



BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE, BANGALORE

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1,210 new cases in Karnataka, 16 deaths

As many as 1,807 persons discharged

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The State on Friday reported 1,210 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total number of cases to 8,99,011. With 16 deaths, the toll rose to 11,928. This is apart from 19 deaths of patients due to non-COVID-19 reasons.

As many as 1,807 persons were discharged on Friday, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,68,471. Of the remaining 18,593 active patients, 253 were being monitored in ICUs. While

the positivity rate for the day stood at 1.19 %, the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) touched 1.32%.

Bengaluru Urban reported 659 cases, taking its tally to 3,77,251. With six deaths coming from Bengaluru, the toll in this district rose to 4,224. Active cases in Bengaluru reduced to 13,225.

As many as 1,00,846 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, including 87,338 RT-PCR tests. With this, the total tests rose to 1,21,64,587.

NEARBY



No celebrations at public places on December 31

BENGALURU

Celebrations that draw crowds and revellers on main roads and to public places, especially at party hubs such as Brigade Road, M.G. Road, Commercial Street, and surrounding areas on New Year's Eve, will not be allowed this year, Revenue Minister R. Ashok said on Friday. After participating in the State's COVID-19 Task Force meeting, the Minister said this would be enforced under the Disaster Management Act.

BENGALURU ► PAGE 3

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No NY revelry in public, including MG Road

BENGALURU, DHNS

Scuttling revellers' plan to see off 2020 by partying on MG Road and Brigade Road, the state government on Friday banned New Year celebrations in all public places including these iconic roads in the CBD, where thousands gather to usher in the New Year.

Revenue Minister R Ashoka and Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar told reporters that the decision was taken due to the possible second wave of Covid-19.

Reiterating the govern-

ment's previous stand on the celebrations, Ashoka said, "People can party at home with their family. Pubs, bars and hotels that previously wit-

nessed hundreds of guests on New Year's eve shall function at 50% capacity with prior police passes. I have already held a meeting in this regard with the BBMP commissioner, city

police commissioner and disaster management officials."

Ashoka said 2020 will be different "due to what all of us have undergone".

► **New year, Page 8**

Online betting on races banned, Page 15



R Ashoka

INDIA COVID
CASES ON FRIDAY

29,845

430

DEATHS

Thursday's cases: **29,398**, Deaths: **414**

KARNATAKA
CASES ON FRIDAY

1,210

16

DEATHS

Thursday's cases: **1,238**, Deaths: **12**

After Covid test duty, GeneXpert machines revert to TB testing

SURAKSHA P
BENGALURU, DHNS

With Covid cases declining, the tuberculosis (TB) wing of the Health Department has been asked to utilise all the remaining CBNAAT cartridges available for Covid testing and use the GeneXpert machines for testing TB samples as was done before the pandemic.

The state resorted to using the machines for testing Covid samples when the pandemic began. So far, 29,599 Covid samples have been tested using the CBNAAT method. There are eight to nine government Covid testing labs that have GeneXpert machines in the state.

Dr Ramesh Reddy, joint director, TB, Health department, said: "Cartridges for GeneXpert machines are supplied by the Government of India. We cannot procure them locally. Around 3,000 cartridges arrived two months ago. Further supply will not come. We cannot do anything. We are left with

500 cartridges to test Covid samples." Now, the labs have to use the rapid antigen method and RTPCR machines for tests.

"We have received guidelines that we have to use TrueNAT and CBNAAT machines to test TB samples as we have a goal to eliminate TB. If we use the machines for Covid testing, we cannot do TB testing. Even though Nimhans did not ask for the cartridges, we gave it to them, to exhaust them. Active case finding is underway for TB and door-to-door survey will be done."

The Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS) started CBNAAT testing on May 6 and has so far tested 286 Covid samples with the technology.

Emergency situations

Dr Mahantesh Parande, HoD, microbiology, BIMS, told *DH*: "We use CBNAAT only in emergency situations, because we have a shortage of cartridges. We last got 360 cartridges from the Health Department on

November 10. The advantage of using CBNAAT is, in cases of emergency surgery, we can get the Covid test result in three hours, while RTPCR takes eight hours for a cycle."

While TrueNAT results come in one-and-a-half hour, only four samples can be mounted at one go. The GeneXpert system is available in a one, two, four, and 16-module configuration.

Gadag Institute of Medical Sciences (GIMS) started CBNAAT testing on April 24. Dr Mahesh Baragundi from GIMS said: "We tested 193 Covid samples with CBNAAT and then stopped, as despite repeated requests, we were not supplied cartridges."

Dr Channamma Katti, from the Vijayapura district hospital, said: "We have tested 200 Covid samples with CBNAAT so far. We could not use more than 400 cartridges supplied more than two months back, because our GeneXpert machine was taken away by the Health department for TB testing."

DH



DECCAN HERALD

DH



DECCAN HERALD

1,210 fresh Covid cases, 16 deaths reported in state

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka reported 1,210 new Covid-19 cases and 16 deaths, taking the total number of infections to 8,99,011 and the toll to 11,928, on Friday.

