particularly when the second wave of the pandemic hit countries.

No third chance for missed V-dates

Beneficiaries will be given only two chances if they can't keep their date to get the covid vaccine

| Sridhar.Vivan@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @sridharVMIRROR

Two strikes and you're out of the queue for this phase of the vaccination drive.

For beneficiaries who did not turn up to get vaccinated on the day of their scheduled appointment, the health officials say there won't be a third chance.

BBMP Commissioner N Manjunath Prasad told Mirror, "We cannot conduct so many sessions for beneficiaries who don't turn up. If that happens, we may not be able to complete the vaccination drive for health care professionals even for another six months."

BBMP had kept aside three days to complete the vaccination for frontline workers but with poor turnout that did not work out.

Over five days, the percentage of vaccinations done ranges between 55 and 63 per cent. One of the reasons for skipping the appointment for the vaccination according to Prasad is that many are still in the wait and watch mode. Other reasons are because some are travelling, some are on leave, some didn't want to come on Sundays, a few are unwell, some mobile numbers are incorrect and hence the beneficiaries could not be informed about their appointment.

Some technical issues in CoWIN app are also causing a delay.

Sources said that if a person had missed multiple chances, then he/she would have to submit the details via CoWIN app and once again register for a second appointment. In addition, a reason will have to be provided as to why the first appointment was missed.

At many hospitals, health workers were seen calling beneficiaries to come to the vaccination site for their inoculation. A health official told Mirror, "We have a list of beneficiaries with their phone numbers."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 »

What's causing delay in meeting vaccine targets

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

If they are not present to take the jab, we call them and ask them to report immediately so they don't miss their appointment."

Another official said, "We are also trying to understand why they did not keep their appointment. If it is a genuine reason, we try to help them get an alternate appointment. But if they're hesitant to take the vaccine, then we can't force them."

The Centre has already said who should not take the vaccine – pregnant women, lactating mothers, persons with symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 infection, those who have received monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma and who are acutely unwell and hospitalised. The Centre's guidelines on contraindications include those persons with a history of anaphylactic or allergic reaction to a previous dose of covid vaccine or immediate or delayed onset of anaphylaxis or allergic reaction to vaccines or injectable therapies, pharmaceutical products and food items etc.

BENGALURU

Sasikala has SARI, is stable



Former AIADMK leader, VK Sasikala who was rushed to the Bowring hospital on Wednesday evening, was diagnosed with Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI) and is said to be stable now. Sasikala who is serving a four year prison term in Parappana Agrahara Central Prison was shifted to jail hospital after she complained of fever, cough and breathlessness to the jail hospital and had to be shifted to Bowring hospital on Wednesday.

On Thursday morning, she was taken to the Victoria hospital for CT scan as she has SARI symptoms and her RT PCR test had come out negative.

First landing in foggy weather

Kempegowda International Airport recorded its first landing under CAT IIIB conditions on Thursday. Radiation fog set in during the early part of the day, resulting in a rapid drop in visibility to 200 metres. During this time, IndiGo flight 6E-6389 from Lucknow made a successful touchdown at 7.41 am.

The South Runway can facilitate aircraft landing with an RVR as low as 50 metres and take-offs at 125 metres. Before the upgrade, the permissible visual range was 550 metres and 300 metres, for landing and take-off, respectively. This upgrade by BIAL is expected to reduce disruption in operations.

BBMP to dig deep: 104 borewells at ₹97.65 cr

Exorbitant water charge by BWSSB is driving demand for borewells, civic agency has chosen areas located in peripheral areas of the city such as Hoodi, Bellandur to look for water

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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

It is not just individuals who are digging borewells in non-core areas of the city, but the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) appears to be leading from the front in that activity.

The civic body plans to spend Rs 97.65 crore for providing 104 borewells in about 20 wards.

Exorbitant charges fixed by the Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewage Board (BWSSB) for new water connection, locals say, is one of the reasons for such a high demand for borewell water, which is supplied free of cost.

A sum of Rs 97.65 crore is part of the action plan prepared by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) for using a grant of Rs 558 crore allocated under the 15th Finance Commission.

Besides the borewell, the civic body will also provide water supply pipelines. Each work is estimated to cost Rs 40 lakh.

Most of the places chosen for providing new borewells is located in the peripheral areas of the City such as Hoodi, Bellandur, Byatarayanapura, Yelahanka, RR Nagar, Kengeri, Horamavu, Varthur among others. Some of these places already have Cauvery water connections, while in many places work for laying Cauvery pipeline is underway.

Pricey water

Locals and ex-corporators say many opt for water supplied from BBMP-owned borewells as it's free of cost. "Leave alone the monthly



Borewell digging machines are a common sight in the city as demand for borewells is on a high

Rs 558-crore grant to BBMP

The BBMP has received a grant of Rs 558 crore under the 15th Finance Commission. While Rs 279 crore has been earmarked for improving the air quality ambience of the City, the remaining half of the total sum has been allocated for works such as environment protection, water supply, solid waste management etc. While about 104 borewells are proposed under water supply

category, a sum of Rs 41.85 crore has been provided for fencing 17 lakes. The remaining Rs 139.50 crore will be spent on nine works pertaining to solid waste. BBMP Commissioner N Manjunath Prasad said the action plan was prepared based on the guidelines issued by the Finance Commission. All the works will be implemented after floating tenders.

Instead of digging borewells, the money could be better utilised for providing Cauvery water connection. The BWSSB should also reduce charges for getting new connections

— VK Srivatsa,
Hemmigeppura resident

charges, the tariff fixed by the BWSSB for a new water connection is unaffordable. The owner of a 30x40 site needs around Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh to obtain a new connection. The BWSSB has also withdrawn installation system. Not many can afford to pay the entire amount upfront," an ex-corporator from Bellandur ward said.

Another former corporator's husband from Doddanekundi said

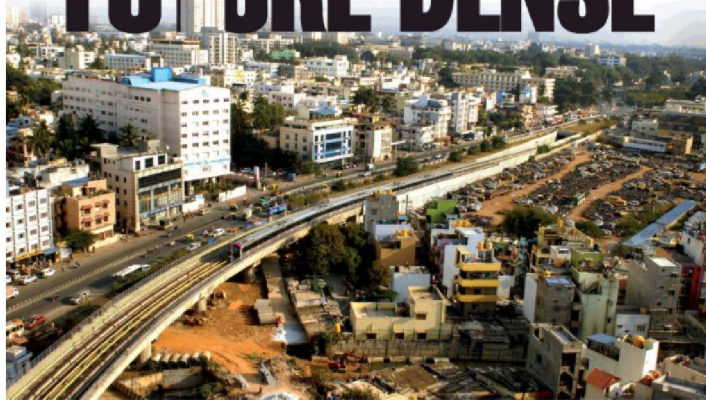
that the BBMP not only provides borewell but the residents of areas nearby are also connected through a pipeline system. "The BWSSB provides water connections to the houses only when 70 to 80 percent of a locality pays," he said.

VK Srivatsa, resident of Hemmigeppura believed the BBMP should stop digging borewells and leave the water supply responsibility to BWSSB. "Instead

of spending close to Rs 100 crore for digging up around 100 borewells, the money could be better utilised for providing Cauvery water connection, which is also metered. The BWSSB should also reduce charges for getting new connection. I spent Rs 50,000 for getting water connection a 3BHK house. If there is more than one kitchen, the charges go up to Rs 2 lakh," he said.

