



**Bruhat Bengaluru
Mahanagara Palike**

**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE,
BANGALORE**

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NEARBY

BBMP dashboard for trade licence

The pandemic has made people wary of launching new businesses in the city. The civic body has received just around 5,646 applications for new trade licences in the current financial year. The BBMP has decided to simplify the process in a bid to cover more trades and encourage traders to renew their licences.



P1

BBMP to launch dashboard to track status of trade licence applications

The civic body has received only around 5,646 applications for new trade licences so far this fiscal

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The pandemic has made people wary of launching new businesses in the city. The civic body has received just around 5,646 applications for new trade licences in the current financial year. This, despite the fact that the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) had simplified the process to apply for and renew trade licences.

In the 2019-20 fiscal, a total of 51,563 trade licences were issued, bringing the BBMP revenue of around ₹47 crore. Of these, as many as 13,171 were new trade licences and 38,392 were renewed.

In the backdrop of this poor response, the BBMP has decided to further simplify the process in a bid to cover more trades and encourage traders to renew their licences.

BBMP's Chief Health Officer (Public Health) Vijayendra said a dashboard is also be-



In the 2019-20 fiscal, a total of 51,563 trade licences were issued, bringing the BBMP revenue of around ₹47 crore. *K. MURALI KUMAR

ing developed, which will reflect details in each zone, the number of new applications received, and the number of pending applications. This will not only bring transparency, but help hasten the licence issuing process. It is expected to be up and running in a couple of weeks.

With the whole process

now online, without any physical touch points, the BBMP already has a database of medical stores and pharmacies, hotels and grocery shops. Dr. Vijayendra said that a decision to do away with spot inspection before issuing new licences, for some trades, had also been taken.

"Small trades, such as provision or grocery shops, pharmacies, vegetables or fruit shops, do not warrant spot inspection. However, when there is an inspection and health officials find any violation, the licence issued will be cancelled," he said.

Traders have to make e-payment of the prescribed

fee through the department's portal for auto-renewal of their licences. They can then download the digitally signed approval certificate in minutes.

He added that even the application of new licences had been simplified. Traders need to submit just two documents - rent or lease agreement and electricity or telephone bill. Applicants can choose the duration of validity of these licences, from one to five years, make payments online and also track the status of their application.

Civic officials hope that these measures will help the BBMP cover more trades in the city and issue licences. The number of trade licences issued is a small fraction of the commercial power connections in the city, a matter that came up for discussion during a recent review chaired by BBMP Administrator Gaurav Gupta.

P2

Doctors: Respiratory-related queries up, but COVID-19 etiquette could help reduce cases

A large number of queries are from people in the 21 to 30 age group, according to Practo

K.C. DEEPIKA
BENGALURU

Dip in temperature, fear of COVID-19, the Deepavali season which sees bursting of firecrackers, and fall in air quality in a few cities are propelling queries related to respiratory disorders.

Healthcare company Practo said there was 20% growth in respiratory-related queries compared to the previous month. Among the big cities, most queries were from Delhi, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Chennai, and Pune. With people increasingly consulting doctors online to ensure that no symptom goes undiagnosed, most patient queries revolved around breathing issues, dust allergy, asthma, respiratory problems, and dry cough. A large number of queries came from people in the 21 to 30 age group (34%) followed by people aged 60 and above (28%).

Rajesh Bhardwaj, ENT specialist who consults on Practo, was quoted as saying: "Especially this time when we move from monsoon to winter, the air we breathe begins to get polluted. This happens due to various factors - since cold air is more dense particles re-



This year, in Bengaluru, KSPCB data on Air Quality Index from November 14 to 16 showed that air pollution levels had reduced by 30.34% compared to the corresponding festival days in 2019.

main suspended in it for a long period and remain on the surface. This is also aggravated by low winds, farm stubble burning, construction activity, and cracker bursting."

Hirennappa B. Udnur, consultant pulmonologist at Columbia Asia Hospital, Hebbal, told *The Hindu* that with COVID-19 cases down, patients who were suffering from problems such as COPD and asthma were shoring up the courage to consult doctors again. "We are also getting patients who have reco-

vered from COVID-19 but with COVID-19 related lung fibrosis, post COVID-19 sequelae, etc.," he said.

Reduced pollution

This year, in Bengaluru, Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) data of the Air Quality Index (AQI) from November 14 to 16 showed that air pollution levels had reduced by 30.34% when compared with the corresponding festival days in 2019.

This was mainly attributed to the rule that only green

firecrackers would be allowed (though the effectiveness of its implementation was questioned), as well as muted celebrations due to the pandemic.

Analysis of air quality data before and after Deepavali across Bengaluru, Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Pune, and Jaipur from November 9 to 18 by Ambee, an environmental intelligence company, showed that Delhi recorded high levels of pollution with average AQI consistently above 250 before and after

the festival.

On the other hand, Bengaluru remained the cleanest with average AQI ranging between 50 and 70.

"It was noted that certain residential areas with large apartments had increased levels of PM2.5 which could be attributed to community cracker burning during Deepavali. Following rain right after the festival, there was some respite for the residents with a 40% drop in PM2.5 levels," the company said.

Better off this year

K.S. Satish, president, Karnataka Pulmonologist Association, said increase in respiratory disorders during this time is a usual phenomena all over the world.

"Now the season for infections begins. Under the guidelines too, all respiratory disorders are taken as COVID-19 unless proven otherwise. However, fortunately, this year, firecracker bursting has been less than previous years. In addition, people are wearing masks. Though we are not in the peak of winter, we will definitely see fewer cases this time due to masking, cough etiquettes, and social distancing," he said.

State reports 1,849 new cases and 26 deaths

STAFF REPORTER

BENGALURU

Karnataka reported 1,849 new COVID-19 cases and 26 deaths on Thursday. The total number of active cases in the State stands at 25,169, while the overall number of deaths shot up to 11,604.

As many as 1,800 people were discharged on Thursday, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,30,988. A total of 598 patients are in the ICU. The number of tests done was 1,18,474, while the positivity rate was 1.56%.

Bengaluru Urban, though witnessing a significant reduction in the number of positive cases, continued to be the highest contributor to the State's tally with 1,048 new cases. Fourteen new deaths were also reported in the capital. Tumakuru reported 103 new cases, which was the second highest. The number of positive cases in the State so far is 8,67,780.

'Conducting practicals will be a challenge'

Principals are hoping that attendance will increase in Dec.

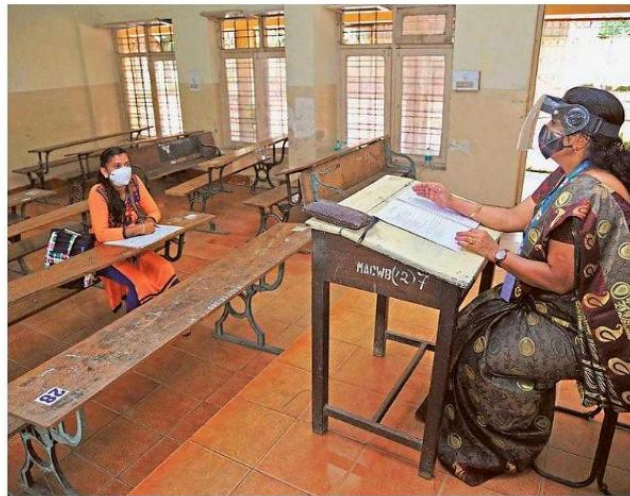
STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

With most colleges recording low attendance by student on the third consecutive day, principals and managements are considering holding only practical classes on campus and continuing with the remaining lectures online.

Principals expressed concern over convincing students to physically attend practicals. "Conducting practicals will be difficult if attendance remains low," said a faculty member of a college in Bengaluru.

P. Ishwara Bhat, Vice-Chancellor, Karnataka State Law University, said that very few students turned up on campus on Thursday. "This has been the case with most of the 106 colleges affiliated to our university. Only a few colleges in cities like Bengaluru are seeing some student turnout," he said.

He added that if this trend continues in December, they will have to look at alternative ways to ensure that final year students get the training they need for placements. "The mandatory



A class being held for a lone student in Bengaluru on Tuesday. •PTI

On Thursday, 68 students reported to the campus, but most of them did not have a COVID-19 negative certificate. We had to make arrangements for testing on the premises

C.B. ANNAPURNAMMA,
principal, National College, Basavanagudi,

COVID-19 negative certificate and lack of transport facilities may be contributing to the low attendance," he added.