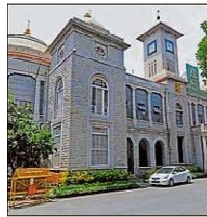
The day also saw 1,807 patients getting discharged after recovery. Cumulatively, 8,68,471 discharges have been reported in the state so far. Out of the 18,593 active

cases, 253 are in the ICUs across the state. Six of the total deaths were from Bengaluru Urban district, which accounted for 659 cases.

Chikkaballapur reported 52 cases, Hassan 45, Mysuru 44, and Chitradurga 40. A total of over 1,21,64,587 samples have been tested so far, out of which 1,00,846 samples were tested on Friday.

BBMP Bill: A thoughtless drill

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Bill, 2020, passed by the Karnataka Assembly, is half-baked and has missed a golden opportunity to address the woes of the crumbling capital city. While there has been a long demand for an exclusive legislation to govern Bengaluru, the new Bill covers only BBMP, defeating its very purpose. What the city needs is an umbrella law bringing within its ambit various civic agencies like Bengaluru Water Supply and Sewerage Board, Bengaluru Development Authority, Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTCL), Namma Metro, among others, as the total lack of cohesion among these organisations is the biggest stumbling block in the city's planned growth. The silver lining, however, is that



**The BBMP will
become even
more unman-
ageable**

the BBMP will have some administrative stability as it will have only two mayors during the five-year period, with a tenure of 30 months each, as against the present system of electing a new head every year. Another positive feature is the decentralisation of developmental works which will now be under the control of 15 local zones.

Perhaps, the biggest pitfall of the Bill is to expand the city limits by a radius of 1 km, thereby subsuming several villages on the outskirts and increasing the number of wards from the present 198 to 243. This move is totally illogical as BBMP is still unable to provide basic facilities like water supply, underground drains and roads in the 110 villages that were merged with the city 13 years ago. At best, this will come as a boon to real estate sharks as land rates increase with urbanisation. The expansion of the city's borders also goes against the grain of the recently notified rules permitting increase in floor area ratio (FAR) to enable vertical growth of the city. The government had committed itself to the vertical growth of Bengaluru, an idea first mooted over two decades ago, to manage people's mobility through certain fixed corridors and reduce the overall vehicle footprint, encourage use of public transport and lessen the pressure on civic agencies to provide amenities in far-flung areas by drawing power and water lines from the city.

The BBMP, which is already struggling to fulfil its basic responsibilities, will now become even more unmanageable and is certain to collapse under its own weight with the inclusion of new areas. In the absence of an all-encompassing legislation to administer the city, it would have been better to split BBMP into smaller corporations on the lines of Mumbai. The Bill also does not address the issue of autonomy, as MLAs will continue to have a stranglehold over the corporation. The new Bill is a thoughtless exercise that threatens to do more harm than good to the city.

The road ahead

■ Bio-mining has been a much-talked solution to tackle the mountains of waste that has piled up in Mandur. As part of the process, the recyclable waste is first extracted. The Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) produced from the solid waste is likely to be used either for filling up low-lying areas or sent to cement factories. If the proposed Waste-to-Energy plant at Mandur had been active, the RDF could have been shred, dried, baled and finally burnt to produce electricity. To convert a part of the land into a biodiversity park, bioearth is to be used.

■ Last year, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) State Level Monitoring Committee for Solid Waste Management, Karnataka had directed that no waste should head to the landfills from November 1, 2019. However, for want of alternatives, the reliance on landfills has continued. The Mittaganahalli landfill, now being used, is likely to be completely filled soon.

■ When it did not receive any response for multiple bio-mining tenders, the BBMP had in 2016 mooted a grand idea to convert the Mandur dumpyards spread over an area of 135 acres into a golf course. However, this proposal based on public private partnership model did not find any takers.

■ In exchange for defence land for development projects within the city, the Palike had once offered 30 acres of the land in Mandur. But the defence authorities were not interested, contending that the land was mostly filled with legacy garbage.



This leachate escape pond at the Mandur landfill site is filled to the brim with rainwater and leachate. The contaminated water percolates into the groundwater.



Mandur's toxic challenge

Massive protests had forced the closure of the Mandur landfills in 2014. Six years later, toxic smoke from burning bio-methane still rises from the uncleared mountains of muck, triggering serious health hazards

RASHEED KAPPAN

Six tough years after massive protests forced the closure of Mandur's inglorious landfills, toxic fumes from burning bio-methane has all the surrounding villages on the edge. This hot weather phenomenon is the latest in a long list of health hazards, even as the groundwater remains dangerously contaminated.

Over a thousand truckloads of mixed, unsegregated waste trooping daily from the city had devastated the land, leaving hundreds of villagers perennially sick and polluted the air beyond repair. That apocalyptic scenario from 2014 has now changed. The unbearable stench is gone, but that is the only silver lining.

Mountains of muck remain piled up, camouflaged by a thick overgrowth, shrubs and bushes. Thousands of tons of garbage lay underneath as a *DH* team surveyed the area. Deceptively picturesque, but the acidic, bio-methane appeared set to burst open once the rains fade and heat surges.