A Re-Revised Master Plan for Bengaluru will be drawn up by the same firm whose earlier report got rejected; the new plan will foster development activity around transit corridors

PAST IMPERFECT, FUTURE DENSE



Navneet Menezes
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The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) is all set to re-start the exercise of preparing a fresh master plan for the City, which currently follows an outdated land use document that had expired in 2015. Netherlands-based consulting

“The City is progressively getting worse while we are staying with the same old formula. The government must choose ten strategic projects spread across the city. It could be a hardware park in Devanahalli or a textile hub on Mysuru road. The rest of the planning should align with this

firm Royal Haskoning DHV — which had prepared the now-scrapped Revised Master Plan (RMP), 2031 — is likely to be

roped in to prepare a new one at a cost of Rs 16 crore. BDA Commissioner HR Mahadev said the Authority has

sought government's approval for awarding the contract to the same consultants, who prepared

Will a revised master plan be the path to B'luru's development?

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the RMP, under 4G exemptions. “In the new RMP, we will be incorporating transit oriented development policy for all modes of transport including suburban rail network, Metro and BMTCL,” he said. He also said the suggestions of various stakeholders will be taken regularly.

BS Yediyurappa-led state government scrapped the RMP 2031 last year, although its draft was approved by the BDA in 2019. The consultants had spent about two years preparing the massive document, which started in 2016. While the change in government is the main reason for scrapping the vision document, the draft blueprint for the City had also received about 14,000 objections from the general public.

Some of the projections made in the provisional RMP were — population of Bengaluru to double by 2031, additional 80 sq km area to be opened up for further expansion of the city, residential land use to double to 424

sq km etc.

The new RMP is expected to incorporate key documents such as Comprehensive Mobility Plan and Transit Oriented Development that were prepared by Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd and Directorate of Urban Land Transport.

City without a master plan

Going by the time taken for the preparation and approval of previous master plans, Bengaluru will take a minimum of 3 years for the next vision document to be ready. Such a gap could lead to uncontrolled developmental activities in the periphery of Bengaluru. It's learnt that about 5,000 structures have already come up along the 65-km alignment of peripheral ring road, although the land use was notified in the 2015 RMP.

Due to high rates of corruption, none of the master plans prepared in the past have been successfully implemented as the land use plan has been constantly violated by influenc-

ing the authorities. Sources said only 14 per cent of the RMP 2015 was implemented, raising questions over the use of master plans.

Urbanist V Ravichandrar said the entire exercise of preparing the master plan is inherently flawed. “The City is progressively getting worse while we are staying with the same old formula,” he said, suggesting two new ways of drafting the blueprint for the City. “It should comprise a strategic spatial plan. The government must choose ten strategic projects spread across the city. It could be a hardware park in Devanahalli or a textile hub on Mysuru road. The rest of the planning should align with this,” he said.

He also suggested introducing the concept of a 5-kilometre city. “Living and working in the 5-km radius should be made possible. That requires the introduction of social rental housing where the poor including drivers, maids and vendors can live in the same area as the rich and middle class live,” he said.

Blaze in Serum's SEZ campus kills 5

Welding work thought to be culprit; no damage to covid-19 vaccines

Vicky Pathare & Anurag Bende
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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

With the dawn of the vaccine drive against COVID-19 just days ago, things may have been looking up for people after a long time. But tragedy seemed to be waiting around the corner, and even as labour was beginning to return to major cities and find work after severe hardships during the lockdown, five precious lives of contractual workers were lost in a giant blaze at the Serum Institute of India's (SII) Manjri premises in Pune city on Thursday, and a search continued for more casualties.

All five deceased were working at the under-construction building number 3 of the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) when the conflagration broke out, sparking widespread panic. While fire brigade officials were able to rescue six people, they are yet to ascertain the cause of the fire — for now, it is being speculated that welding work or an electrical short circuit caused the calamity, said officials. The fire began around 2.15 pm, and the fire brigade was rapidly alerted by 2.30 pm, upon which at least 10 fire tenders and one sky lift machine rushed to the spot.

The deceased were identified as Rama Shankar Harijan and Bipin Saroj, both hailing from Uttar Pradesh, Sushil Kumar Pandey of Bihar, and Mahendra Ingle and Pratik Pashte from Pune. All five were contractual labourers engaged in electrical work.

Harrowing tales emerged from those who were saved from the blaze, with some of the workers los-



Smoke billows out after a fire broke out at SII in Pune on Thursday

ing their kin to the tragedy. Worker Sudhanshu Kumar, who narrowly escaped with his life, told Mirror that there were 8-10 people in the building that caught fire, working there since just the last two weeks. “Insulation and welding work was going on in that building. When we learned a fire had broken out, we ran out helter-skelter — some from the stairs and some jumping from the building. Two of my brothers have died,” he lamented.

Meanwhile, police did not rule out the possibility of the death toll increasing as search operations were slated to continue into Friday.

News of the fire spread fast in the city and on social media, as SII is at the crux of manufacturing the Covishield vaccine amid the ongoing pandemic. A statement from Cyrus S Poonawalla, chairman and managing director of SII, stated online,

“Today is an extremely sorrowful day for all of us at SII. Regrettably, there were losses of lives in the fire that broke out in our under installation facility... We are deeply saddened and offer our condolences to the families of the departed. We will be offering a compensation of Rs 25 lakh to each of the families, in addition to the mandated amount as per the norms.” Similarly, his son Adar Poonawalla, chief executive officer (CEO) of SII, condoled the “distressing” loss of life in the incident and tweeted, “I would like to reassure all governments & the public that there would be no loss of #COVISHIELD production due to multiple production buildings that I had kept in reserve to deal with such contingencies at @SerumInstIndia. Thank you very much @PuneCityPolice and Fire Department.”

(Inputs by Prachee Kulkarni)

Problems in your area?
Send us a picture along with specific details. And please, no phone calls or spamming

Peril ahead

Yelahanka New Town



Bescom dug up this stretch in Yelahanka New Town 5th phase around three months ago but have not taken any steps to fill it back

Wide open

Wilson Garden



The slabs on this drain at the junction of Siddalah Road and Wilson Garden 8th Cross has been missing for more than a year. It has become risky for pedestrians.

Parked and forgotten

Viveknagar



This khataara has been parked at this stretch between 4 and 5th Cross in Viveknagar. It has been obstructing traffic.

BBMP commits to Paris Agreement on climate change

Plan to make Bengaluru emission-neutral, climate-resilient city by 2050

BOSKY KHANNA @Bengaluru

BENGALURU has now given its commitment to the Paris Agreement to keep rise in global average temperatures within 2°C of pre-industrial levels, and to pursue efforts to limit temperature rises even further to only 1.50 degrees Celsius.

The Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change.

BBMP Commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad recently wrote to Mayor Garcetti, the 42nd Mayor of Los Angeles, giving his commitment. The Agreement aims to strengthen the ability of countries to deal with unavoidable impacts of climate change through adaptation. This is set in the context of sustainable development and on the basis of inclusivity for all communities.

Research by C40 and partners shows concrete action is necessary to achieve the ambition of the Paris Agreement.

The plan provides a roadmap outlining the pace, scale and prioritization of action needed by C40 member cities, and identifies these cities' share of the remaining global carbon budgets to 2100 that would keep us on a climate safe path.