Principals are hoping that at-

tendance will increase in the month of December. C.B. Annapurnamma, principal, National College, Basavanagudi, said that to maintain social distancing and avoid crowding in laboratories, they had extended college hours. "Even then, very few students turned up on the first day. On Thursday, 68 students reported to the campus, but most of them did not have a COVID-19 negative certificate. We had to make arrangements for testing on the premises," she said.

Faculty at National College hope to complete practicals

within the first week of December. "But it will be a problem if only a few students turn up for the practicals," she said.

Students, especially those residing in the outskirts of the city, blamed the lack of coordination between government departments, which they said is making it difficult for them to go to college. "From transport to testing facilities, even if we want to come to campus, we can't because either result of the test is delayed or there is no proper public transport. Students who don't live in the city can't return because many hostels are closed," said Yashwanth N., a student.

Bucking trend

However, a few colleges are bucking the trend, and reported a rise in attendance. T.M. Manjunath, president, Karnataka Government College Teachers' Association, said that more students turned up on Thursday when compared to the past two days. "Around 40 % of students have started coming to the college now. We will get to know the real picture in a few days. If some opt for online classes and others offline, then the workload on teachers will increase. The government has to take a call on the issue," he said.

Draft rules for premium FAR unviable, say city's builders

'It is highly unlikely that any builder will opt for it'

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

The city's builders have dubbed the draft rules for premium floor area ratio (FAR) recently notified by the Urban Development Department as 'unviable'.

The UDD draft rules prescribe premium FAR charges at "50% of the guidance value of the additional (notional) sital area and building area to be constructed using premium FAR" with guidance value of the developed site as the base value.

Premium FAR, the maximum limit of which is not specified in the draft rules, will apply in "impact zones of transport infrastructure projects and any other public infrastructure projects within the local planning areas and in other areas of the approved master plans".

FAR is the ratio of the built-up area of the building to the area of the land parcel on which it is built.

The Draft Revised Master Plan - 2031 had provided FAR in the range of 1.75 to 3.25 in the city.

However, the draft was scrapped among other reasons to accommodate Transit Oriented Development (TOD) policy of Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation, which provides for dense, mixed land use development along transit corridors - Namma Metro, suburban rail lines and bus hubs.

The TOD policy prescribed premium FAR up to 5, along the transit corridors and the new draft of the RMP is expected to allow this. This is expected to have a huge impact on zoning regulations in the city.

The fee prescribed for the premium FAR has received a tepid response from the industry. Suresh Hari, Chairman, Confederation of Real Estate Developers' Associations of India (CREDAI) - Bengaluru, said the pre-

scribed premium FAR charges made it an unviable proposition for the industry.

"The government should not look at this as a money-making exercise, which is what it seems. At 50% of guidance value, given today's market conditions, it is highly unlikely that any builder will opt for it. Additional development will only lead to more revenue to the government in other forms including property tax and development charges, not just premium FAR charges," he argued.

CREDAI-Bengaluru has also taken objection to guidance value being the sole criteria for the premium FAR charges. "Guidance value has never been reduced and in many places do not reflect the changing market realities. A fair market price should be the basis," Mr. Suresh Hari said, adding that CREDAI will submit its objections to the draft rules.

With hostels still shut, students are unable to return to campus

Some wardens say they cannot provide facilities only for a few students

TANU KULKARNI
BENGALURU

Although many final year students wish to physically attend classes they are unable to do so as a majority of hostels are still closed.

With no access to accommodation, students from outside Bengaluru said they will continue with online classes.

A science student from Chickballapur said she wanted to return to campus as she was finding it difficult to grasp concepts through the online lectures. "I even got tested for COVID-19, but learned that hostels were not open," she said. There are also reports of hostel wardens turning away students on the grounds that they do not have many reservations to make it viable to operate.

"The wardens are telling us that it will not be possible to open the hostel and provide food for just two or three students. They told us to come back after a week," a final year BA student of Bangalore University said.

Another postgraduate science student from a village in Kolar who is enrolled in government college in Bengaluru said that prior to the lockdown she had quarters in a hotel for students belonging to backward classes. But the hostel is still closed.

"I came to Bengaluru and I am now staying with my relatives. They have told me to start attending classes only once the hostel re-opens so that I do not expose myself to COVID-19 while commuting, and infect them," she said.

Most of the government hostels are run by social wel-



A file photo of students getting tested in Bengaluru ahead of college reopening. ■ K MURALI KUMAR

fare, minorities and backward classes departments, while many are run by the respective State-run universities.

T.D. Kemparaju, Vice

Chancellor of Bengaluru North University, said that they will open hostels after around 10 days depending on the number of students who turn up. "We will have

to make arrangements accordingly," he said.

K.R. Venugopal, Vice-Chancellor of Bangalore University, said that he has instructed wardens to start operations from Thursday and provide food even if the student strength is low.

However, Social Welfare Commissioner Ravikumar Surpur said that all the hostels run by the department were fully sanitised and open and the department had also issued standard operating procedure. Students have to produce a COVID-19 negative certificate before occupying the hostel. The hostel authorities have also been told to fill up only 50% of their total capacity.

Nearly 80% increase in COVID-19 pneumonia cases, say doctors



Pneumonia is more common among immunocompromised individuals such as those with diabetes, chronic kidney, and cardiovascular disease, say doctors. •FILE PHOTO

AFSHAN YASMEEN
BENGALURU

With the world under the grip of COVID-19, pneumonia has yet again gained centre stage. Doctors, who said they are seeing a rise in COVID-19 pneumonia cases, pointed out that the pandemic is likely to increase all-cause pneumonia deaths by more than 75%.

Although there is no data available on the number of COVID-19 pneumonia cases, doctors said nearly 80% of the pneumonia cases they are seeing are due to COVID-19.

Pneumonia is caused by multiple factors which can be detected through an X-Ray or CT scan. However, one of the main causes of pneumonia in recent days is COVID-19, said Hirenappa B. Udnur, consultant pulmonologist at Columbia Asia Hospital (Hebbal).

"Currently 60%-80% of pneumonia cases are due to COVID-19. Cases have increased compared to last year particularly during the pandemic. Pneumonia during pre-COVID-19 days was mainly community acquired although oxygen requirement and ventilator support was required as well. Today, the most common complication of COVID-19 is pneumonia," he said.

"When a patient develops pneumonia, we first get a COVID-19 test done. There is also a specific pattern for pneumonia which can be detected in the CT scan that is suggestive of COVID-19. It clearly shows if the pneumonia is through COVID-19 or other reasons," he explained.

Vasunethra Kasaragod,

consultant chest physician at Vikram Hospital, said as pneumonia is more common among immunocompromised individuals such as those with diabetes, chronic kidney, and cardiovascular disease, it is important to keep these diseases under control to prevent pneumonia.

"Early medical attention and diagnosis is imperative for early recovery. Patients are treated with antibiotics, oxygen and nebulisation most of the time," he said.

Sachin Kumar, senior consultant, pulmonology and critical care medicine at Sakra World Hospital, said most pneumonia deaths this year are due to COVID-19. "Un-even healthcare services, lack of right equipment or trained healthcare workers to effectively diagnose and treat respiratory infections in most of the low and middle-income countries are some of the contributing factors. Due to this, COVID-19 could add 1.9 million to the death toll this year. Hence, to minimise the death rate, pneumococcal and influenza vaccination for the vulnerable population is recommended," he said.

Chinnadurai R., consultant in the department of critical care at Aster RV Hospital, said COVID-19 pneumonia has to be treated like any other pneumonia. "Since countries like the U.K. and the U.S. are experiencing a second wave of COVID-19, the government should gear up to handle a second wave if it occurs here. People must continue to follow precautions such as social distancing and wearing a mask," he said.

HC seeks list of political parties to issue notices on COVID-19 norm violations

It takes note of the violations by various parties during election campaigning

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Taking note of the many instances of violations of COVID-19 norms in wearing masks and maintaining social distancing in the rallies of political parties, their leaders and workers, the High Court of Karnataka on Thursday sought a list of recognised political parties in Karnataka to issue notices to them.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice S. Vishwajith Shetty passed the order during the hearing of PIL petitions, filed by Letzkit Foundation, Bengaluru, and Sai Datta, a resident of the city, on violations of norms by celebrities, elected representatives, and political leaders.