Summer worry

For Mandur residents, this is their big source of summer worry. "Every summer, fuelled by the methane gas that gets released into the air, dry grass and shrubs catch fire. The smoke covers the villages, triggering asthma and other ailments," informs the local Panchayath Development Officer, SV Venkatarangan.

Water contamination is an everyday affair too. The rains fill up the open wells dug up during the dumping period. The thick, black leachate gets mixed up with rainwater, percolating into the groundwater. "This contamination is evident even at depths of 400-500ft in most of



Toxic smoke from the fire sparked by bio-methane gas generated by the waste underneath in Mandur. This gets worse during the dry summer months.

PHOTO BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

the 14 villages under the panchayath," he points out.

Water piped from afar

To quench the thirst of Mandur and surrounding villages, water is piped all the way from wells dug on the Hoskote lake beds. But, as Mandur resident Byresh M J says, this network does not cover all villages in the vicinity. Even inside the main village, residents struggle to get a connection without political influence.

In December 2014, when they had seen the last of the garbage trucks and the dumpyards were shut down, the villagers were given an assurance: That the entire garbage would be cleared within the next three years. Six years have passed, and the promise of a good life for the villagers

remains a mirage.

Bio-mining tender

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has now floated a tender for bio-mining one of Mandur's two dumpyards. An estimated 10 lakh tonnes of legacy waste lies here, spread over an area of 80 acres. The plan is to take up the project at a cost of Rs 80 crore under the Shubhra Bengaluru programme. The Palike's previous attempts to kick off the process had failed, and there is no certainty whether this time will be any different.

Residents have meanwhile learnt to live with official apathy. Years ago, they had been beckoned by the promise of 24/7 power, converting waste into energy.



Mountains of muck remain piled up, camouflaged by a thick overgrowth.

DH PHOTO / JANAROHAN B K

Byresh recalls, "In 2005, the village had only three hours of power daily, farmers struggled without even 3-phase supply."

The government, he says, "promised to change all that if we let in the city's garbage, which was to be segregated and converted to energy. Farmers were also assured free manure from the residue." But soon they realised they were to be taken for a royal ride.

Waste-to-energy plant

The Palike had struck a deal with Srinivas Gayathri Resource Recovery Pvt Ltd to process 1,000 tonnes of garbage daily to generate 8 Megawatts of power. "The contractor built a compound around the 25 acres allotted for the plant. People did not know what was going until they re-

ceived truckloads of garbage were going straight to the landfills." The energy plant remained on paper but the number of daily trucks rose from 15 to 300 to 1,000 and beyond. "Almost the entire garbage generated in Bengaluru was coming to Mandur. The garbage mafia was coming to Mandur. The garbage mafia, the plant contractor, the elected representatives, were all in league," recalls Byresh.

As the stench and pollution turned unbearable, sprinklers were engaged. "But this too was a money-making exercise." The Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) is now probing the entire energy plant fiasco. Although the Palike cancelled the contract in 2014, the ACB stepped in to investigate how the land was mortgaged allegedly by the contractor to secure a bank loan in excess of Rs 50 crore.

The road ahead

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Covid vaccine: Only 100 may get jab per day at site

Dedicated Hosp To Take Care of Adverse Effect

Chethan.Kumar
@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: The government has planned an extensive Covid-19 vaccination campaign, deploying five personnel for each inoculation site and keeping aside one room for adverse-effect observa-


► **Inoculation sites at state schools & marriage halls, P 5**

tion after the shot is given.

Each Covid-19 vaccination site can vaccinate around 100 people in a day. Also, the government is looking to utilise community halls and set up makeshift tents for vaccination in the later stages, given that each site will need to be larger than regular vaccination sites.

These are part of the draft

DRAFT PROTOCOL

- Health ministry announces draft SOP for upcoming vaccination campaign
- Each camp can vaccinate 100 a day;  not more than 13-14 per hour
- In case of side effects, s/he rushed to dedicated hospital
- States can set up vaccination centres in schools, community halls or tents
- Drinking water and toilet facility should be available at all vaccination centres

standard operating procedure issued by ministry of health and family welfare and shared with all states.

States are gearing up to ramp up the vaccination infrastructure, identifying dedicated hospitals for adverse events following immunisation and specific vaccinations sites to meet requirements for Covid-19 inoculation. Accord-

ing to the SOP, each vaccination site will have five vaccination officers, including a guard, and three rooms — one each for waiting, vaccination and observation. TOI has reviewed a presentation made by the ministry at a meeting with state immunisation officers.

Each person who gets the vaccine will be mandatorily kept under observation for 30 minutes to check for adverse effect and those developing severe after-effects will be shifted to a dedicated hospital identified by the state.

Dr Rajani N, one of the immunisation officers who attended a two-day workshop on vaccination organised by the Centre, said: "The decision to have three rooms for vaccination is keeping in mind the need for social distancing. While the vaccination room will see only one person enter at each time, the waiting and observation room will have seating for multiple people."