"To support the implementa-



tion of the Paris Agreement, I commit the City of Bengaluru to develop and begin implementing a climate action plan (or series of plans) that will deliver action consistent with the ambitions of the Paris Agreement, and addresses both the need to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change," Prasad said in the letter, a copy of which is with TNIE.

Prasad said he has committed that Bengaluru will deliver a GHG emissions neutral and climate resilient city by 2050, and set an interim target for 2030. It will demonstrate how the city will adapt and improve resilience to climate hazards that may impact the city.

Rajendra Cholan, BBMP Special Commissioner; Health, said talks with stakeholders and government departments like the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board, transport and energy departments were being held.

Five dead in blaze at Serum Institute facility

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

FIVE persons were charred to death after a fire broke out at Serum Institute of India's plant at Manjri in Pune on Thursday afternoon. The blaze occurred at an under-construction building and all the dead were contractual workers doing electrical works in the building.

The deceased were Pune residents Mahendra Ingle and Pratik Pashte, Rama Shankar Harijan and Bipin Saroj from UP, and Bihar native Sushil Kumar Pandey.

Nine people were evacuated from the spot. According to a

labourer who was working in the building at the time of incident, the mishap happened due to sparks from welding works on the sixth floor. However, officials said the cause is yet to be ascertained.

"We will carry out further investigation and ascertain the cause of the fire," said Pune Fire Brigade chief Prashant Ranpise.

The Manjri facility is where the Covishield vaccines are made. However, the building where fire broke out is around 1 km away from the Covishield vaccine manufacturing unit. Serum Institute CEO Adar Poonawalla said Cov-



Workers wearing protective gear walk after a fire broke out at Serum Institute's plant at Manjri near Pune on Thursday | PTI

ishield vaccine production will not be hit due to the fire incident.

According to eyewitnesses, there were over 200 workers in the building. After the fire broke out, they tried to rush out. But the fire and smoke spread so fast that their path was blocked, forcing many to jump out of the windows.

Clarifying that the fire broke out in the BCG vaccine section, Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray said, "The fire occurred due to an electric fault during the on-going construction works. Probe will reveal all details."

Serum has announced ₹25 lakh compensation to families of persons who died in the fire.

MORE: P10

CYCLE AND THE CITY

Smart City: Bengaluru's bicycle lanes not on track

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

WHILE the newly completed cycle track on the footpath of Race Course Road has made many citizens happy, they can't help but wonder when the whole circuit will be completed.

Set up under the Bengaluru Smart City project, the stretch on Race Course Road is part of a larger cycling circuit. While the smart roads will be completed by January-end, the deadline

for the cycle tracks is likely to be March-end due to lack of coordination between six BBMP engineers overseeing the project.

"I have completed the cycle track on Race Course Road. It is supposed to connect to Palace Road, Raj Bhavan Road and Chalukya Circle, but when the connection will be done is not known as the plan and coordination with other road engineers and traffic police officials is not yet drawn," a BBMP



The newly completed cycle track on Race Course Road | ASHISHRISHNA HP

engineer said.

This has left citizens in a lurch. Prashanth L, a cyclist said: "Everyone is praising the cycle track. But they should ask where the other tracks are, because no cyclist can cycle on the footpath only at Race Course Road. There are no markings on the ground identifying the tracks and creating spaces for bicycles on the roads, especially at the junctions."

Another BBMP engineer as-

signed other roads said that there was still no clarity on which side of the road the track should be set up and where it will connect. "So it is unlikely that the tracks will be ready for use by January-end even if the roads are done. It is important to have cycle tracks as it will change the look and layout of the central area of the city," the other engineer said.

Creation of cycle tracks and green footpaths for pedestrians

is a part of the Smart City project, which includes Palace Road, Raj Bhavan Road, the road opposite to the planetarium, and surrounding areas.

Recently BBMP Administrator Gaurav Gupta did a field survey and set a January-end deadline. Smart City in-charge minister Byrathi Basavaraj had also assured citizens that Phase-1 of the Smart City roads will be completed within the stipulated time.

EXPRESS READ

Old BMTC buses to turn into mobile schools

BENGALURU: Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation is converting old vehicles into mobile school buses which Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike will use to conduct bridge courses to bring out of school children into mainstream schools. BBMP will purchase 10 buses at the cost of Rs four lakh per bus from BMTC. The converted buses will have vinyl flooring mat, a white board for teachers to teach and a chair for the staffers. The buses will be sent to areas where the number of out of school children is high. Teachers from BBMP schools will be deputed to teach these children.

COVAXIN CONSENT FORM NOT GIVEN, SAY RECIPIENTS

Many claim they were unaware of forms, some complain they can't read English

RANJANI MADHAVAN @Bengaluru

THE process of administering Bharat Biotech's Covaxin, already mired in controversy and doubt, has not been without problems in Karnataka.

Although the Centre has approved Covaxin for emergency use, phase 3 trials which measure efficacy are still under way. One centre each in six districts — Ballari, Shivamogga, Hassan, Chamaraajanagar, Chikkamagaluru and Davanagere — have been given doses of Covaxin. The rest of the state has received doses of Oxford University's Covishield.

Beneficiaries who receive a shot of Covaxin are to sign a consent form, and in case of an illiterate person, it has to be signed in the presence of an impartial witness. However, several people at centres where Covaxin is being used, have said that they either received no consent form, or were unaware that such a form existed. When they did receive the form, it was in English.

Some health workers did not even know whether they were given Covishield or Covaxin.

"I was given Covaxin, but I was not asked to read or fill any consent form before taking it. The vaccinators only checked my blood pressure and asked for some personal and health information. If there is such a permission form, they should have taken my signature," an Asha worker in Ballari district told TNIE, on condition of anonymity.

A data entry operator in Sakleshpur, Hassan, who took Covaxin said, "I was not given any permission form. They only took my Aadhaar information



A health worker at Minto Ophthalmic Hospital gets the jab | SHIRIRAM BN

before giving the vaccine."

What the form says

The three-page consent form is crucial for many reasons. One, it states that "in case of any adverse events or serious adverse events, you will be provided medically recognised standard of care in government designated and authorised centres/hospitals. The compensation for serious adverse events will be paid by sponsor (BBIL) if the SAE is proven to be causally related to the vaccine".

The details sought include recipient's name, date of birth, age, gender, marital status, address, phone number, name and address of vaccination site, name and number of vaccinator or supervising officer. Questions on medical history include information about medication for a chronic illness, name of illness, whether they under radiotherapy, etc.

An excerpt of the consent form reads, "I have been provided and have read, or had been explained to me, the fact sheet about the Covid-19 vacci-

nation. I understand that this vaccine requires two doses for it to be effective and two doses need to be administered. I have been allowed to ask questions which were answered to my satisfaction. I understand the benefits and risks of the vaccination as described. I request that the Covid-19 vaccination be given to me."

A third Covaxin beneficiary who is a staff nurse and works with ASHA workers in Yelandur taluk, Chamaraajanagar district, said, "I took Covaxin but was not given any consent form. They only checked my blood pressure and pulse rate and wrote down my details manually."

The consent form requires the vaccinator to confirm and sign that they have reviewed the details of side-effects with the vaccine recipient.

The form is not just about getting the signature as a purely mechanical process, but ensuring that the beneficiary is explained each section of the consent form and answering any questions they have, so that they

understand it, said Dr Anant Bhan, researcher, Global Health, Bioethics and Health Policy.

