



**Bruhat Bengaluru
Mahanagara Palike**

**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE,
BANGALORE**

**ENGLISH NEWSPAPER CLIPPINGS
26-11-2020**



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THE HINDU

Another corporation to manage garbage in city?

STAFF REPORTER
BENGALURU

An agency tasked with solid waste management (SWM) in Bengaluru may soon join the growing list of boards and corporations in the State. The government is considering setting up a new corporation for SWM in Bengaluru.

The city's civic body, meanwhile, is set to propose a corporation only for waste processing, while it is keen on retaining the functions of street sweeping and garbage collection.

A dedicated parastatal agency tasked with SWM in the city has drawn opposition from civil society groups, which argue that this would only further disempower the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike. This would be opposed to both letter and spirit of the 74th amendment to the Constitution, that empowers local self-governance, they say.

The proposal on the new corporation comes days after the formation of corporations for the development of Maratha and Veerashaiva-Lingayat communities. These corporations have also turned a political sop to assuage legislators and other leaders. Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa has over the last two days nominated chairpersons to over 20 boards and corporations.

MHA issues fresh COVID guidelines

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday issued fresh guidelines for “surveillance, containment and caution” in view of the surge in COVID-19 cases due to the ongoing festival season and onset of winter. The MHA has stressed that States should ensure 80% contacts of all persons found COVID-19 positive should be traced in 72 hours and their “tracking, identification, quarantine and follow up” for the next 14 days should be done strictly.

The MHA said that States need to enforce social distancing in offices.

“In cities, where the weekly Case positivity rate is in more than 10%, States and UTs concerned shall consider implementing staggered office timings and other suitable measures, with a view to reduce the number of employees attending office at the same time, thereby ensuring social distancing,” the order said.

The order issued on Wednesday is called ‘Guidelines for surveillance, containment and caution’, which will be effective from December 1 to 31.

The MHA said that States and Union Territories (UTs), based on their assessment of the situation, may “impose local restrictions” such as “night curfew” with a view to contain the spread of COVID-19. “However, State/UT Governments shall not impose any local lockdown (State/ District/ sub-division/City level), outside the containment zones, without prior consultation with the Central Government,” MHA order said.

Separate agency for SWM on the cards

BBMP plans agency for waste processing; it is keen to retain street sweeping, garbage collection tasks

K.V. ADITYA BHARADWAJ
BENGALURU

The State government is keen on taking away solid waste management (SWM) from the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) and instituting a parastatal agency for the same, along the lines of dedicated agencies for power, water, bus service, and metro service outside the ambit of the city's civic body.

However, the BBMP is all set to propose the formation of a Bengaluru Solid Waste Processing Corporation, that will be tasked with only waste processing in the city, while retaining street sweeping and garbage collection to itself.

Key responsibilities

"Street sweeping and garbage collection is one of the fundamental responsibilities of any civic body, which we will retain. But there is an expertise gap in managing processing plants, which we feel can be bridged with a dedicated corporation. I will be submitting a proposal for the same this week," said BBMP Commissioner N. Manjunath Prasad.

However, a senior Urban Development Department official in favour of an SWM parastatal, said processing being given up would only be



Garbage trucks lined up at Mittaganahalli quarry in Bengaluru. • SUDHAKARA JAIN

a half measure. "How will this processing corporation function if the civic body does not provide segregated waste? Ideally, the entire gamut of SWM operations should be brought under one parastatal agency," he said.

The government is yet to take a final call on the issue, sources said. Though a similar proposal was made a few years ago, it never gathered momentum as the garbage cess that the BBMP collected along with property tax was only a small fraction of what was spent on SWM – over ₹1,000 crore annually – over the last two years. However,

that has changed with a new provision to impose a user fee of ₹200 per household as per the new SWM bylaws. This is expected to generate an annual revenue of over ₹700 crore, reviving the proposal.

The move to create a parastatal agency has drawn the ire of urban governance activists and political parties. Even as the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) termed this "wishing away of primary responsibilities", the former leader of the Opposition in BBMP council Abdul Wajid (Congress) said, the BJP-led State government had been eating into the autonomy of

the civic body and this was only the latest instance.

Mathew Idiculla, a lawyer and urban policy advocate, said, "Most of the existing parastatal agencies pre-date the 74th amendment, which should have been ideally merged into the civic body, but never happened. This is a legacy problem we have. Instead of clearing this, taking away more functions from the civic body and creating more parastatal agencies will be directly contradicting the 74th amendment."

However, the proposal has garnered support from several solid waste management activists. Sandhya Narayan,

The [proposed] corporation will increase the efficiency of asset management in processing and help build new capacity.

SANDHYA NARAYAN,
member of the BBMP Technical Advisory Committee on SWM

Taking away more functions from the civic body and creating more parastatal agencies will be directly contradicting the 74th amendment.

MATHEW IDICULLA,
a lawyer and urban policy advocate

member of the BBMP Technical Advisory Committee on SWM, said the processing corporation would increase the efficiency of asset management in processing and help build new capacity.