Current low positivity rate does not mean 2nd wave won't hit: Sudhakar

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The current low positivity rate — that is positive cases per 100 tests — does not mean an escape from a second wave of Covid-19 infections, state health minister K Sudhakar said. Karnataka's daily positivity rate has hovered around 1.2% for the past few days.

At a Covid task force meeting on Friday, experts discussed measures that need to be put in place to tackle a second wave which they believe could hit the state in January and February.

Ten districts in the state — Dakshina Kannada, Udupi, Bengaluru Urban and Bengaluru Rural, Bidar, Belagavi, Vijayapura, Haveri, Yadgir and Ballari — which have failed to reach testing targets, came in for sharp scrutiny. A video conference with authorities from these districts was held on Friday to assess the pandemic situation.

To ensure people are quickly tested and treated, the state government is procuring medical oxygen generators and other equipment for 10 district hospitals and 30 taluk hospitals, the health minister said. Besides, Rs 22.5 crore has been earmarked for purchase of drugs required to treat Covid patients for the next three months.

"In the wake of concerns over a second wave, we need to adhere to testing targets.



WORK ON: BBMP health workers prepare to collect swab samples at Kengeri satellite bus stand in Bengaluru on Friday

These 10 districts, though with low positivity rate, have not reached testing targets that have been set, compared to the other 20 districts," Sudhakar said.

Vaccine roll-out

The state is preparing to administer a Covid-19 vaccine to the masses and details of vaccination centres, freezers, transport facilities across the state are being uploaded on a dedicated application and the ICMR portal, said Sudhakar. The state will also prepare an army of one lakh vaccinators, he said.

As reported, the first beneficiaries of a vaccine will be the healthcare workers in both government and private sector, Covid warriors, and those senior citizens with comorbidities. A list of these people has been prepared.

The Centre will procure vaccines for all states, Sudhakar said. "The decline in cases does not mean that Covid has gone away. We need to follow precautions and all guidelines," he said.

Responding to queries on protests that are happening across the city and Covid-appropriate norms being flouted, the minister said opposition party leaders must show responsibility given the situation. "If Covid cases get out of hand because of the lack of Covid-appropriate behaviour during these protests, opposition party leaders must take responsibility. I request them to take all precautions" he said.

Deputy chief minister Govind Karajol has been appointed chairman of the Covid-19 task force committee. In a meeting held under

Remdesivir cost capped at ₹1,800

While the government is procuring remdesivir, the antiviral drug used to treat Covid-19, for Rs 1,800 per dose, some private hospitals are reportedly charging up to Rs 5,000 per dose which is unacceptable, health minister K Sudhakar said. "We have received complaints that some private hospitals are overcharging for administering the drug. Action will be taken against such hospitals under Karnataka Private Medical Establishments Act if further complaints are received," said Sudhakar.

his chairmanship on Friday, the task force also decided to purchase rapid antigen testing kits worth Rs 11.3 crore. Incidentally, the state had consciously decreased the number of RAT tests over the past couple of months and had concentrated on RT-PCR tests, the gold standard to detect Covid-19 infection.

Of the 1,00,846 tests conducted in 24 hours on Friday, 87,338 were RT-PCR and 13,508 were RAT tests. While RAT tests have high false negatives, RT-PCR has a high accuracy, but takes a lot of time to deliver results. The government has mandated that all RAT negatives have to be tested for RT-PCR, to address RAT shortcomings.



State reports 1,210 cases, 16 deaths

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Karnataka reported 1,210 new Covid-19 cases on Friday, of which 659 were from Bengaluru. The state's daily positivity rate stood at 1.1 % and the daily fatality rate was less than 1.3 %.

In the last 24 hours, the state conducted 1 lakh tests. Across the state, 1,807 Covid recoveries were reported. Nine districts reported less than 10 new cases.

In all, 16 Covid fatalities were reported in the state, of which six were from Bengaluru, two each from Dakshina Kannada and Tumakuru and one each from Bengaluru Rural, Chitradurga Davanagere, Dharwad, Vijayapura and

Ramanagara districts.

The deceased included three women. Of the 16, the youngest was a 38-year-old man from Dakshina Kannada who was also suffering from cancer and died on December 1. Among the dead is a 55-year-old man from Belagavi who was brought dead to a hospital on November 25 and tested positive for Covid later. Across the state, 253 Covid patients are in ICUs, including 113 from Bengaluru.

Bengaluru Urban had the most number of active cases at 13, 225, followed by Tumakuru at 458 and Mysuru at 356. Nine districts reported less than 10 cases, including Haveri (1) and Bidar and Gadag (2 each).

BANDEMIC

New Year's celebration on MG Road and surrounding areas banned; but restaurants and pubs can operate with 50% capacity

Rajashékara.S
@timesgroup.com
TWEETS @rajMIRROR

It is official. There will be no night curfews on the New Year's eve. But there wouldn't be celebrations either on the roads of Bengaluru on the night of December 31.

A formal decision to ban New Year celebrations on MG Road and surrounding Brigade Road and Church Street along with other parts of the city was taken after a covid core committee meeting.