"Consent has four factors -- information, understanding, ensuring it is voluntary and not coerced, as well as documentation for proof. Not giving the consent form to the Covaxin beneficiary is a clear violation of protocol, as the vaccine has been approved for restricted emergency use under the condition that the beneficiary receives this form. The vaccine is in clinical trial mode and is collecting data for study. People need to be told that the vaccine has been approved under special circumstances and that they will be tracked for any adverse effects following immunisation, if any, and whom to report if such things happen," Dr Bhan said.

Forms in English

Some doctors and nurses who received Covaxin in Vijayanagar Institute of Medical Sciences, Hassan Institute of Medical Sciences and McGann District Hospital in Shivamogga, said they did receive the consent form and it was in English.

Public Health Doctor Dr Sylvia Karpagam said, "Pourakarmikas, ASHA workers, Group D employees, are often Dalit women and men. They are at the lowest end of the hierarchy and may not be able to understand English. Healthcare workers who come under contractors may be vulnerable and may be forced to take the vaccine, under orders, without taking their consent."

Dr Bhan added that the consent form must be printed in the languages of each state.

22 suffer side-effects in B'luru West Zone

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

IN all, 22 adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) were reported after beneficiaries took the Covid vaccine in BBMP West Zone on Thursday. This is the highest number of AEFIs reported from any zone, or all zones put together in Bengaluru, till date.

Manoranjan Hegde, health officer, West Zone, said, "Minor AEFIs including giddiness, fever, chills, pain at the site of injection were reported. The beneficiaries did not require hospitalisation, and only needed observation. Medicines were given to those with fever and chills but not to those with giddiness."

The only other zone in the capital with AEFI was South Zone, with one case of a woman suffering from dizziness for a few seconds.

Shivakumar, health officer, South Zone, said, "This is not

really an AEFI and may have happened due to pain or anxiety. She was fine after a few seconds and did not need medicines."

Totally, 52 per cent of the targeted beneficiaries were given the vaccine in the city on Thursday — 1,027 from the government and 4,282 from the private sector — until 8.30 pm. Usually, the drive is only till 5 pm but was extended for the first time on Thursday. Of the 32,773 targeted people, 17,190 could get the jab. Haveri, Uttara Kannada and Yadgir had zero targets and zero achievement.

The best performing districts were Mandya (82%), Chikkaballapur (78%), Dharwad (75%), Hassan (74%) and Chikmagalur (72%).

The cumulative coverage from January 16 to January 21 has been 57 per cent. No major AEFI cases were reported across the state, according to the government.

EXPRESS READ

Haveri records lowest active cases

HAVERI: Hospitals in Haveri district have no Covid patients, with the only seven positive cases in home isolation. The district has the lowest active cases in the state. At present, there are zero fresh cases at least three days a week and the remaining days 1-3 cases are being reported. **ENS**

EYE OF STORM

Tumakuru officials fake taking jab

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Tumakuru

TWO Tumakuru health department officials are in the eye of a storm after a video of them pretending to take the vaccine went viral on social media.

District Health Officer Dr M B Nagendrappa and principal of the health staff training institute Dr Rajani M pretended to take the vaccine at the District Training Centre (DTC) on January 16.

Deputy Commissioner Dr Rakesh Kumar had visited the centre that day and advised senior health officials to take the shot as it would send a message to health workers who had signed up for the vaccine.

"I did pretend for the demonstration, but I took the vaccine later. The information has not been uploaded as mapping was not done in my case," Dr Nagendrappa told *The New Indian Express*.

Dr Rajani, said, "Mapping for my vaccination was done and I got the jab much earlier, before demonstrating to the media."

IN A SMART MOVE, BSY RETAINS KEY PORTFOLIOS

Bengaluru Development, Energy, Infrastructure in demand, could cause heartburn; CM promises Munirathna that he'll be inducted

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

IN a smart move, keeping elections, especially the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) polls in mind, Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa retained the Bengaluru Development portfolio, coveted by many of his cabinet colleagues.

Of 33 ministers in Yediyurappa's cabinet, eight are from Bengaluru. While five of them — Deputy CM Ashwath Narayan, V Somanna, Suresh Kumar, Aravind Limbavali and R Ashoka are from the old team, ST Somashekar, Byrathi Basavaraj and Gopalaiah are from the new team.

This apart, Yediyurappa has also promised Rajarajeshwari-nagar MLA Munirathna that he will induct him into the ministry for helping him form the government.

Allocating Bengaluru Development to any one of these ministers would have widened the gap between the old and new teams, and also the ministers. This could impact BBMP elections, BJP sources said. There was a buzz that Limbavali was keen on the portfolio, but was given Forests.



A file picture of the new ministers taking oath before Governor Vajubhai Vala and Chief Minister Yediyurappa at Raj Bhavan in Bengaluru

On Wednesday, the Congress appointed R Ramalinga Reddy as a KPCC Working President, clearly with the BBMP elections in mind. This also means that the BJP has to flex some muscle against the Congress veteran. "Each of these eight MLAs is strong in some constituencies — Ashoka has a hold on Bengaluru South, Somanna and Suresh Kumar on the West, Somashekar and Ashwath Narayan on the North, Aravinda Limbavali on the East.

"Giving importance to any one of them might not be acceptable to the others, and could affect the BBMP polls. BJP is under pressure to win

the elections as the party is ruling the State, so the CM cannot take a risk at this time," said BJP sources.

Other than Backward Classes and Information and Public Relations, Yediyurappa retained most of the portfolios he was holding. Minister Umesh Katti, who got Food and Civil Supplies, was said to be eyeing Energy.

A few other ministers, including Ramesh Jarkiholi, was also hoping to bag Energy. Again, the CM has kept this portfolio, controlling more damage. Infrastructure is another portfolio in demand, which he has not allocated to anyone.

Centre modifies app to address lower vaccination

CoWIN now has provision for walk-in beneficiaries on any date



The paradox is that countries across globe are asking us for access to the vaccines while a section of our own is fomenting misinformation and doubt for narrow political ends

Union Health Minister
Harsh Vardhan

PLAN TO INOCULATE 30 CRORE PEOPLE IN 6-8 MONTHS

The country plans to vaccinate around 30 crore people with two doses each in the first six to eight months of the year. The recipients include 3 crore doctors, nurses and other frontline workers, to be followed by people who are either over 50 years of age or have illnesses that make them vulnerable to Covid-19. The pace of the vaccination, since the launch on January 16, however, has been slower than expected and till Thursday 10,40,014 beneficiaries had taken either Covishield or Covaxin across India.

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @ New Delhi

AMID reports of low turnout of beneficiaries for Covid-19 vaccinations and wastage of vaccines, the Centre has modified the CoWIN app, the platform driving the immunisation drive, to allow registered but non-allocated individuals to take the shots.

This new feature will permit states to accommodate walk-ins, especially at centres where less than 100 people per day, as planned, are taking the jabs.

"While the average vaccination sessions allowed per site are 100, in a majority of the states, fewer people were turning up as a result of which a large number of vaccines were getting wasted," said an official in the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. "Therefore, following requests by the states, we have created a provision in the app to also accommodate registered beneficiaries scheduled to take the jab on other dates."