Accountability

Not everyone agrees though. N.S. Mukunda, founder president of Citizens Action Forum, said parastatal agencies lacked a structure of accountability. "The de-politicisation of utility services may find popular support among the middle classes, but it lacks structures of accountability and will only fail in the long run," he said.

Non-profit organisations join hands to empower waste pickers

Saamuhika Shakti launched; it is funded by a Sweden-based foundation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Though informal waste pickers are a crucial cog in the solid waste management wheel, they remain virtually "invisible", and face discrimination owing to the nature of their work. With the aim to improve the lives of waste pickers in the city, eight non-profit organisations have joined forces to launch Saamuhika Shakti, a multi-year project. The project, funded by Sweden-based H&M Foundation, follows the collective impact approach. For the first three years, the foundation has committed \$10 million, with scope for extending it for another three years.

The core component of the project is gender equity and equitable access for women, girls, and other vulnerable groups. As per data, there are around 22,500 waste pickers, including informal waste collectors, sorters in dry waste collection centres, and scrap shops, and itinerant waste buyers.

At the launch on Wednes-



As per data, there are around 22,500 waste pickers, including informal waste collectors, in the city. •FILE PHOTO

day, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Commissioner N. Manjunath Prasad said the need of the hour was to support waste pickers' livelihood and improve their quality of life. He stressed on the need to integrate efforts of various departments and create awareness about the many schemes that the waste pickers may benefit from, be it housing, drinking water, etc.

Integrating them

A panel discussion on the role of waste pickers, ways to integrate them into the formal waste picker ecosystem, and challenges of integration saw participation from BBMP's Special Commissioner (SWM) D. Ran-

deep, co-founder of Hasiru Dala Nalini Shekar, and Bharti Dewan from the Azim Premji Philanthropic Initiatives.

Ms. Shekar, who was instrumental in getting the civic body to issue identity cards to waste pickers in 2011, said informal waste pickers reduce the cost of SWM. She emphasised how their skills and knowledge with respect to different waste streams are of tremendous value to the SWM ecosystem.

The non-profit organisations that have come together for the Saamuhika Shakti project are BBC Media Action, CARE, Hasiru Dala, LabourNet, Save the Children, Social Alpha, WaterAid, and The/Nudge Foundation.

HC reserves order on pleas for holding BBMP council election

Directive sought on conducting polls only to 198 wards

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Wednesday reserved its order on petitions seeking direction for holding elections to the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) council by ignoring the increase of number wards to 243 as the polls would be delayed because the process for creating new wards and related procedures take one more year.

A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice S. Vishwajith Shetty reserved the verdict on completion of arguments on behalf of the State Election Commission (SEC) and other petitioners. The SEC itself had sought a direction from the court to go ahead with the process under way to hold elections to 198 wards



ignoring the increase in the number of wards to 243 as such a process violates constitutional mandate of timely holding of elections to local bodies.

Amendment

Earlier, it was contended on behalf of the State government that elections cannot be held ignoring the amendment made in October 2020

to the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, which increased number of wards for BBMP area.

The government claimed that delay for holding elections, due by September 10, 2020, was because of the COVID-19 pandemic as a committee had begun deliberation on amending law before the pandemic but process got delayed owing to lockdown.

However, it was contended on behalf of the SEC that the committee was set up only after the commission filed a petition in the High Court in January this year seeking directions to government to complete process of delimitation of 198 wards as per 2011 Census and fix reservation for wards to enable the SEC to hold elections before the expiry of term of the BBMP council.

P2

COVID-19: 1,630 new cases, 19 deaths reported

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The State on Wednesday reported 1,630 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total number to 8,78,055. With 19 deaths, the toll rose to 11,714. This is apart from 19 deaths

of patients due to non-COVID-19 reasons.

As many as 1,333 people were discharged on Wednesday, taking the total number of recoveries to 8,41,432. Of the remaining 24,890 active patients, 405 were being

monitored in the ICU. While the positivity rate for the day stood at 1.33%, the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) touched 1.16%.

Bengaluru Urban reported 916 cases, taking its tally to 3,66,233. With 11 deaths

coming from Bengaluru, the toll in this district rose to 4,101. The active cases in Bengaluru touched 18,360. As many as 1,22,454 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, including 1,02,480 RT-PCR tests.

P4

B.V.K. Iyengar Road, Avenue Road to be developed

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

BENGALURU

B.V.K. Iyengar Road and Avenue Road, two major roads in Chickpet area, will be taken up for development as per TenderSURE norms under the Smart City project.

During an inspection of roads on Wednesday, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike Administrator Gaurav Gupta directed officials of Bengaluru Smart City Ltd. to draw up a master plan and a traffic diversion plan as well as a timeline for the work within a week. Officials were also directed to submit a feasibility report of developing S.J.P. Road.

Karnataka braces for Nivar impact, alert in some parts

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru/Mysuru

WITH Cyclone Nivar headed for the Tamil Nadu coast, most parts of south-interior and coastal Karnataka are expected to receive rainfall for the next two days and also witness a dip in temperature.