A few days back, a technical advisory team set up by the Health and Family Welfare Department had suggested imposing lockdown-like rules between December 20 and second week of January, expressing fears of a second wave of the pandemic. Revenue Minister R Ashoka and Health Minister K Sudhakar said it was unwise to celebrate New Year when thousands of people have lost their lives and livelihood.

No night curfew

Ashoka said there will be no night curfew on New Year's eve as hotels, pubs and clubs are allowed to function with strict covid guidelines. Only public celebrations on roads are banned, he said. "Hotels, pubs and clubs are allowed to take only 50 per cent of their total intake capacity.

Action will be taken against violators," the Minister said, adding that detailed guidelines



REPRESENTATION PIC ONLY

“ We have decided to have oxygen generators in 10 district hospitals, 30 taluk hospitals. We have given administrative approval to buy oxygen generators... at an estimated cost of Rs 37.72 crore

— Health Minister Sudhakar

New chairman appointed for covid core committee

C Sudhakar said Deputy Chief Minister Govind Karjol has been appointed as the new chairman of the committee. Earlier, B Sriramulu, the then Health Minister, was appointed as the chairman of the panel. BasavaraJ Bommai. Sriramulu's appointment was not taken well by Narayan, who by virtue of being a Deputy CM, was expected to head the task force. He stayed away from chairing any meetings after Yediyurappa made Sudhakar the covid in-charge minister.

The CM had also appointed Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar as an authorised spokesperson on covid. Sudhakar was an automatic choice to head the panel. But the CM appears to have exercised some caution to avoid further controversies and included senior-most Karjol as the chairman.

will be issued soon on other restrictions.

Well-prepared: Sudhakar

According to Sudhakar, Rs 37.72 crore has been released to 10 district hospitals and 30 taluk hos-

pitals to procure oxygen generators and other equipment. The minister said DCM Govind Karjol has been appointed as the chairman of the task force committee and points have been discussed to contain the spread of the infection for the next three months. Rs 11.32 crore has been set aside for purchasing rapid antigen kits and Rs 22.5 crore for buying medicines for the next 90 days.

Sudhakar said action will be initiated under the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (KPME) Act against hospitals for overcharging Remdesivir.

The government price for this injection is Rs 1,800, he said, adding that there were complaints against some private hospitals overcharging the medicine. The Health Minister also held a covid review meeting with officials of 10 districts, including Bengaluru urban.

The storm water drain in RR Nagar stinks, changes colour, and causes itching. On Friday, residents found out why when a tanker bearing effluents was caught trying to dump waste

THE CHEMICAL LOCHA



The different colours of the drain water due to the effluents dumped in it

I Y Maheswara Reddy
 @maheswarareddy
 @bangaloremirror

THE RR Nagar MIRROR

The bad colour emanating from the storm water drains in Raja Rajwade Nagar has been the bane of the residents for more than a year. But it's not just the colour. The drain water changes colour. On some days, it is a dirty yellow and on other days, it is a murky red. All these years, at least, the residents would complain about dumping of effluents in the drains. The authorities would receive their complaints but nothing would be done about it.

But since the residents realised that they could not ignore the smell, and the changing colour of water. Many residents, especially those from BHEL Layout, Corbett Layout and Krishna Garden also complained that they were experiencing itching and burning, specifically between 7 am and 8 am.

So in the wee hours of Friday, the residents and Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) guards managed to catch a tanker driver proceeding to let chemical effluents into the storm water drain.

"Our environment officer has taken up the issue with Talaghattapura Police. We have lodged a first information report (FIR) with the police. We want the police to identify the source of the chemical effluents to initiate further action. We will shut down the company that is responsible for the pollution of the storm water drain," said KSPCB's Member Secretary Srinivasulu.

Srinivasulu said that according to the information available, the driver of the tanker

vehicle managed to escape from the spot. "We have identified the driver as Chippeswamy K S, a resident of 29th State Road in RR Layout based on his driving licence. The tanker vehicle's registration number is KA-10-3636," he said.

He said that he is waiting for the report from Talaghattapura Police.

Ajay Kumar IIM, one of the residents who piped a key into the tanking the tanker vehicle, told Bangalore Mirror that he had information about the tanker vehicle letting chemical effluents into the storm water near the NCT Road Junction. "I was supposed to know their regular operation. They send a cab to see whether there are people on the road. The tanker, with headlights off, arrives at the spot. We were waiting at the spot and questioned the driver. He told us that he had lost his way. He said that he was taking waste water to Talaghat."

He said that he informed the KSPCB regional officer and also RR Nagar police. "The driver escaped from the spot as soon as the police arrived. Later, we took the help of a borewell machine

A bunch of brave people from RR Nagar, with KSPCB marshals, seized this chemical tanker in Banashankari

—Narasim Vrishathbhavathi, Niveditha Sankad

vehicle driver to take the tanker to Talaghattapura Police Station," he said.

Narasim Vrishathbhavathi Srinivasulu president Niveditha Sankad said that chemical dumping had been happening since the last few months and the public had been raising their complaints with the KSPCB. "A bunch of brave people from RR Nagar, along with KSPCB marshals, seized this chemical tanker near Banashankari 6th Stage. The accused kept changing locations to avoid detection. Now, we have to see if this will be taken to a logical end by the authorities and a circular will be issued to stop similar violations," said Niveditha Sankad.