The Bench said that directions are required to be issued to the political parties as a large number of viola-



tions are by its leaders while taking note of violations by major political parties during election campaign and a rally by the BJP workers to welcome Lok Sabha member Tejasvi Surya on his appointment as national president of the BJP Yuva Morcha.

Correcting mistake

Meanwhile, the government clarified to the Bench that it never intended to prosecute citizens for not wearing masks and maintaining social distancing as per the Karnataka Epidemic Diseases

(KED) Act, 2020, while admitting that there was “unintended mistake” in drafting of the Act, which actually prescribes three months to five years of imprisonment and fine of ₹50,000 to ₹2 lakh.

In a statement, Jawaid Akhtar, Additional Chief Secretary (Health and Family Welfare), said that the “true intention” of the government was to impose only fine for not wearing mask and not maintaining social distancing and this has been uniformly followed in cases of all citizens.

The stringent punishment, the government stated, prescribed in the KED Act were for the more egregious violations under the Act and the government is taking corrective measures to ensure that its policy is actually reflected in the legal position, including but not limited to issuance of fresh or-

dinance to amend the existing positions.

Filing FIRs

Government counsel Vikram Huilgol told the Bench that if the government had to prosecute citizens for violating the norm of wearing mask and maintaining social distancing, then lakhs of citizens who were fined for violations are required to be prosecuted by registering First Information Reports (FIRs).

Stating that government would soon issue an Ordinance to correct the “serious and grave errors” that has crept into law unintentionally, Mr. Huilgol submitted stating that the government had realised the mistake in the law only after the court analysed the provisions of the law and posed repeated questions on why political leaders were not prosecuted for violating these norms.

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

‘Implead all parties for violating Covid norms’

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

AS the state government made its stand clear that its intention was not to punish anyone with imprisonment and fine, including politicians, for violation of Covid-19 safety norms, the Karnataka High Court on Thursday directed the petitioner to implead all recognised political parties.

A division bench of Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice S Vishwajith Shetty passed the order after the government advocate Vikram Huilgol informed the court of the government's stand. The government response came after the bench directed it to make its stand clear

whether it would prosecute political leaders who had admitted to violations and paid a fine. It wanted to know if the state would allow them to get away with a mere fine of ₹250.



The PILs were filed by the Letzkit Foundation.

“The state government is coming out with a fresh ordinance though the offences under Section 5 of the Karnataka Epidemic Diseases Act are cognizable of

fences. The state is not willing to register FIRs. Since most of the violations are by political parties, we direct the petitioner to produce a list of recognised political parties to implead them. List the matter on November 24 to pass orders to issue notice to them,” the bench said.

The bench orally observed if it was the policy of the state not to prosecute violators. Once the cognizance of the offences are taken, the state cannot take such a stand as there are a large number of violations. Ultimately, the intention of the state is to protect the political class, the bench said.

Then Huilgol submitted that the government's intention was to protect

everyone and not protect any class. Hence, it has taken a stand not to punish or prosecute the violators, he said.

“There will be lakhs of FIRs as there are a large number of people violating regulations of mask and social distancing. Admitting the error, the state is issuing a fresh ordinance in order to bring a uniform policy,” he said.

Opposition leader Siddaramaiah and MPs D K Suresh and Tejasvi Surya were the prominent leaders among the 684 violators against whom the police have registered 18 Non-Cognizable Reports for violation of regulations. A fine of Rs 250 each was imposed though they were cognizable offences.

Stressed doctors turn to state psychiatric helpline

RANJANI MADHAVAN
@Bengaluru

THE pandemic has taken a toll on many doctors who have been working round the clock. The Psychiatric helpline, that was started for doctors by Indian Medical Association - Karnataka (IMA-K), in coordination with Indian Psychiatric Society-Karnataka and National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (NIMHANS), has been receiving 10 to 15 calls per day.

The helpline was launched last month to cater to doctors who are under immense pressure during the pandemic.

"There are 10 phone lines under the centralised helpline with doctors volunteering at different hours of the day to provide immediate counselling to other distressed doctors and their family. The response has been

good so far," said Dr K S Karanth, chairman of IMA-K Psychiatry cell. He added that the pandemic was the most commonly found stress factor in medicos.

"They are worried about the danger of exposure to Covid, owing to their interaction with patients. Harassment from patients, inability to spend time with family, dealing with patients who are lax about precautions often leading to arguments, and hearing about Covid deaths of other doctors, lead to insomnia, mild anxiety, depression, etc. These are some of the issues we have heard," said Dr Ganesh Prasad, one of the core-committee psychiatrists offering assistance.

Prasad said many doctors fear passing on the virus to elderly parents or kids at home. "The possibility of having to get quarantined if they get

infected, the economic loss and social deprivation that comes with it is another factor causing psychological trauma. Many doctors themselves are heart patients or suffer from diabetes and hypertension," he added.

Dr Sanjeev Kumar, faculty at Centre for Psychosocial support in Disaster Management said, this is an IVRS system, where a particular number has to be pressed, if a doctor is seeking help. "The call will be transferred to the volunteer who is a mental health professional, psychiatrist, clinical psychologist, psychiatric social worker or psychiatric nurse. If they are unable to help due to the nature of the problem, the call is referred to senior consultants. If the problem still cannot be dealt by them, the doctor is then referred to a physical clinic at a tertiary level, where there is a multidisciplinary team," Dr Kumar said.



P4

Covid curve flattening, state past first peak: Experts

Say disease pattern in Europe shows second surge occurs after 2-3 months, need to wait and watch for signs in Feb, March

IFFATH FATHIMA & RANJANI MADHAVAN @Bengaluru

AFTER a steady surge in cases through July, August and September, the Covid curve is on a downward trend in Karnataka, raising the question of a second wave. However, for now, the state government can take a breather as cases remain low.

"The curve is at a flattening stage. Despite testing more, the positivity rate is 1-1.5%. Going by the dis-

ease pattern in Europe, a second surge occurs after 2-3 months. We need to wait and watch if that happens to us in February and March," said Dr C N Manjunath, state nodal officer for Covid testing.

A second surge is being seen in European countries and even places such as New Delhi and Mumbai in India. While some experts classify the pandemic into phases, others do not.

"We cannot say phase-1, phase-2, etc. But we can



Health workers and technicians take a break between swab collection in Bengaluru on Thursday | MEGHANA SASTRY

classify a pandemic as imported or indigenous. There was and continues to be community spread in Karnataka, but we are past the first peak. There has been a downward trend since October 11," said Dr Pradeep Banandur, epidemiologist at NIMHANS.

Going by the trajectory in Europe, Karnataka should expect a surge in cases with the economy opening up, said Dr Satyanarayana Mysore, HOD of pulmonology at Manipal Hospital. "People's

immunity levels might drop in three months, which can also be the cause for a second wave to start. The next 3 months are crucial. If people don't take precautions, we might see a second wave," Dr Mysore said.

He also warned against "pandemic fatigue", where people simply get fed up of following precautions and lower their guard, causing cases to rise. "People should continue to take precautions and follow Covid norms," he said.

However, Dr Giridhar R Babu, senior epidemiologist and member of the state's Covid-19 Technical Advisory Committee, pointed out that the spread of the disease across the state was not uniform.

"It has only flattened in central areas of the state. Some districts are still seeing more cases. More testing needs to be carried out in districts, just as it was done in the city. Our first wave has still not come to an end," Dr Babu said.

P4

Shops inside Metro stations seek help to reopen

S LALITHA @ Bengaluru

ALTHOUGH Namma Metro resumed its services two months ago, none of the shops inside the Metro stations are willing to reopen unless concessions on rent are offered to them.

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited said that 33 shops had closed. "Ten have shut permanently while 23 have reopened. The ones that have reopened are located outside the stations, but fall in our jurisdiction. No shop within stations is willing to restart," an official said.

Three of the 10 shops closed their businesses voluntarily. "However, half the shops are

ready to reopen if we offer a huge cut in rentals," another official said.

Shops were functioning inside Baiyappanahalli, Indiranagar, Halasuru, Trinity, Vijaynagar, MG Road, Srirampura, Yeshwantpur, Rajajinagar and Mahalakshmi Layout Metro stations. BMRCL did not collect rent for any of its shops when services were suspended due to the pandemic. But with ridership just a tenth of pre-Covid levels, shop owners feel reopening will result in losses.