The pace of the vaccination, since the launch on January 16, however, has been slower than expected and till Thursday 10,40,014 beneficiaries had taken either Covishield or Covaxin across India.

The sources in the government also said that the Centre may allow self-registration by the elderly and those with comorbidities on the CoWIN platform for faster and easier

enrolment to receive a shot of the vaccine.

"An Aadhaar-based enrolment process could also be rolled out for the elderly and those with comorbidities on the CoWIN platform, which may be integrated with the widely used Aarogya Setu app," said an official.

As per the plan, the CoWIN platform will allow the public to access certain features — only those required for enrolment and vaccination and not the complex back-end operations — on the Aarogya Setu app.

Aarogya Setu app, the single-window interface for health-related updates related to Covid-19 launched by the Centre in April last year, has been downloaded by over 17 million users.

Meanwhile, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan, while launching a major communication campaign to address hesitancy shown by people towards the vaccines and misinformation, said all eminent doctors of well-known hospitals have taken the vaccine and praised the exercise for its desired end.

"It is only a handful of vested political interests who are spreading rumours," he said. Vardhan added that "the paradox is that countries across globe are asking us for access to the vaccines while a section of our own is fomenting misinformation and doubt for narrow political ends."



2.3 lakh healthcare workers get the jab on Thursday as total count crosses 10L

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE number of healthcare workers who have received Covid-19 vaccine jabs in the country till the evening of the sixth day of the nationwide immunisation drive crossed one million as per provisional reports, Union Health Ministry said on Thursday.

The Ministry also said on Thursday, 2,33,530 beneficiaries were vaccinated till 6 pm through 4,043 vaccination sessions held across 27 states and Union Territories, while adding the final report would be

completed by late in the night. The highest number of vaccinations — 26,558 — were recorded in Odisha followed by Telangana where 26,441 healthcare workers took the jab on Thursday.

The countrywide Covid vaccination programme was conducted successfully on the sixth day as well, said Dr Manohar Agnani, the additional secretary in the Union health ministry. "The total number of healthcare workers vaccinated against Covid has touched 10,40,014 (till Thursday 6 pm) through 18,161 sessions, as per

the provisional report," he said.

The ministry said 187 adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) have been reported till 6 pm on the sixth day of the vaccination drive. "A person who was vaccinated on January 16 and developed intracranial haemorrhage on January 20 has been admitted to Geetanjali Medical College and Hospital, Udaipur in Rajasthan and it is not related to vaccination. Further, no death has been reported today," said the health ministry official.

With agency inputs

PM's 'vaccines ki baat' with Varanasi people

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will interact with beneficiaries and vaccinators of the Covid vaccination drive in Varanasi on Saturday. The interaction is aimed at countering the scepticism about the vaccines in a few sections of the society. The participants in the video conference interaction will share their first-hand experience of vaccination. The Prime Minister has regularly been interacting with people from his constituency.

Nepal, Bangladesh get Indian shots

Bangladesh and Nepal on Thursday received Indian-manufactured Covid vaccines. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar took to Twitter to make the announcement. "Nepal receives Indian vaccines. Putting neighbours first, putting people first!" he tweeted. In another tweet, the minister said that the supply of vaccines to Bangladesh reaffirms the highest priority India accorded to its ties with Bangladesh.

Elderly lawmakers to get jab in next round?

Elected representatives above 50 years of age are likely to be vaccinated against Covid-19 in the second round of the ongoing inoculation drive after over three crore healthcare and frontline workers are vaccinated in the first round. A government source, however, insisted that there is no specific timeline for the vaccination of top politicians. The PM had earlier said that 30 crore people will be vaccinated in the next few months.

JAB FOR THE WARRIOR

I took the vaccine today and I'm doing perfectly fine. All healthcare workers and frontline warriors should volunteer for the vaccination without fear and apprehension. The vaccines given in India are absolutely safe and have had no major adverse side-effects. Mild fever, injection site pain and body ache are not side-effects but only effects of the vaccine. Getting the jab is the only way we can end this pandemic. When more people take the vaccine, it boosts public confidence. Even those who are apprehensive or worried will come forward to take the jab. With more people getting vaccinated, we can achieve herd immunity

Dr C N Manjunath,
Director of Jayadeva Institute of Cardiology



I registered willingly, but was a little apprehensive. However, after weighing the risk and the benefits, I opted for it. There have been no side-effects or discomfort. A few of my colleagues had mild to moderate body pain and felt feverish too. But they are also doing absolutely fine now. I would strongly recommend that everyone takes the vaccine. I thank everyone who was involved in the development of this vaccine. My wife is also a doctor and is waiting for her turn. We should remember that we still need to follow protocol — wearing a mask, maintaining social distance and washing hands frequently even after vaccination

Dr Bhagath Ram DR, consultant anesthesiologist,
Institute of Nephro and Urology, Bengaluru

■ US finally joins WHO's Covax facility for vaccines | ■ Experts relieved as Biden restores WHO funding | ■ US set to rejoin Paris accord on climate change

JOE GOES GLOBAL IN ANTI-COVID FIGHT

WASHINGTON

The United States said on Thursday it would resume its funding for the UN's health agency, WHO, as President Joe Biden shifts towards greater international cooperation in the fight against Covid-19.

On his first day in the job, Biden confirmed he had reversed the decision of former president Donald Trump to quit the World Health Organization (WHO).

"Under trying circumstances, this organisation has rallied the scientific and research and development community to accelerate vaccines, therapies and diagnostics," top US scientist Anthony Fauci told a WHO meeting via video-link, confirming that the US would continue to pay its dues to the organisation.

Fauci also said Biden will issue a directive Thursday that shows the United States' intent to join the Covax Facility, a project to deploy Covid-19 vaccines to people in need around the world — whether in rich or poor countries. Under Trump, the US had been the highest-profile — and most deep-pocketed — holdout from the COVAX Facility, which has struggled to meet its goals of distributing millions of vaccines both because of financial and logistic difficulties.

Good news for India?

WHO and leaders in many developing countries have repeat-

edly expressed concerns that poorer places could be the last to get Covid-19 vaccines, while noting that leaving vast swathes of the global population unvaccinated puts everyone at risk. The Covax programme aims to secure enough Covid-19 vaccines this year for the most vulnerable 20% in every country, rich or poor.

Currently around 190 countries are participating, including the 92 low-income and lower-middle income nations such as India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Vietnam.

Aimed at pooling the risk and rewards, Covax has struck agreements with manufacturers for two billion vaccine doses, and has secured options on a further billion.

It is co-led by the WHO as well as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and CEPI, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations.

Nearly \$7 bn funding needed

The project's success also rests on whether it can raise the required funding. Covax raised the initial \$2 billion last year.

But at least \$4.6 billion more will be needed this year for procurement, with a further \$800 million needed for research and development and \$1.4 billion for vaccine delivery support.

The WHO hopes to distribute 145 million doses worldwide in the first three months of this year. However, the WHO has repeatedly hit out at "vaccine na-



President Joe Biden leaves after attending a virtual swearing-in ceremony of political appointees from the State Dining Room of the White House | AP

4,05,400

people in the US have died after testing positive for Covid-19, a toll that surpasses the 4,05,399 military fatalities of the US in World War II. The number includes both combat and non-combat deaths.

tionalism" — particularly rich countries hogging the first doses off the production line in their own direct deals with manufacturers, bypassing Covax.