According to Lokesh, a resident of BHEL Layout, the chemical effluents have been let into the storm water drain for over a decade and only it has begun to affect the residents. Homeorganisers ward storm water drain (SWD) Assistant Executive Engineer Krishna Gowda said that he was aware of the problem. "I

have already written a letter to the Pollution Control Board in this regard and will also notify the talaghattapura police about the same," said Krishna Gowda. Homeorganisers ward former corporator Arun Srinivas was not available to comment on this issue.

Watch this story across all by pointing your phone camera at the QR code



Our story from Jun 1, 2019 and June 1, 2020

Tender process for mechanical sweeping machines a sore point

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



Many more mechanical sweepers, many more problems

Palike's tender for another 25 machines is causing a heartburn among some manufacturers

| Naveen.Menezes@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @Naveen_MIRROR

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has floated tenders for the procurement of 25 self-propelled mechanical sweeping machines at an estimated cost of Rs 230 crore including their operations and maintenance (O&M) for a period of seven years. Many manufacturers, however, say that the tender conditions are such that they will not attract fair and competitive bidding. Manufacturers wondered why the civic body is insisting on self-propelled machines when there are a variety of road sweeping solutions in the market including the chassis-mounted machines that can cover longer distances with minimal maintenance cost. Another bone of contention among the manufacturers is the hook loaders, which, they say, is not required for truck-mounted sweeper machines.

Some have also gone to the extent of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>

alleging the tender conditions are rigged only to favour one or two manufacturers. "Self-propelled sweeping machines are not meant for the city. They are best used in industrial units or in airports where the extent of dust and debris is not as much as it's on public roads. If the BBMP goes ahead with the tenders, a lot of public money will be wasted on maintaining these compact machines, whose spare parts are costly," a mechanical sweeping machine manufacturer, who is unlikely to qualify in the tender, said.



The self-propelled machines, he said, requires an additional hook loader to take the waste from the machine to the container. "The truck-mounted machines are able to store a large volume of dust and transport it to far-away places without depending on additional vehicles," he said.

As per the new tenders, the BBMP will initially spend Rs 42.68 crore for procuring 25 machines and another Rs 185.83 crore towards O&M. Each machine is expected to sweep 40-kms of road every day.

What can be noted is that the BBMP already has the experience of procuring and operating both self-propelled and truck-mounted sweeper machines. Both these variants were, however, provided by New Delhi-based TPS Infrastructure Ltd, which has the reputation of being black-listed by New Delhi Municipal

Council in 2016 for failing to carry out mechanised sweeping of roads as per the contract. The Delhi-headquartered firm is currently establishing 50 mini garbage transfer stations in the City at a cost of Rs 246 crore.

Officials said the decision to procure self-propelled machines was taken based on the resolution passed by the BBMP council. "The corporators were not happy with the performance of truck-mounted mechanical sweepers. Hence, we chose self-propelled machines," D Randeep, Special Commissioner at BBMP's Solid Waste Management division said.

"If some manufactures feel that the tender conditions keep them away, they can raise their concerns in the pre-bid meeting. We can make suitable changes to ensure there are adequate competitions. If only one bidder qualifies, we may not go with the tender. Even government's approval is required before awarding the contract," Randeep explained.

A recent Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) report had found absence of a mechanism to monitor the operation of eight mechanical sweeping machines that the BBMP had purchased for Rs 27.73 crore in 2017.

The department, the report observed, did not make any arrangements to monitor the usage of machines of high value. The auditors found that the BBMP had paid Rs 8 lakh under O&M charges for the period between July, 2017 and September, 2017. The company had sought Rs 61 lakhs for 14 months from October 2017.

During the last council meeting, some corporators had stated that none of the mechanical sweeper are covering the required 40-km stretch daily. Experts also say that these sweeping machines do not perform well on city roads.

"In areas where soil has more sandy content, the machine sweeping is better. Our roads have more silt and clay content," he said.

Dangling cable wires to do a disappearing act?

Palike to submit a report to the State Human Rights Commission on Dec 23

KAUSHIK JN



At Jayanagar, a mesh of multiple cable wires hang close to the ground, making the pavement almost inaccessible.

I Y Maheswara Reddy
i-maheswara.reddy@timesgroup.com

TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Bangaluru's low hanging power cable wires have been a hazard for the citizens, with many even suffering serious injuries.

Despite many complaints, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) authorities turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to people's plight. That is, until now. Following a complaint by an activist, the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC) has directed the BBMP to fix the cables within this month.

Jagan Kumar, a social activist from Ramamurthy Nagar, had lodged a complaint on March 8, 2019 with the Karnataka State Human Rights Commission (KSHRC) asking the BBMP authorities to remove the low hanging cables that pose a danger to the pedestrians. "I have come across people losing their lives or getting injured due to such low hanging cables. The plight of unaware citizens made me complain to the KSHRC. I am happy that the KSHRC summoned the BBMP," said Jagan Kumar.