Although average ridership has gradually increased since trains began running after Covid restrictions were lifted, it is nowhere near the 5 lakh



per day ridership before services were shut.

"During the November 2-8 week, we had an average of 68,000 commuters daily. On November 9, we touched our sec-

ond-highest ridership figure of 73,205 passengers," said B L Yashavanth Chavan, chief public relations officer.

Proprietors also factor in the cost of rent. Even the smallest shops pay between Rs 35,000 and Rs 45,000, said a shop owner. To this, Chavan said, "We did not fix the rent. We only cited a minimum price and it was the owners who gave us the quotes. There are different rentals for different shops."

On reopening of shops, BMRCL Managing Director Ajay Seth said, "Because of the pandemic, patronage is low. Naturally, shops are asking for relief measures so that they do not suffer heavy losses. We will

take an appropriate decision in this regard."

However, even before the pandemic, things were not all rosy. At least half of the shop owners downed shutters for good. Salon chain, Sooper Xpress, shut shop before the pandemic struck, while the iconic Dasprakash Hotel at the Metro Art Gallery adjacent to MG Road Metro station, closed down after the death of its owner.

This was not the right time to advertise commercial spaces, Seth said. "The bids for taking up the spaces will be very low due to a business dip all around. We will wait for an appropriate time before we go in for fresh bids."

P3

Big-time retooling of development models

Policy framework aimed at liberalising tech industry: PM

BISMAL MALIK @ Bengaluru

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that India's regulatory framework is being simplified to promote innovation in the technology sector and the government is actively engaging with key stakeholders for this.

"You must be aware of the recent decisions taken by the government to ease compliance burden for the tech industry. We are actively engaging with the stakeholders in the IT industry to chalk out a future policy framework for liberalising the sector and removing the compliance burden," Modi said while virtually inaugurating the 23rd edition of Bengaluru Tech Summit, 2020. He was referring to the recent announcement by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) on removing ITeS/BPO firms from the OSP (Other Service Providers) compliance burden.

Hailing MEITY's recent approval to IT firms allowing their employees to work from anywhere in India, Modi said the policy decisions are aimed at liberalising the burgeoning tech industry. "India is currently at a sweet spot. Our tech solutions have the potential to go global and, due to technology, our schemes have gone beyond files and changed the lives of people on a large scale," the PM added.

While admitting that the pandemic had caused disruption in the economy, the PM said that it is not the end of the road. **P4**

Through technology, we have enhanced human dignity. Millions of farmers receive monetary support in one click. At the peak of Covid lockdown it was technology that ensured India's poor received proper and quick assistance. The scale of this relief has few parallels Narendra Modi, PM



The new development paradigm is a strategic decision we have made based on the current stage and conditions of development in China and with full consideration given to globalisation and changes in the external environment Xi Jinping, President, China



Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, Deputy Chief Minister Dr C N Ashwath Narayan and Industries Minister Jagadish Shettar at the inauguration of Bengaluru Tech Summit 2020 in Bengaluru on Thursday | SHRIRAM BN

K'taka eyes pole position in bio, digital economies

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

THE Karnataka Government is aiming to achieve the top position in India's bio-economy and digital economy. Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on Thursday said one of the key goals of the state is to achieve 50 per cent market share of the national bio-economy (biotechnology economy) of \$100 billion by 2025, and added that necessary steps have already been

taken in this direction.

Addressing the inauguration of the Bengaluru Tech Summit 2020, Yediyurappa assured of Karnataka playing a pivotal role in making India a \$5 trillion economy and pointed out that the state already has the most progressive start-up ecosystem.

He pointed out that four of the seven start-ups, which had become 'start-up unicorns' in India in 2020, were from Karnataka. **P4**

China to ride on domestic demand

JAYANTA ROY CHOWDHURY @ New Delhi

STARTING next year, China will rely more on domestic consumption to drive future growth for its \$14.34-trillion economy, which has used an export-led model to accelerate its way out of poverty in the past four decades.

"From next year on, China will embark on a new journey towards fully building a modern socialist country. We will foster a new development paradigm with domestic circulation as the mainstay and domestic and international circulations reinforcing each other," Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday told a meeting of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation chief executives.

The ratio of foreign trade to GDP has already dropped from 67% in 2006 to less than 32% in 2019, according to Chinese government data. In comparison, India's foreign trade as a percentage of GDP stood at 40% in 2019. **P9**

P1

Steps to push IT beyond B'luru: CM

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Speaking about the massive growth of biotechnology in the state, Biocon Ltd Chairperson and Managing Director Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw said Karnataka's bio-economy was estimated to contribute \$22.6 billion in 2019, accounting for 10.2 per cent of Karnataka's GDP, while the national share of bio-economy is at \$62.5 billion, or 2.3 per cent of India's GDP. "And although at present, the state accounts for a third of India's bio-economy, the goal is to reach 50 per cent of the \$100 billion bio-economy that the country aims to achieve by 2025," she added.

Yediyurappa assured Union Minister for Electronics, Information Technology and Communications, Ravishankar Prasad, who participated virtually in the session, of taking necessary steps to make Karnataka the leader in data economy. He said steps were being taken to push IT beyond Bengaluru to generate over 60 lakh direct and indirect jobs in five years.

Deputy Chief Minister Dr C N Ashwath Narayan, termed the pandemic as the "Y2K moment" of the coming decade and said rapid development of infrastructure in two sectors — connectivity and communication — will be addressed through a single-window mechanism. "We will mould Karnataka from a \$52 billion digital economy to a \$100 billion one in the next five years, while the present share of \$36 billion in biotech will reach \$100 billion in the same period," he said.

On the air connectivity front, he said operation of many UDAAN airports in the state will make travel easy. Rapid penetration of 4G — and in a few months, 5G network — will solve communication issues, he said.

The Karnataka Digital Economy Mission will use the 'Invest India' model to build global linkages for promoting the state's tech industry, Ashwath Narayan said.

'IT sector resilient during pandemic'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

THE current situation has proven to be a silver lining for the tech industry due to large-scale adoption of digital technology over the last few months.

"We have been able to help millions of poor people in this country, including farmers and other marginalised sections, with the click of a mouse and cater to their needs within a short period of time. The IT industry showed resilience during the pandemic. Our fintech industry performed well and millions of transactions were carried out digitally due to people's trust in technology," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said.

Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology, Ravi Shankar Prasad, while referring to the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, said that companies have committed to invest Rs 11 lakh crore to boost manufacturing of mobile phones and electronic components in India out of which Rs 7 lakh crore will be for exports. He also pointed out that during the pandemic, nine operating units of tech giant Apple have shifted base from China to India and Bengaluru is one of the key locations from where the company's contract manufacturers are making the premium phones.



EXPRESS READ

Waste management opportunity for small industries

Bengaluru: Management of solid waste and waste water is a good business prospect for small-scale industries, while being essential for the environment, said Vijay Kumar Gogi, Principal Secretary to the Department of Environment and Ecology. Addressing a seminar here on Thursday, he added that small-scale industries can act as facilitators between city corporations and industries utilising waste. He urged units to efficiently manage waste; use and recycle waste water; and ensure that no chemical effluents are discharged. ENS



NAALE BAA, CORONA

Artist Parmesh Jolad distributes masks with the words 'Naale Baa' (come tomorrow), drawing a parallel between Covid-19 and a folk legend. The story goes that spirits would knock on doors, and people began writing Naale Baa on walls and doors to ward them off | **MEGHANA SASTRY**

Govt unwilling to punish mask violators: Court

While observing that most of the violations under the Karnataka Epidemic Diseases Act were by political parties, a division bench headed by chief justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka said the government is unwilling to register FIRs against violators. Hearing a PIL, the bench asked the petitioner to furnish a list of political parties that are violating Covid norms of social distancing and masks. **P 4**

India's tally hits 9m, rise slowest since 1st million

India has become the second country in the world after the US to record nine million (90 lakh) Covid-19 cases. On the brighter side, it took 22 days for the case count to increase from the eight-million mark, making it the second slowest rise of one million infections in the country, reflecting the slowdown in the pandemic in recent weeks, reports Amit Bhattacharya.