Quarantine for US arrivals

Biden will kick off his national Covid-19 strategy to ramp up vaccinations and testing, reopens schools and businesses and increase the use of masks — including a requirement that Americans mask up for travel.

The US mask order for travel being implemented by Biden will apply to airports and planes, ships, intercity buses, trains and public transport. Travelers from abroad must furnish a negative test before departing for the US and quarantine upon arrival. Agencies

Leaders laud US return to Paris pact

LONDON

World leaders breathed an audible sigh of relief that the United States under President Joe Biden is rejoining the global effort to curb climate change, a cause that his predecessor had shunned.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and French President Emmanuel Macron were among those welcoming Biden's decision to rejoin the Paris climate accord, reversing a key Trump policy in the first hours of his presidency Wednesday.

"Rejoining the Paris Agreement is hugely positive news,"

Johnson wrote on Twitter. Britain, which is hosting this year's UN climate summit, looked forward to working with the Biden administration on the issue, he said.

Macron likewise tweeted his joy at the US rejoining the Paris pact, saying that with Biden, "we will be stronger to face the challenges of our time. Stronger to build our future. Stronger to protect our planet."

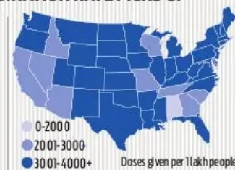
The accord, forged in the French capital in 2015, commits countries to put forward plans for reducing their emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide, which

is released from burning fossil fuels. Former President Donald Trump had questioned the scientific warnings about man-made global warming, at times accusing other countries of using the Paris accord as a club to hurt Washington. The US formally left the pact in November.

By contrast, Biden put the fight against climate change at the center of his presidential campaign and on Wednesday immediately launched a series of climate-friendly efforts to bring Washington back in step with the rest of the world on the crucial issue. "A cry for survival comes from the planet itself," Biden said in his inaugural address. AP

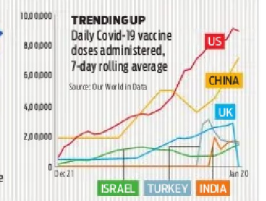
U.S. VACCINATION RATE PICKS UP

The rollout of Covid-19 vaccines in the US is picking up pace after delays initially. Biden has set a goal of 100 million shots in his first 100 days in office.



Doses given per 100k people

3 mn/day



During flu season, the U.S. is able to vaccinate about 3 million people a day, said Dr. Christopher Murray of the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in Seattle

Fire at Serum's Pune Plant Leaves 5 Dead

Loss pegged at ₹1kcr;
CEO Poonawalla rules
out disruption in Covid
vaccine supplies

Our Bureaus

Mumbai | Pune: A fire at Serum Institute of India (SII) in Pune left five dead and damaged a manufacturing plant, possibly threatening future supplies of Covid-19 vaccines in India and abroad. CEO Adar Poonawalla

said there would be no disruption to Covid vaccine supplies. SII makes the Covishield vaccine, which accounts for the bulk of India's Covid inoculation programme, based on AstraZeneca-Oxford University knowhow.

While the incident likely won't hamper Covid vaccine supplies in the short term, planned increases could be impacted, people aware of the development told ET.

'No Loss of Covishield Production' >>> 12

999,065 <small>TOTAL VACCINATIONS</small>	192,581 <small>ON JAN 21 TILL 6PM</small>
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Fire at SII's Pune facility where a new line to make Covid vaccines was being installed

No Loss of Covishield Production: Poonawalla

>>> From Page 1

A new line to make Covid vaccines was being installed at the plant, which makes BCG vaccines, they said.

The total monetary loss due to the fire was estimated at ₹1,000 crore, they said.

Poonawalla said the incident won't affect Covishield plans.

"I would like to reassure all governments & the public that there would be no loss of #COVISHIELD production due to multiple production buildings that I had kept in reserve to deal with such contingencies at Serum Institute of India," he tweeted.

A company spokesman told ET that it "does not anticipate any disruption to its Covid vaccine production." SII has reserves of up to 50 million Covishield doses. It's expected to supply more than 200 million doses in the next quarter to India and other countries as well as the GAVI Alliance. Those production commitments may have to be revised, said people aware of the matter.

Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray tweeted that an electrical fault caused the fire at the plant that made BCG vaccines.

Thackeray will visit SII at noon Friday to take stock of the situation, according to the chief minister's office.

SII is pledged to manufacture close to 1 billion doses of the vaccine being developed by US-based Novavax to the World Health Organisation's Covax facility. It's also committed to providing up to 400 million doses of the AZ-Oxford vaccine to Covax.

Maharashtra deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar said the state government has ordered a probe into the blaze. It broke out at 2:45 pm on the fourth and fifth floors of the SEZ 3 building on SII's premises and was brought under control in two hours, police said.

Pune chief fire officer Prashant Ranpise said 15 water tankers were pressed into action and the fire was brought under control at around 4:30 pm.



INITIATE TALKS WITH VACCINE MAKERS TO PROCURE JABS

Staffing Cos Seek Vax for Lakhs on their Payrolls

Sreeradha D Basu & Prachi Verma Dadhwal


Kolkata | New Delhi: Top staffing and logistics companies, including Shadowfax, Quess Corp, Manpower, Adecco, TeamLease Services and CIEL that have lakhs of contract workers on their payrolls and service thousands of companies, are exploring options to get Covid-19 vaccines — once they become available commercially — for employees and associates. Many of these people have been working as essential service providers right through the pandemic.

While some firms are considering plans to set up camps at client locations, a few have initiated talks with vaccine manufacturers and suppliers as they explore options to ensure employee safety. A bulk of these workers are employed in frontline roles such as in last-mile delivery, customer service, facility management, security and feet-on-the-street, and face greater risk compared with most others.

On-demand logistics service provider Shadowfax, with a 1.5-lakh delivery-partner network, has initiated talks with vaccine manufacturers and large pharma distributors. “We would like to cover the cost for our delivery partners as much as possible. Conversations are going on and we will have more clarity in the coming days,” said cofounder Praharsh Chandra.

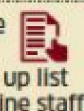
“Once government and vaccine manufacturers confirm bulk supplies for employers, we will consider working closely with clients, especially where there is a large workforce under one roof. Such vaccination camps can be facilitated in manufacturing, industries, banking and other such sectors,” said Lohit Bhatia, president of workforce management at

Keeping Them Safe

 Top staffing and logistics cos exploring options to inoculate employees

Companies will do so once vaccines are commercially available to procure

Some cos initiated talks with manufacturers 

Cos have started drawing up list of frontline staff 

Many of their workers in frontline roles servicing clients & are exposed to more risk

Quess Corp.

Quess’ frontline workforce in facility management and security, deployed at hospitals in roles such as ward boys and general duty assistants, have already started getting vaccines through the hospitals under which they are deployed, said Bhatia.

India had vaccinated more than 7.86 lakh people as of Wednesday evening. While the pandemic has

AT RISK

A bulk of these workers are employed in frontline roles such as in last-mile delivery, customer service, security, etc

seen a declining trend in the country, the overall number of cases in India is the highest after the US.