Following the complaint, the KSHRC directed BBMP Commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad, BBMP's Head of the Legal Cell Keshav Deshpande, and the Commissioner of Police Kamal Pant to



“I have come across people losing their lives or getting injured due to such low hanging cables. The plight of unaware citizens made me complain to the KSHRC.”

— Jagan Kumar, Social Activist

submit an action-taken report on this issue at 3.30 pm on December 23.

"It appears that the BBMP has not taken any effective legal steps to prevent and remove the overhanging optical fibre cables all over the city in violation of the strict provisions of the Karnataka Municipal Corporation Act 1976," the KSHRC proceeding stated.

The KSHRC said that BBMP officers have admitted that the overhanging cables were indeed causing accidents and injuries to ordinary people and such incidents are reported to the police.

"Therefore, it was suggested and discussed that proper legal notice should be issued to all internet and cable service providers concerned to remove and put them in order within a reasonable period of a fortnight to one month and thereafter take up the issue of removal of such illegal cabling in accordance with the law.

The action taken on these lines may be reported to the Commission on the next date of hearing which is fixed on

December 23 at 3.30 pm," the KSHRC proceeding stated.

Meanwhile, VR Marathe, a social activist, said that he had already complained to the Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) against the illegal optical fibre cables in the city.

"The ACB wrote a letter to the BBMP. The BBMP sent it to the Technical Vigilance Cell under Commissioner (TVCC) to look into the matter. The TVCC sent the file back to the BBMP without taking any action," said Marathe.

Vishnu Prasad of Bellandur Development Forum has also said that he has approached police and other authorities against the illegal cables in and around Bellandur but nothing has been done till date.

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BBMP felicitates pourakarmikas

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike on Friday honoured Pourakarikas on the occasion of the birth anniversary of IPD Salappa, who authored a report on the improvement of living and working conditions of pourakarmikas. BBMP Commissioner N Manjunath Prasad garlanded his idol at the corporation head office and also honoured the pourakarmikas.

NO PUBLIC GATHERINGS ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

Pubs, bars, hotels to use only half seating capacity, says Sudhakar

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

PUBLIC celebration on New Year's eve will not be allowed on MG Road and Brigade Road in Bengaluru, or anywhere else in the state, Health and Medical Education Minister Dr K Sudhakar said on Friday.

The government has also issued directions to restrict gatherings for Christmas, New Year, weddings, religious and other gatherings, to under 200 between December 20 and January 2, Sudhakar told the media after a heading a review meeting.

Pubs, bars and hotels must only use half of their seating capacity through New Year festivities, Revenue Minister R Ashok said.

These decisions were made in light of the state possibly experiencing a second wave of

Covid infections. Deputy Chief Minister Govind Karjol has been appointed chairman of the Covid Taskforce.

Sudhakar also said that testing targets and containment measures were discussed to keep infections down during the next three months in 10 districts: Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Ballari, Yadgir, Dakshina Kannada, Belagavi, Bidar, Haveri and Udupi.

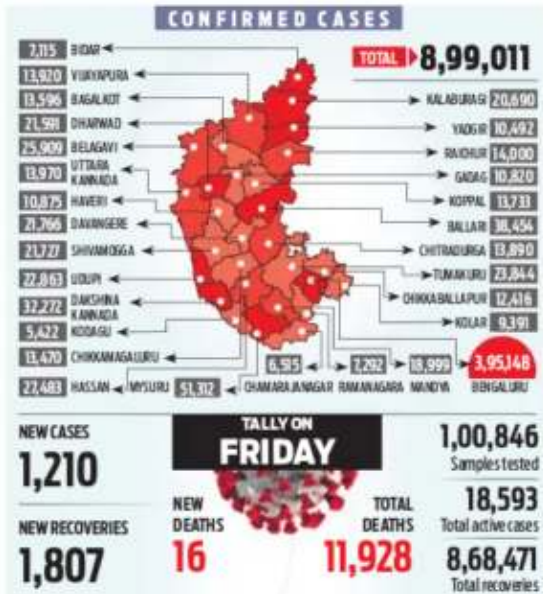
"The State is well-prepared for a possible second wave of the pandemic. Ten district hospitals and 30 taluk hospitals have been provided with Rs 37.72 crore for procuring oxygen generators and other equipment. Rs 11.32 crore has been set

aside to purchase Rapid Anti-gen Test kits and Rs 22.5 crore earmarked to purchase medicine for the next 90 days," Dr Sudhakar said.

He also said that the government had received complaints that private hospitals were overcharging for the anti-viral drug remdesivir, for which the government charges Rs 1,800. He said action will be taken against such hospitals un-

der the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments Act.

Lacunae in uploading vaccine information on the ICMR portal, will be addressed in a day. The government has identified 30,000 vaccination sites, 1.1 lakh vaccinators and five lakh beneficiaries, he said.





A touching story: Visually impaired now helpless

RANJANI MADHAVAN @Bengaluru

WHILE Covid-19 has made all of us rethink the basic human act of touching, the lives of visually impaired people - who rely on their sense of touch to be independent - have been made more difficult as people fear touching them to help.