The grim milestone was reached on Thursday, when India recorded 46,260 fresh infections, taking the total to 90,03,800. This was the highest daily tally in eight days, in part because of a rise in test-

Cases increase after Diwali, curfew in Ahd

Gujarat imposed night curfew — between 9pm and 6am — in Ahmedabad from Nov 20 to 23rd as the city saw 230 cases on Thursday, a tally last seen on June 23. With one in every five case being recorded during Diwali in Gujarat coming from Ahmedabad, private hospitals are running with an occupancy rate of over 90%. **TNN**

ing numbers that had fallen sharply in recent days.

► 2nd highest globally, P 6

P1

B'LURU WATCH

Covid figures as on Nov 19

Cases	Active	Cured	Deaths
3,60,587	17,856	3,38,688	4,043

P2

12% India cases among those under 20: Unicef

New Delhi: Nearly 12% of Covid-19 infections in India are among children and adolescents under 20 years whereas globally, they accounted for 11% of infections, a new report by Unicef showed, underlining that the pandemic may have impacted the health of children and young people more directly than originally anticipated, reports Sushmi Dey.

Besides, disruptions to services such as education, healthcare and child protection interventions were also harming children, it said.

► Covid affect to stay, P 6

Covid-19 gave oxygen to 10% of B'luru pvt hosps

Sunitha.Rao@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: At least 10% of Bengaluru's private hospitals with 50 to 100 beds which were facing a financial crisis have seen a good recovery during Covid-19, according to a private hospitals' union.

A couple of new corporate hospitals which were struggling

to repay loans have also seen their revenues grow. But the absence of elective surgeries has hit most corporate hospitals. Bengaluru has 658 private hospitals.

Dr R Ravindra, president of Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association (Phana), said, "Unprepared small hospitals and some corporate hospitals have suffered. It's not true all ho-

sitals have made money."

A few hospitals looking at closure got a new lease of life with Covid. "Big, chain hospitals are crying foul. Mid-level and small hospitals have benefited. Their earning per bed went up from about Rs 2,500 in normal times to Rs 5,200 (with government-referred Covid patients seeking admission) and Rs

10,000 (from patients seeking treatment on their own)," said Dr Prasanna HM, president-elect, Phana. The specialist said his Pristine Hospitals, off Chord Road with 100 beds, did better during Covid, treating 240 government-referred Covid patients and 200 private patients.

► South B'luru hospital, P 2

P2

'South B'luru hosp earned 30% more during Covid'

► Continued from page 1

Dr Prasanna is the managing director of Pristine Hospitals. Pulse, a 30-bed speciality hospital in south Bengaluru which was doing well earlier, earned 30% more during the pandemic treating about 200 cases, said its head Dr Guruprasad MR.

In April, the Federation of Healthcare Associations of Karnataka (FHAK) had demanded moratorium on loan repayment and appealed to the government to shoulder 25% of the staff salary burden of private hospitals for six months, owing to losses.

The situation improved by the end of June, with the government allowing private hospitals to treat Covid-19 patients, besides taking over 50% of private beds and footing the bill of patients it sent in. Even though beds in government hospitals were available, public health authorities kept referring Covid patients to private hospitals as per families' request.

FHAK principal coordinator Dr SC Nagendra Swamy said only 10-15%

of mid-level hospitals which provided ICU care did better than the rest.

Revenue only on paper

Prakriya Hospital, a 200-bed establishment on the outskirts of Bengaluru and started 18 months ago, had just 30-35 beds occupied early this year and the occupancy level dropped to 15 beds during lockdown.

"We suffered massive losses. From June, we treated more than 1,000 Covid patients and 400 of them were sent by the government. Revenue looks good on paper. We have not received money from the government," said Dr Srinivas C, CEO of the hospital, adding that they have got Rs 8 lakh of Rs 2 crore the government owes them.

"Insurers owe us Rs 3.5 crore. Our employee strength has gone up from 200 to 450 persons because of Covid care. New employees agreed to come only with a salary increase. Our expenses have skyrocketed and we are surviving on loans. With cases coming down, we are overstaffed," Dr Srinivas told TOI.

P2

KARNATAKA COVID TRACKER		Bengaluru Urban 1,048		ON THURSDAY		DISCHARGED 1,800		Bengaluru Urban 13		Bengaluru Urban 17,856	
CASES IN 24HRS		Tumakuru 103		CASE BREAK-UP ON THURSDAY		TOTAL DISCHARGED 8,30,988		Tumakuru 2		Mysuru 714	
DEATHS IN 24HRS		Vijayapura 78		8 women and 18 men succumbed to Covid on Thursday. 14 of the 26 deaths (54%) were those of senior citizens - aged 60 or more. The average age of Thursday's fatalities was 62.		ACTIVE CASES 25,169		Dharwad 2		Tumakuru 701	
TOTAL		Dakshina Kannada 54		PATIENT STATUS		A total of 1,18,474 tests were conducted in the state on Thursday. Of these, 25,101 were Rapid Antigen Detection tests. RT-PCR and other tests made the rest. A total of 98.6 lakh tests have been conducted so far.		Ballari 2		Dakshina Kannada 557	
8,67,780		Mysuru 54						Bengaluru Urban, Chikkaballapura, Vijayapura, Kodagu and Mysuru reported 1 death each. The case fatality rate for the day - 18 November - was 1.4%, and positivity was 1.8%		Mandya 451	
TOTAL DEATHS		Shivamogga 53						Bengaluru Rural 343		Belagavi 391	
11,604		Uttara Kannada 38						Bengaluru Rural 343		Bengaluru Rural 343	
		Belagavi 37						Shivamogga 302		ACTIVE CASES	

FEAR TO THE FORE Only 7,651 Of 80,000 Students In B'luru Tested On Wednesday; Officials Say Parents Biggest Deterrent

P2

On-campus tests fail, poor attendance haunts colleges

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: On campus-testing, a move by colleges in Bengaluru to prompt more students to attend regular classes, has not been as successful as managements hoped they would be. A paltry 7,651 of the 80,000 students in 350 colleges in the city turned up to give swab samples on Wednesday, Day 2 of colleges reopening.

Meanwhile, attendance remained thin in most colleges on Thursday, Day 3, indicating students are still wary of turning up.

"Students do not want to get tested," said Karisidappa, vice-chancellor, Visvesvaraya Technological University. "Principals of affiliated colleges quote students saying they are ready to come provided they don't have to furnish Covid negative certificates. Parents are unwilling to send them for testing. The average attendance in our colleges was 20-30%."

While BBMP has mapped many of its PHCs with colleges to facilitate testing of students and staff, several colleges invited Palike teams to collect swab samples on campus to allay fears students may have.



K Sunil Prasad

ATTENTION PLEASE: Visual artist Paramesh Jolad and his troupe held an awareness drive in Bengaluru on Thursday, asking people to wear masks

However, data provided by BBMP shows not even 10% of students got themselves tested. For instance, in a college in Vasanthnagar, only one of a total 150 final year students was tested. The college is scheduled to resume regular classes only on November 23.

In many colleges, not even a single student has been tested. For example, none of the 11,600 students from four colleges mapped with BR Ambedkar PHC were tested. Six teams were set up, but no student turned up.

The highest number of tests — 1,572 — were conducted in west zone. Rajarajeshwari Nagar, under which Ban-

galore University falls, collected 1,520 samples and Yelahanka 1,324. East, which has 34,000 students in colleges in the zone, saw 817 students turn up for the test.

TD Kemparaju, VC, Bangalore North University, said: "Even though students were told they could be tested on campus for free, only a few are coming forward. Attendance dropped on Thursday compared to Tuesday."

A principal of a B-school said parents fear that if their son/daughter tests positive, the entire family will have to be quarantined. "About 50% have given names for testing that will be held on Monday.

ZONWISE TESTING	
Bommanahalli	West
513	1,572
RR Nagar	South
1,520	913
Mahadevapura	Dasarahalli
435	557
East	Yelahanka
817	1,324

But we will have to see how many turn up. Outstation students are also staying away."

A senior BBMP education official, while explaining the low numbers, said, "The second biggest fear among parents is that they do not know which locality other students are coming from. They feel it is safer if their children stay at home. Parents have also invested money and purchased laptops and mobile phones for online education and they feel it would be wasted in case regular classes begin. So, many are staying away from regular classes."

While children are eager to attend college and meet friends, parental pressure is preventing them from attending school, the official said.