ManpowerGroup India is exploring possibilities of vaccinating frontline staff as soon as the government makes it commercially available for corporates. “It would be our way of showing gratitude to our employees for risking their lives all through the pande-

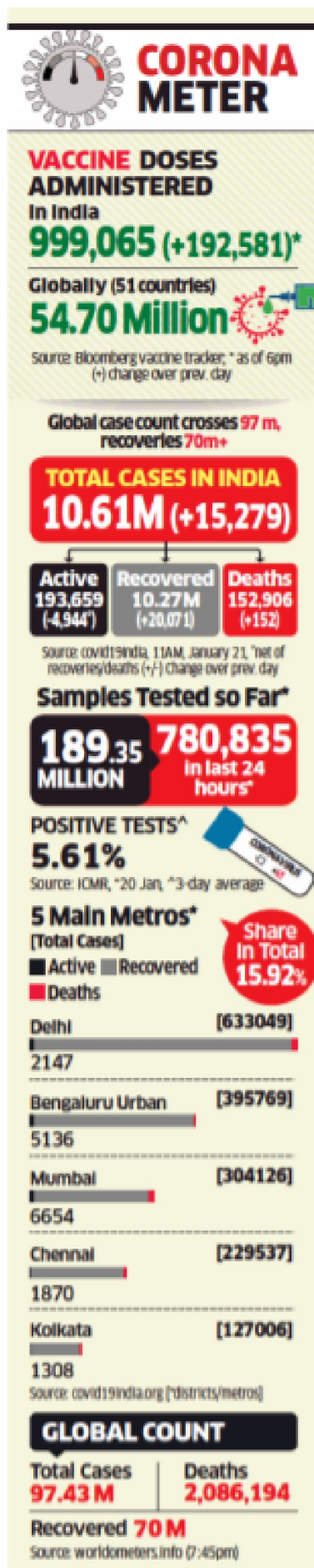
mic,” said managing director Sandeep Gulati.

CIEL is making a list of employees in frontline roles such as sales, customer service, warehousing, last-mile delivery, administration, billing and facility management, who are at a greater risk of the infection. “While the exercise is still on, we estimate this to be about 10,000 employees spread across India. We will track the progress of vaccination and explore possibilities of organising the programme for them through a provider,” said CEO Aditya Narayan Mishra.

Firms said they are monitoring the efficacy of the vaccination drive, as they continue to stress on following safety protocols and social distancing. “We are exploring the right approach to inoculate our frontline employees in a staged manner in the coming months,” said Manu Salgal – director of general staffing & permanent recruitment at Adecco.

TeamLease cofounder Rituparna Chakraborty said the company was anticipating enquiries from organisations seeking help in procuring vaccines for employees deployed with them, especially in outbound roles and manufacturing jobs.





India Gifts Over 2m Vaccine Doses to B'desh

PTI

Dhaka: India on Thursday officially handed over 2 million doses of Covid-19 vaccine as a gift to Bangladesh. The vaccines were provided to Bangladesh at a crucial time when the number of coronavirus cases in this country was rising.

"India had stood by Bangladesh during the (1971) Liberation War, and today, when the pandemic is rattling the world, India again came with gifts of vaccines," Bangladesh foreign minister Dr AK Abdul Momen said.

A chartered Air India plane, carrying the Covishield vaccine landed at Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on Thursday. Indian high commissioner Vikram Doraiswami handed over the vaccines formally to Momen at a formal function.

Momen said the vaccine supply is a gift of goodwill that Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina have achieved through building strong partnership between the two neighbouring nations.

Health minister Zahid Maleque joined the function during which Momen termed the New Delhi initiative as a proof of true friendship between Bangladesh and India.

State Sees 674 New Covid Cases

Our Bureau



Bengaluru: Karnataka reported 674 new cases of Covid-19 on Thursday, pushing the infection count to 934,252. The state also recorded two deaths taking the toll to 12,187.

Nearly half of these cases (371) were from Bengaluru city. The capital also added one death in the past 24 hours.

The day also recorded 815 recoveries, which was higher compared to the new cases.

VACCINATION DRIVE

Covid vaccination drive has continued in the state, with 17,190 people inoculated on Thursday. While the state achieved about 52% of the target on Thursday, the overall coverage as against the target in the last five days is 57%.

'Sputnik Vax to Cost Below \$10 in India, Expect Nod Soon'


Divya. Rajagopal
@timesgroup.com

Mumbai: The Russian Development Investment Fund (RDIF) the sovereign fund from Russia backing the Sputnik V vaccine, on Thursday said that the company expects to register the vaccine in India soon and will be pricing it at less than \$10. Kirill Dmitriev, CEO, RDIF, told ET that the price of the vaccine is 1/4th of mRNA vaccines with over 90% efficacy charge.

"We believe that you know, there needs to be equal access, equal pricing to all of the countries without any sort of changes. Now, this price is one half to one third of other vaccines that have efficacy of more than 90%. So, vaccines of Moderna and Pfizer with over 90% efficacy are double and triple the price of our vaccine," Dimitri said. The RDIF which has backed the Gamaleya Institute of Infectious disease uses two adenovirus vectors for vaccination, which it said gives better efficacy. The company is also doing trials with AstraZeneca on this vaccine. RDIF told ET that its pricing point makes sense considering the storage requirement is +2 +8 degrees stability of the vaccine, which is very important for logistics.

Hyderabad based Dr Reddy's is running the clinical trial of the vaccine in India and it went into phase 3 earlier this month. The company is expected to file for emergency approval by early March. On Thursday UAE and Hungary officially registered the vaccine in their countries, with Hungary being the first EU nation to register the vaccine. The price of



 Vaccines of Moderna and Pfizer with over 90% efficacy are double and triple the price of our vaccine

KIRILL DMITRIEV
CEO, RDIF

the vaccine however will be difficult to match of companies such as Serum who is offering the vaccine at less than \$2 to government tender. The vaccine will have to find takers in private market.

Sputnik V vaccine development has become a political cross fire between the West and Russia where several countries in the West have dismissed the claims made by RDIF as not supported by data.

Dimitri in an address to media said the vaccine by its "deeds and actions continues to demonstrate success after success, because at the core it's a very safe and efficient product".

BIDEN VOWS HEALING AND ACTION ON COVID PANDEMIC

US Intends to Join Covax and Remain WHO Member, Says Anthony Fauci

Says US will 'fulfil its financial obligations' to WHO and work with other members on reforms

Washington: US infectious-disease chief Anthony Fauci pledged his country's commitment to the World Health Organization, including membership in a global effort to deploy Covid-19 vaccines.

Fauci addressed the Geneva-based group a day after Joe Biden's inauguration, underlining the new US president's effort to mend ties with an agency crucial to fighting the pandemic. He confirmed that the US will join Covax, a 92-nation vaccine collaboration that the Trump administration declined to participate in.

"The US also intends to fulfill its financial obligations" to the WHO, Fauci said in a speech via a video link. "The US sees technical collaboration on all levels as a fundamental part of our relationship with the WHO, one we value deeply and look to strengthen going forward."

Fauci's address initiates a cam-



US infectious-disease chief Anthony Fauci

paign to re-engage with allies spurned by his predecessor. The United Nations agency was a frequent target of former President Donald Trump, who accused it of being lax on China and failing to provide accurate information about the virus.

Biden reversed Trump's decision to exit the WHO on his first day in office as the US death toll from Covid-19 exceeded 400,000, higher than any other country.

The US has been the WHO's largest contributor, providing \$400 million to \$500 million in manda-

tory and voluntary contributions, and Trump's decision last year drew sharp criticism in Congress, as well as from allies in Europe. The WHO has been heavily involved in the fight against the coronavirus, especially in poor countries.

Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, spoke at Thursday's session of a series of executive board meetings that began Monday. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus congratulated Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris on Twitter late Wednesday.

Antony Blinken, Biden's choice for secretary of state, said earlier this week that a US rift with WHO may be healing and that the US was preparing to join Covax, the program led by the WHO, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Bloomberg

Covax to Supply 1.8 B Doses to Poor Nations in '21

London: The Covax vaccine sharing platform designed to ensure equitable access to Covid-19 shots said on Thursday it aimed to deliver 1.8 billion doses to poorer countries in 2021 and hoped to fulfil supply deals for wealthier ones in the second half of the year.

But Covax, which is co-led by the GAVI vaccine alliance, the World Health Organization (WHO) and others, said there were many uncertainties affecting the procurement and supply of Covid-19 vaccines, and terms of the deals were "subject to change".

The 1.8 billion doses would be supplied via an advance market commitment (AMC) to 92 eligible countries and would correspond to approximately 27% coverage of populations in those countries, GAVI said in an updated forecast for Covax. Reuters

Hungary Becomes First in EU to Approve Russian Covid Vaccine

Budapest: Hungary became the first European Union nation to approve Russia's Covid-19 vaccine as Prime Minister Viktor Orban takes a pre-election risk to accelerate the country's exit from the coronavirus crisis.

Hungary's drug regulator granted emergency approval for Russia's Sputnik V and also to the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca Plc, Cabinet Minister Gergely Gulyas said at a briefing on Thursday.

The decision followed pressure by Orban to fast-track the process and skirt the EU, which has yet to authorise either one.

While Hungarian Prime Minister is regularly criticised in the EU for his cozy relationship with Russian President Vladimir Putin and the Chinese Communist Party leadership, he may only be the first rather than the sole western leader to secure alternative supplies from the east amid the slow roll-out of western vaccines that has left governments exasperated. The government in Budapest is also considering procuring a Chinese vaccine from Sinopharm. Bloomberg

Too Early to Say When Covid Lockdown will End, Says British PM Johnson

London: It is too early to say when the national coronavirus lockdown in England will end, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Thursday, as daily deaths from Covid-19 reach new highs and hospitals become increasingly stretched.

Britain posted a fresh record in daily deaths on Wednesday for the second day running, figures Johnson has called "appalling".

A prevalence survey, known as REACT-1, suggested infections had not fallen in the first days of lockdown, though the government has said that the impact of national restrictions introduced on Jan. 5 was not yet reflected in the numbers.

"I think it's too early to say when we'll be able to lift some of some of the restrictions," Johnson told broadcasters.



Boris Johnson

"What we're seeing in the ONS data, in the REACT survey, we're seeing the contagiousness of the new variant that we saw arrive just before Christmas. There's no doubt it does spread very fast indeed."

England's third national lockdown has seen bars, restaurants and schools mostly closed, with Johnson attributing a steep rise in cases at the

end of last year to a more transmissible variant of the coronavirus first detected in England.

While deaths have been rising, the number of new cases has fallen from a peak of 68,000 on Jan. 8 to 38,000 on Wednesday.

Johnson aims to vaccinate high priority groups by mid-February to protect the eldest, the most vulnerable and frontline health staff, before considering whether restrictions can be eased.

Earlier, education minister Gavin Williamson said he hoped schools would reopen by Easter, and that they would have would have two weeks' notice before restarting. Ministers have appealed to people to stay at home as much as they can to prevent hospitals being overwhelmed and to give authorities time to roll out Covid-19 vaccines. Reuters

Moderna Shipments Lag in NYC, States on Temperature Issue

New York: McKesson is replacing some shipments of Moderna Inc's Covid-19 vaccine after they got too cold in transit, underlining the logistical hurdles that face the US vaccination campaign as states confront surging demand for the shots.

The company, which is handling distribution of the Moderna vaccine for the US government, said that some shipments it sent Sunday had fallen below their recommended temperature range. McKesson said gel packs used in shipping the shots had become too cold. New York Mayor Bill de Blasio said that the city was forced to reschedule 23,000 vaccination appointments due to a delay in the delivery of 103,000 doses of the Moderna shot. Bloomberg

Germany's Virus Deaths Surpass 50,000

Berlin: Germany's coronavirus fatalities passed 50,000, underscoring the urgency facing Chancellor Angela Merkel's government to check the spread of the disease and guard against new mutations.

In Europe's largest economy, 1,013 people died from Covid-19 in the 24 hours through Thursday morning, taking the total number of deaths to 50,010, according to data from Johns Hopkins University. Pandemic-related fatalities have doubled in the

past month.

Merkel will address Germany's fight against the disease at a news conference later on Thursday, just two days after struggling to reach common ground with state leaders. The chancellor pushed for tougher curbs, but some state leaders resisted, wary of voter dissatisfaction ahead of regional and national elections in the coming months.

While infections have declined in recent days and the contagion rate is

at the lowest level since the beginning of November, it remains more than double a government target. Authorities are concerned that fast-spreading strains could spark a surge like in Britain and Ireland. Merkel this week raised the prospect of reintroducing controls on Germany's borders unless European neighbors synchronize measures to contain mutations. Helge Braun, Merkel's chief of staff, was cautiously optimistic in a television interview on Thursday. Bloomberg



Biden Unveils National Pandemic Response That Trump Resisted

Signs an executive order making wearing masks in airports and public transportation mandatory

Washington: President Joe Biden will use his first full day in office on Thursday to go on the offensive against the coronavirus, with a 21-page national strategy that includes aggressive use of executive authority to protect workers, advance racial equity and ramp up the manufacturing of test kits, vaccines and supplies.

The “National Strategy for the Covid-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness,” previewed on Wednesday evening by Biden’s advisers, outlines the kind of muscular and highly coordinated federal response that Democrats have long demanded and President Donald Trump refused. Instead, Trump insisted that state governments take the lead.

The new president intends to make expansive use of his executive authority to sign a dozen executive orders or actions related to Covid-19 — including one requiring mask-wearing “in airports, on certain modes of public transportation, including many trains, airplanes, maritime vessels, and intercity buses,” according to a fact sheet issued by the Biden administration.

With its nominees for top health positions not yet confirmed by Congress, the Biden team has asked Trump’s surgeon general, Dr. Jerome Adams, to stay on as an adviser and help with the transition. But Biden’s advisers were not shy about taking aim at the former president, whose vaccine rollout has been the subject of criticism.

“The cooperation or lack of cooperation from the Trump administration has been an impedi-



Joe Biden

ment,” said Jeff Zients, the new White House Covid-19 response coordinator, adding, “We don’t have the visibility that we would hope to have into supply and allocations.”

The Biden team said it had identified 12 “immediate supply shortfalls” that were critical to the pandemic response, including N95 surgical masks and isolation gowns, as well as swabs, reagents and pipettes used in testing — deficiencies that have dogged the nation for nearly a year. Jen Psaki, the new White House press secretary, told reporters on Wednesday evening that Biden “absolutely remains committed” to invoking the Defense Production Act, a Korean War-era law, to bolster supplies.

But the president, who has proposed a \$1.9 billion coronavirus aid package, will need the cooperation of Congress to carry out much of his ambitious plan, which also includes greatly expanding testing of asymptomatic people to reopen schools and businesses. NYT