Darshan K B, an employee at a public sector bank in Mysuru, said that visually impaired people like him cannot own vehicles and have to rely on public transport. "We depend on buses and now, with the need to maintain physical distance, people don't help us board the bus, alight, cross the road... as they used to before the pandemic. When we go to office, there is no one to guide us to the desk and we do not know if the desk is cleaned. We need to touch and feel to survive," Darshan said.

He said that if a visually im-

paired person contracts Covid, there would be no one to care for them during home isolation. However, he considers himself lucky as he has the option to work from home, although not all banks have given done so.

Kumar Nayak, who recently completed his postgraduate degree in political science, says that while online classes are preferred, not all colleges are accessible to visually impaired people. "Some of us have to take the risk of attending physical classes. Disability-friendly technology in smart phones only hit the market one-and-a-half years ago, but not everyone is tech-savvy enough to be able to use them for online classes and submitting assignments. We need help to get around, but this pandemic has ruled that out for us," he said.

Kumar's friend Diwakar B R,



Health worker collects a sample in Bengaluru on Friday | ASHISHKISHNA HP

in his second year of a post-graduate degree in journalism and mass communication, said that while technology and apps have made education accessible to them, network connectivity is a problem, especially in rural areas.

People with disabilities have been among the worst-affected by the lockdown and pandemic, said Pranesh Nagri, honorary

director of Enable India, a Bengaluru-based NGO that works towards helping people with disabilities learn their livelihood.

"During the lockdown, it was difficult for visually impaired people to buy medicines as they could not step out without help, nor were they able to order online as a sighted person can do. We even received calls from people saying they had no food. We distributed gloves, medicines, hand sprays in our network," Nagri said, adding that for the hearing impaired, communicating Covid Dos and Don'ts was an uphill task as most do not know sign language.

"Even those who are in wheelchairs, use crutches or walkers, require touch, feel and the support of others to move around, get on and off transport and more, which has been missing due to Covid restrictions," Nagri added.

PVT HOSPITALS OVERCHARGING FOR REMDESIVIR TO FACE ACTION: SUDHAKAR

'Govt Well Prepared to Deal with Second Wave'

Govt sets aside ₹11.32 cr for rapid antigen kits over next three months

Our Bureau

Bengaluru: Karnataka is well prepared to deal with a possible second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic, health minister K Sudhakar said on Friday. Ten district hospitals and 30 taluk hospitals have been given Rs 37.72 crore for buying oxygen generators and other equipment, he said.

Chief minister BS Yediyurappa has appointed his deputy Govind Karjol as chairman of the task force panel which will monitor the infection spread and containment measures over the next three months. The government has set aside ₹11.32 crore for buying rapid antigen kits and ₹22.50 crore for buying of medicines over the next three months.

The government, he said, has received complaints that some private hospitals are overcharging for Remdesivir and the government will take action against such hospitals, Sudhakar said.

The minister held Covid review meeting with officials of 10 districts including Bengaluru urban. He said that keeping in view the possible second wave, the government will restrict public gatherings for events like new year celebrations. The government will enforce restrictions on public gatherings from December 20 to January second week, he said.



BBMP health workers conduct Covid test at Kengeri satellite bus stand in Bengaluru on Friday. -TOI

TASK FORCE PANEL



CM Yediyurappa has appointed his deputy Govind Karjol as chairman of the task force panel which will monitor the infection spread and containment measures over the next three months

1,210 NEW CASES

Karnataka added 1,210 new cases to its Covid-19 count and 16 deaths on Friday, taking the total number of infections to 899,011 and the death toll to 11,928. The state has continued to see a decline in cases for nearly three months now.

The day also saw 1,807 patients getting discharged. Bengaluru Urban reported 659 fresh cases and six deaths that took the city's total caseload to 377,251. The capital also recorded 1,248 recoveries. According to the health department bulletin, 248 Covid patients are in ICU.

12/10/2020

Govt Revises Covid Test Cost

Bengaluru: The Karnataka government decreased the price of Covid-19 testing on Wednesday, capping the RT-PCR test in private hospitals and laboratories at ₹800 per test, inclusive of the cost of PPE kit. It was costing ₹1,200 till now.

The additional charge for collecting samples from home should not exceed ₹400, the government said.

Govt has capped RT-PCR test in pvt hospitals & labs at ₹800 per test

Subsequently, the rate of testing of samples sent by the government to private laboratories has been reduced to ₹500 from ₹800 per test. "As the rates of chemicals and equipment used to test Covid-19 has come down, the technical advisory committee has recommended to revise the cost of testing," the health department said. The state has fixed ₹1,250 for Truenat test and ₹2,400 for CB Nat test. The cost of testing Rapid Antigen in private labs is capped at ₹400.

1,279 NEW CASES IN STATE

Karnataka reported 1,279 new cases of Covid, of which 728 were from Bengaluru, taking the case tally to 896,563. Nineteen Covid deaths were recorded including, 13 in Bengaluru.