P4

Govt unwilling to punish mask violators, fumes HC

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The high court on Thursday directed the petitioner in a public interest litigation to furnish a list of recognised political parties so it could issue directions to them regarding compliance of Covid norms of wearing masks and social distancing.

A division bench headed by chief justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka also observed that the government is unwilling to register FIRs against violators, even though these violations are cognizable offences under section 5 of Karnataka Epidemic Diseases Act. The court observed that most of the violations under the Act "are by political parties".

Earlier, the government placed before the court an affidavit by Javed Akhtar, additional chief secretary and principal secretary to health and family welfare department. Akhtar stated that as per provisions of the act, offenders can be imprisoned for not less than three months and up to 5 years and also fined anywhere between Rs 50,000 and Rs 2 lakh, but it was never the intention of the government to penalise violators with such harsh punishment.

He further said Rs 250/ 100 fine being imposed now is sufficient and the government will rectify shortcoming through a fresh ordinance. The government advocate told the court his client is contemplating fresh regulations on the model followed in Motor Vehicle Rules.

Meanwhile, BBMP told the court that salary dues of marshals have been cleared up to October. The court was also given an assurance on behalf of the BBMP administrator that future salaries will be credited to their accounts on time and there won't be any default in payments.

Emergency care training unit opens at RGUHS

Bengaluru: A mobile emergency care-cum-training unit, which will train medical students, doctors, nurses, police personnel, firemen and citizens to save precious lives during the 'golden hour', was launched at Rajiv Gandhi University of Health Sciences (RGUHS) on Wednesday.

The mobile training unit and training courses, which have been conceived by Jeeva-Raksha Trust and Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement, was inaugurated by RGUHS vice-chancellor S Sachidanand. The MTU will roll out certified skill courses in emergency care and life support.

These will help during road accidents, snake-bites, cardiac arrest, poisoning, stroke, fits, fractures, wounds, burns, life-threatening bleeding, maternal emergencies and disaster management, a release said. Visit: jeevaraksha.org. **TNN**

Troubling trend: India's Covid-19 test numbers fall, RAT share remains high

India Is Now Doing 9 Lakh Tests Per Day

Atul Thakur & Rema Nagarajan

Analysis of Covid data shows that the number of daily tests has been falling of late in several states and most are depending mainly on the rapid antigen test (RAT) rather than on the more accurate RT-PCR tests.

Widespread use of RAT, in some cases up to 90% of all tests, has raised fears that a large number of positive cases could be missed. As per the ICMR protocol, every positive report from RAT can be treated as confirmed, but samples that test negative are to be retested using RTPCR.

RAPID ANTIGEN SHARE 70% IN DELHI

State	Tests Per Million Of Population	% Rapid Antigen	% RTPCR*
Delhi	2,325	70	30
Kerala	1,504	60	40
Karnataka	1,503	32	68
Andhra	1,280	33	67
Bihar	1,010	88	12
Odisha	975	16	84
Telangana	926	90	10
Tamil Nadu	901	100	0

Source: covid19india.org *Based on official data or govt sources

It is unclear how many states are rigorously following the retesting protocol.

The reason for many states preferring the RAT is that it not only gives results within 30 minutes, it also can be done outside a laboratory setting. However, RTPCR tests results, which are supposed to be available in eight hours but have often ended up taking days because of

backlogs, are considered to be the gold standard.

India is currently doing more than 9 lakh tests per day, down from the 11 lakh plus tests which were being done till about a week back. The daily positivity rate or the percentage of samples testing positive has also been coming down steadily since the last week of October. It is currently just 4.2% com-

pared to 9.1% on October 22. However, even some states that have not seen positivity rates fall have reduced tests.

A high positivity rate indicates the need for more testing as more tests could pick up more cases. Among large states, Rajasthan and Delhi have the highest positivity rate of roughly 13%. Delhi has pushed up testing to reach between 2,300 and 2,700 tests per million population, but about 70% of tests are RAT.

Rajasthan has the lowest tests per million in the country, just 211. The state was doing over 25,000 to 28,000 tests per day in October, when its positivity rate was 5.5-6.5%. The number has now fallen to around 16,500 tests per day though the number of cases too is going up. Rajasthan is using only RTPCR tests, which might explain the difficulty in rapidly ex-

panding testing. In Haryana too, the positivity rate has been going up and has touched 11.5%, the highest in the last two months, though the number of daily cases dipped over the last few days after steadily rising from the last week of October. In Haryana, 70% of tests are RTPCR.

Kerala is another state with a very high positivity rate of 10%, though this is lower than the peak in the middle of October when it had touched 16%. With the number of tests being done almost the same, the number of cases have been declining since the end of October.

After Delhi, Kerala and Karnataka have the highest testing rates in the country of about 1,500 tests per million, but over 60% of the tests being used in Kerala are the rapid antigen tests.

India sees 2nd highest no. of new cases globally in Nov

► Continued from page 1

The day's death toll, at 589, was the highest in 14 days. The last one-million increase coming in 22 days means that the spread of infection in the country has halved since the pandemic's peak in mid-September, when it took just 11 days for cases to rise from four million to five million. Only the first one million cases took more days than the last million.

Despite the steady fall in numbers since then, India still recorded the second highest number of new cases in the world in November. The country has reported a little over 8.2 lakh in the month so far, second to only the US's November case count of 24.8 lakh. France had the third highest tally at 7.3 lakh, followed by Italy (6.2

lakh), the UK (4.4 lakh), Poland (4.3 lakh) and Brazil (4.3 lakh). At 9,937, India's death toll from the virus in November so far was the third highest in the world. The US recorded 20,829 fatalities, followed by 10,133 in France, with Italy (8,896) and Iran (8,563) in the fourth and fifth spots, respectively.

The 46,260 new cases detected on Thursday came out mainly from 10.3 lakh tests conducted in the country the previous day. This was the first time in six days that the testing numbers had crossed 10 lakh. Testing had fallen sharply in the country due to Diwali and other festivals on top of the usual dip on weekends. The number of fresh cases rose in most states, with Delhi again reporting the highest numbers (7,546) in the country.

BANGALORE MIRROR

Two years after Rs 3 crore was spent in reinvigorating Vibhutipura Lake, its state is much like that of the average salaried Bengalurean after covid-19

NO INCOMING, JUST OUTGOING



KAUSHIK JN

average salaried Bengalurean after covid-19

NO INCOMING, JUST OUTGOING

KAUSHIK JN



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In 2018, the Vibhuthipura Lake was 'rejuvenated' at an estimated cost of Rs 3 crore. Two years on, the lake which was once home to several migratory birds and flowering plants, is practically non-existent. While most lakes in the city are filled to the brim because of good rainfall, Vibhuthipura Lake has no water.

The lake looks like a field of grass in the monsoon and like a playground during the rest of the year.

All the residents, who had been petitioning the authorities non-stop to take up rejuvenation work till 2017, are disheartened by the present condition of the lake.

"We were against removing silt from the lake, but the authorities went ahead with their unscientific plan. The other major issue was the closure of inlet and opening of the outlet. How do you expect rain water to enter the lake if the inlet

is closed?" asked Viprab Saha, a resident.

Ram Kumar, a resident of Lal Bahadur Shastri Nagar, said the lake has now become a hangout spot for miscreants. "Many people are misusing the lake bund. There are incidents of people being robbed on the pathway," Kumar said.

He said that residents and lake activists had met the authorities seeking a sewage treatment plant (STP) so that only treated water can

“The other major issue was the closure of inlet and opening of the outlet. How do you expect rain water to enter the lake if the inlet is closed?”

—Viprab Saha, a resident

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>

And now, lethal waste too

4, including landowner, booked for dumping hazardous waste in Hegganahalli plot



The tanker was carrying 36,000 litres of chemical and medical industrial waste from a company

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The city police have registered a criminal case against four persons, including the owner of a piece of land for allowing and dumping of hazardous liquid chemical waste in a plot at Hegganahalli in Rajagopalnagar, North Bengaluru.

The four accused persons have been identified as Abdul Gani (60), a resident of Challakere town in Chitradurga district, Hrudaya Raj (31) a resident of Vishweshwaraiah Layout, Mohammed Ali (48) resident of Jamiya Masjid in Andrahalli and Somanna, the landowner from Hegganahalli.

According to the police, Rajagopalnagar police station house officer (SHO) had received information about a lorry dumping pungent chemical at an empty

ground near Konega Garments in Kareem Sab Layout in Hegganahalli, at around 11.30 on Monday. The SHO deployed a head constable to the area who confirmed that a Maharashtra registration number tanker was dumping 36,000 litres of chemical and medical industrial waste from a pharmaceutical company named Chempro in Hindupur.

The cops filed a case, arrested the driver and his accomplices and the truck was seized.

Upon investigation it was found that Somanna, a resident of Shivapura, had allegedly taken Rs 7,000 per month from truck drivers to let them dump any kind of waste in his land, the police said. With no chemical waste



They find landowners who allow this dumping for a small amount —A police officer

disposal facilities in Hindupur or certain areas around Andhra Pradesh, this was an easier option for the culprits. "Companies pay from Rs 10 to 15 per litre of industrial waste to agencies who dispose of chemical waste in a proper manner, and some kind of industrial wastes have been even paid Rs 30 per litre. This can add up to Rs3 to Rs 4 lakh per tanker. To avoid paying this amount, or travelling far, many indulge in such illegal activities," a police official added.

Another officer said that some criminals take money from the companies to ethically dispose of the chemical waste, but instead pocket the money by finding landowners, willing to let them dump the waste on their vacant land.

The police also informed the Karnataka State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) officials who took large samples from the tanker.

BENGALURU

With increased testing, City breaches 1K mark

After reporting less than 1,000 cases for the last few days, Bengaluru Urban reported 1,048 Covid-19 cases on Thursday, while the State's daily caseload was 1,849. Experts said that one of the reasons for rise in cases was that the testing, which was lower for the last few days, was ramped up. On Thursday, 1.18 lakh coronavirus tests were conducted.

Additionally, the covid deaths, which were being reported in single digits for the past few days, also saw the rise. On Thursday, 14 deaths were reported from Bengaluru, making it the highest single day death toll since November 6. Meanwhile, the total positivity rate in the state was 1.56 per cent, while the case fatality rate was 1.41 per cent.

One side dug for laying pipes, other for utilities

Millers Road has been dug up for over 9 months, making commute impossible

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If you commute through Millers Road daily and are fed up of the traffic jams in the area, then do not expect relief from it anytime soon. Over the last nine months, motorists and residents of Vasanth Nagar have been facing a lot of problems due to the ongoing work on Millers Road taken up by Bengaluru Smart City Limited.

Residents and businessmen on Millers Road have been complaining against sound and air pollution being caused by thousands of vehicles. Due to the ongoing work and potholes, the movement of vehicles on this stretch of the road slows down and often leads to traffic jams. Residents said the road was

ANANTHA SUBRAMANYAM K



The ongoing work has slowed down vehicular movement on this stretch, often causing traffic jams

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If you commute through Millers Road daily and are fed up of the traffic jams in the area, then do not expect relief from it anytime soon. Over the last nine months, motorists and residents of Vasanth Nagar have been facing a lot of problems due to the ongoing work on Millers Road taken up by Bengaluru Smart City Limited.

Residents and businessmen on Millers Road have been complaining against sound and air pollution being caused by thousands of vehicles. Due to the ongoing work and potholes, the movement of vehicles on this stretch of the road slows down and often leads to traffic jams. Residents said the road was dug up in March and no effort is being made to complete the job.

"One side of the Millers Road is dug up for laying pipes and other for utilities. Work has been on standstill for two months. Pedestrians are compelled to walk on the congested road," said Thanmaya Bekkalale, a resident of Vasanth Nagar.

Expressing disappointment over the delay in completing the work, Rajkumar Dugar, founder of Citizens for Citizens, said that Bengaluru Smart City Limited has bitten more what it can chew. He pointed out that more than 10



ANANTHA SUBRAMANYAM K

The ongoing work has slowed down vehicular movement on this stretch, often causing traffic jams

“After pestering the BBMP for eight months, they showed up and did such a shoddy job that potholes filled up on Wednesday, resurfaced on Thursday

—A resident of Millers Road

roads have been dug up in the Central Business District (CBD) area. "First, I want Bangalore Smart City Limited to complete work on roads that were dug up quite some time ago," said Dugar.

He pointed out that there are three hospitals – Vikram Hospital, Fortis Hospital and Bhagwan Mahaveer Hospital – in the vicinity

of Millers Road. "Traffic jams may become a hurdle for ambulances to transport critically ill," he said.

Poor pothole patchwork

A resident pleading anonymity said that a Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) engineer made arrangements to fill up potholes on the stretch on

Wednesday night. "After pestering for eight months, they did such a shoddy job that potholes filled up on Wednesday, resurfaced on Thursday," the resident said.

Meanwhile, Smart City Project Chief Engineer Ranganatha Naik said that he will take measures to complete the work as early as possible. "I have already told the contractors to expedite the completion of the ongoing work on Millers Road. Shortage of manpower is one of the reasons for the delay in completion of the work. I am expecting it to be complete by April or May 2021," said Naik.

₹3 crore down the drain

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

be let into the lake. "Initially, the authorities said there was no provision for the STP. Later, they assured us they will consider our request. We do not want sewage water entering the lake," he said.

According to him, residents of nearby apartments are compelled to depend on private water supply as the groundwater table has hit rock bottom. "We never faced scarcity of water prior to the lake rejuvenation. With no water in the lake for the last two years, the groundwater table has almost been depleted. We are compelled to spend money to buy water from private water suppliers," he said.

A resident, who visits the lake for a walk in the morning and evening, said stray dogs had attacked a girl in June. "There are no lights at the lake thus causing inconvenience to the people who visit the lake in

the early morning and in the evening," he said.

Raghavendra B Pachhapur, programme manager, Action Aid Association, said that lake design and structure have a major role in enhancing the flora and fauna in a lake's ecosystem.

"It is ridiculous that despite so many failures, there is no rethinking on the designs implemented for lake rejuvenation in Bengaluru. The DPRs need to take a relook into the failures and its impact on lake ecology," he said.

When Bangalore Mirror quizzed BBMP Chief Engineer (Lakes) Mohan Krishna about the lake, he admitted there were some inlet issues at Vibhuthipura Lake. "I am aware that a few lakes are not full despite heavy rains during the monsoon. We are looking into this matter. These lakes have some inlet issues. We will fix those issues," said Mohan Krishna.

City's Covid Infection Curve may be Flattening

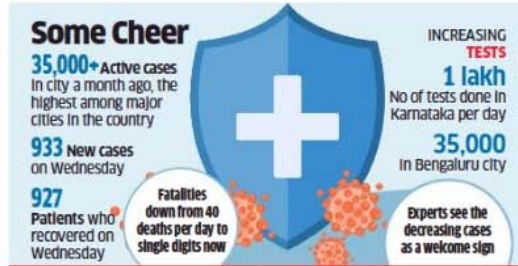
Recovery rate at a healthy 94%; avoiding second wave with public being responsible and adequate tests and treatment now key

Our Bureau

Bengaluru: From reporting over 5,000 Covid-19 cases a day in the first week of October, Bengaluru's daily caseload has now fallen below 1,000, indicating a possible flattening of the infection curve.

The drop in new cases, coupled with the decline in deaths and improved recoveries, has come as a big relief to administrators and healthcare workers who have been battling a surge in cases for the past five months.

Health and medical education minister K Sudhakar on Wednesday tweeted that Bengaluru's case fatality rate at 1.1% is the lowest among all major cities in India. "With 336,880 recoveries and 17,707 active cases as



on Tuesday, the city's recovery rate stands at a healthy 93.94% and active cases rate stands at 4.93%," he said. About a month ago, Bengaluru with

over 35,000 active cases, had the largest active cases in the country, among the major cities. Since then, there has been a gradual decline in

active cases due to the reduction in new cases and many Covid-positive persons recovering. While 933 new cases were reported on Wednesday, 927 patients recovered.

The city has also witnessed a sharp decrease in fatalities from recording over 40 deaths per day to numbers in single digits now.

Experts see the decreasing cases as a welcome sign considering that the city has been testing aggressively. Of the over one lakh tests done in Karnataka every day, close to 35,000 tests are done in Bengaluru city.

"We can now say that Covid curve is flattening in Bengaluru and the rest of Karnataka. But the pattern across the globe has made us apprehensive about another wave that may strike the state after 2-3

months," said Dr CN Manjunath, chairperson, Karnataka's Covid-19 expert committee.

Experts and officials said that the intensity of the second wave may largely depend on people's behaviour and how rigorously the administration continues to test and treat patients over the next few months.

"Testing should remain high and people should not be complacent," an officer supervising Covid-19 work in Bengaluru said.

Manjunath said the state government and Bengaluru's administration should conduct the same number of tests despite the decline in cases at least till December-end. "Then we should review the target, either lower it or increase depending on the scenario," he said.

P1

State's 23 Dists See Zero Deaths

Our Bureau

Bengaluru: Karnataka reported 1,849 fresh cases of Covid-19 on Thursday, of which 1,048 were from Bengaluru. The new cases took the total infections in the state to 867,780 of which 25,169 are active cases. Bengaluru's total case count is 360,587 and of them 338,688 have recovered.

The state also reported 26 fatalities including 14 from Bengaluru. However, no deaths were recorded from 23 districts. Karnataka has recorded 11,604 Covid deaths so far and Bengaluru accounts for 4,042 deaths. A total of 596 patients are in ICU across the state of which over 300 of



them are in Bengaluru.

SADANANDA GOWDA +VE Union Minister for Chemical and Fertilisers DV Sadananda Gowda on Thursday said he has tested positive for Covid-19.

He requested everyone who had come in his contact with him to be careful and adhere to protocol.

P3

Delhi Tightens Curbs; ₹2k Fine for No Mask



Our Political Bureau

New Delhi: The Delhi government on Thursday put in place strict measures, including a fine of ₹2,000 for not wearing a mask and stalling all non-emergency planned surgeries, as the surge in Covid cases continued in the capital.

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal convened an all-party meeting on Thursday appealing to leaders to put aside politics and collectively work towards increasing awareness amongst people.

He requested political parties to ask cadres to distribute masks and urge people to follow the essential habits of wearing a mask and maintaining 6-foot distance.

Delhi has also put in place measures which had been introduced during the initial months of all-India lockdown. With the increasing load on healthcare facilities, Delhi has asked all hospitals to postpone non-essential planned surgeries. Kejriwal said, "Non-emergency operations in hospitals across Delhi will be stalled for a few days in the wake of rising Corona cases."

77% new cases reported from 10 states

Night curfew returns in Ahmedabad; Centre sends teams to four states

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Three in every four new cases reported in India on Thursday were from 10 states, including Delhi and Kerala, even as recoveries remained above daily infections

for the past 47 days.

As the country added over 45,000 new cases, the Centre rushed teams to Haryana, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Manipur to visit districts with a high number of Covid-19 cases to control the outbreak, which is showing signs of rebounding in some places.

In Ahmedabad, once the Covid epicentre of Gujarat, the state government has decided to impose night curfew between 9 pm and 6 am from Nov 20 with the virus rearing its head again post-Diwali.

The decision to send teams to Rajasthan and Haryana



A health worker collects a sample in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

came following a surge in daily cases in Delhi - which reported the highest number of cases in

the country on Wednesday - and its spillover effect being observed in these states.

Delhi, Kerala, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu account for 77.28% of the fresh cases in the country. Delhi reported 7,486 cases while Kerala recorded 6,419 new cases.

When it comes to recoveries, these ten states again top the list accounting for 77.27% of the total discharges.

With 7,066 persons recovering from Covid-19, Kerala saw the most number of recoveries.

Of the 585 new fatalities reported in the past 24 hours, 79.49% have been from 10 states. Delhi accounted for 22.39% or 131 deaths followed by Maharashtra (100).

According to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India's active caseload had fallen "under the 5% mark on Thursday". "It has ensured that India's present active caseload of 4,43,303 consists of just 4.95% of India's total positive cases," the ministry said.

New recoveries outnumbering daily cases has also improved the recovery rate to 93.58%.

P1

College students miss out on classes due to delayed Covid test reports

Fewer than 10% students turn up at colleges on third day

BENGALURU, DHNS

Prolonged delays in Covid-19 test reports badly hit student attendance on the third day of the reopening of colleges across the city. Most undergraduate and postgraduate colleges

witnessed poor attendance on Thursday, too.

Students pleading with the authorities to let them in saying they are awaiting results was a common sight outside many colleges. A student at a college in Jayanagar rued that they had not received any update from the BBMP on Covid test results even five days after having given the swab samples.

Another student, from a college on Hesaraghatta Road, said she gave the swab sample at a BBMP fever clinic which doesn't give the report unless



Students attend a class at the Government First Grade College, Vijayanagar, on Thursday. DH PHOTO/JANARDHAN B K

the result is positive. "There won't be any report if I test negative, which is what the col-

lege authorities want. I haven't even received an SMS. What is stopping the BBMP from issu-

ing a negative report?"

Many students tried in vain to get the test results from the BBMP helpline, which had no idea about the swab samples collected from them, according to a student from Rajajinagar.

Prof K R Venugopal, Vice-Chancellor, Bangalore University, said student attendance on Thursday was lower than Wednesday. Out of 1,434 students enrolled for final-year postgraduate courses at BU, only 128 turned up on Thursday, as against 138 on Wednesday. Further, only 40

of the 50 postgraduate departments on the BU's Jnanabharathi campus reported attendance, he added.

Out of more than 300 colleges affiliated to the BU, only 57 colleges, or about 15%, reported student attendance, said an official in the university. The overall student attendance was less than 10%, the official added.

Not a single student or staff member turned at the 103-old University of Visvesvaraya College of Engineering a day after two people tested positive, according to the official.

P2

State reports 1,849 new cases, 26 deaths

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka registered 1,849 fresh Covid cases and 26 related fatalities, taking the total infection count to 8.67 lakh and the toll to 11,604, on Thursday.

The day also saw 1,800 patients getting discharged after recovery. Out of the fresh cases reported, 1,048 cases were from Bengaluru Urban alone.

Fourteen out of the total

deaths reported on Thursday are from Bengaluru. Among the districts where new cases were reported, Bengaluru urban accounts for 1,048, Tumakuru 103, Vijayapura 78, Mysuru, Hassan and Dakshina Kannada 54. A total 1.18 lakh samples were tested on Thursday, of which 25,101 were rapid antigen tests.

Small chance of Covid surge after schools reopen: experts

BENGALURU, DHNS: As the government mulls reopening schools amid the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak, medical experts said a surge in cases is likely to occur depending on how much children end up driving disease transmission.

"We still do not know about the level of transmissibility of the virus by children, but some studies have shown that transmissibility is low," said Dr Gnanam R, consulting emergency paediatrician with Manipal Hospitals, Old Airport Road.

Speaking to a large online audience comprising parents and medical professionals brought together for a specially curated session organised by *DH* on Thursday, Dr Gnanam and Dr Jagadish Chinappa, consulting paediatrician at Manipal Hospitals, examined the issue of school reopening and Covid-19 preparedness.

Parents expressed not only fear over children developing complications due to the disease, but also that they will bring the disease home to infect vulnerable adults.

Birmy Bastian, a parent, said "many parents with comorbidities or other high-risks could potentially orphan their children if exposed to the disease brought home from school."

The concern has some validity. Studies showed that disease rates from school-going children may have contributed to a second wave of Covid-19 cases in Israel.

A South Korean study of nearly 6,000 patients which was published in *Emerging Infectious Diseases* in July found those aged 10 to 19 spread the

virus as much as adults did.

Dr Sankarshana Thimmarayappa, an ENT specialist, suggested that the government declare the 2020-2021 academic year a zero year.

"The government is hiding data on the Covid outbreak for economic reasons and is opening schools. There is a risk that the system will be inundated as before," he said, adding that paediatric infrastructure is extremely limited in Bengaluru, and could potentially not be able to handle a large inflow of child Covid-19 cases.

Dr Chinappa said most children do not develop serious symptoms of the disease, which means less hospitalisation is required.

"A combination of preventive measures including staggering classes and adherence to social distancing measures could potentially address the problem," he said.

"We simply cannot restart classes in the old way. The government must carry out a risk assessment and consult all stakeholders, especially parents, before taking the decision to open schools," he said.

At the same time, monitoring outbreaks in schools could be challenging as, Dr Gnanam clarified, regular testing of children before entry into schools is also not viable as it is not easy to collect swab samples from children. Besides, regular testing has a negative impact on the mental health of adolescents and teens.

Chinappa said children are also at the tail end of priorities for a vaccine, as the degree of severity of the disease among children is low.