Speaking about Karnataka's preparedness, CM B S Yediyurappa said that the



government has taken all precautionary measures as heavy rain is expected in Bengaluru and neighbouring districts. "I have directed the district authorities to take all necessary measures.

An alert has been sounded in a few places while rescue and relief personnel have been placed on standby," he said.

The India Meteorological Department has issued a yellow alert for Bengaluru Urban, Bengaluru Rural, Kolar, Chikkaballapur, Mandya and Tumkuru districts on November 25 and 26. Meanwhile, the South Western Railways has cancelled two trains originating from Bengaluru to Chennai on Thursday.

PROTESTS PAY OFF, PETE ROADS TO BE RESTORED SOON

Bangalore Central MP PC Mohan, BBMP Administrator Gaurav Gupta visit area; traders hit by pandemic and bad infrastructure

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THERE is hope in sight for the traders of Chickpet, Mamulpet Akkipet, Balepet, Avenue Road and surrounding areas, whose businesses are reeling under twin blows: the reluctance of the public to step outside homes for shopping, and roads not restored after being dug up for various works.

Many petitions and protests later, politicians and officials visited the area on Wednesday and assured the traders that all steps will be taken up to restore the roads at the earliest.

Bangalore Central MP PC

Mohan and BBMP Administrator Gaurav Gupta were among those who visited the area.

Mohan later told TNIE, "The traders have taken a beating in their business. I have asked officials to ensure the roads are set right very soon. It will be done in a phased manner."

The Karnataka Hosiery and Garment Association had submitted a letter to Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa on November 21. Association president Dungarmal Chopra, secretary Prakash Bhojani and taxation committee chairman Sajjanraj Mehta said, "The rain has worsened the condition of the roads, causing inconvenience to shop



MP PC Mohan and BBMP Administrator Gaurav Gupta visit Chickpet on Wednesday | VINDYAKUMAR

owners, customers and other stakeholders. The bad roads make it very difficult for everyone to complete their work on a day-to-day basis." The area is a hub of over 20,000 traders who have customers coming from all over the state, country as well as abroad, the letter said.

"Considering that Chickpet is a commercial hub, the only infrastructure development is the Chickpet Metro. We want the authorities to help make this area a world-class business and trade hub," the association's office-bearers wrote to the CM. Chickpet is a central attraction for tourists, who buy garments, especially silk, here

P2

High Court reserves order on BBMP polls

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE Karnataka High Court on Wednesday reserved judgment on a batch of PILs seeking direction to hold elections to the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). A division bench of Chief Justice Abhay Shreeniwas Oka and Justice S Vishwajith Shetty reserved the order after hearing the arguments of Advocate General Prabhuling K Navadgi, who said the purpose of the amendment to the KMC Act to increase the number of wards from 198 to 243, is to ensure a proper governance model. "The legislature has not taken an overnight decision. The exist-

ing wards are highly disproportionate," he added.

He stated that legislation can be struck down only on three limited grounds – for lacking legislative competence, violating Fundamental Rights, or if found to be 'manifestly arbitrary'. In the absence of limited grounds, the government cannot be directed to ignore a law enacted by legislature.

The bench said the petitioners' contention was that elections be held as per the existing wards to avoid breach of constitutional mandate to hold the polls on time. If the amendment is taken into ac-

count, it will be contrary to Article 243-U, as elections can't be held on time, the court added.

"Article 243-U can't be read in isolation. The provisions of Part IX-A must be read as a whole and be given effect to. Proper delimitation of wards is an essential feature of the article," Navadgi said.

The bench asked him whether elections can be postponed on the grounds of creation of additional wards. "The moment we uphold the state's enactment, it will defeat the constitutional mandate to hold elections on time... Even legislature does not have power to

enact law contrary to Article 243-U," the bench said.

The AG submitted that the State government would welcome directions on the timeline for a new delimitation process, and elections held. The delay was due to the Covid pandemic, he added. Senior counsel for a petitioner Prof Ravivarma Kumar argued that the State cannot make applicable amendments to the present situation as elections are already overdue.

Senior counsel KN Phanindra, State Election Commission, submitted that the Delimitation Commission came into existence after SEC filed a PIL before court, seeking directions to hold elections.



P2

FOR A BETTER LIFE

From rags to some riches, Palike to help waste collectors

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

SAMUHIKA Shakti, a programme to address the plight and improve working condition of dry waste collectors in Bengaluru, was launched on Wednesday. The initiative, funded by Sweden-based H&M Foundation, has the support of Bruhat of Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike. BBC Media Action, CARE, Hasiru Dala, LabourNet, Save the Children, Social Alpha, WaterAid and The/

Nudge Foundation have also joined the programme.

"The vision is to enable them to have greater agency to lead secure and dignified lives," said Maria Bystedt, Strategy Lead, H&M Foundation.

BBMP Commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad said work is on to identify the waste collectors, give them identity cards and bring them under SWM rules. There should be no unorganised dry waste collectors and the BBMP is working towards it. So far, 8,000 rag-pickers have been



identified and given ID cards. The city, which has 198 wards, has 168 dry waste collection centres and work is on to set up more such centres, he added.

During a webinar on Wednes-

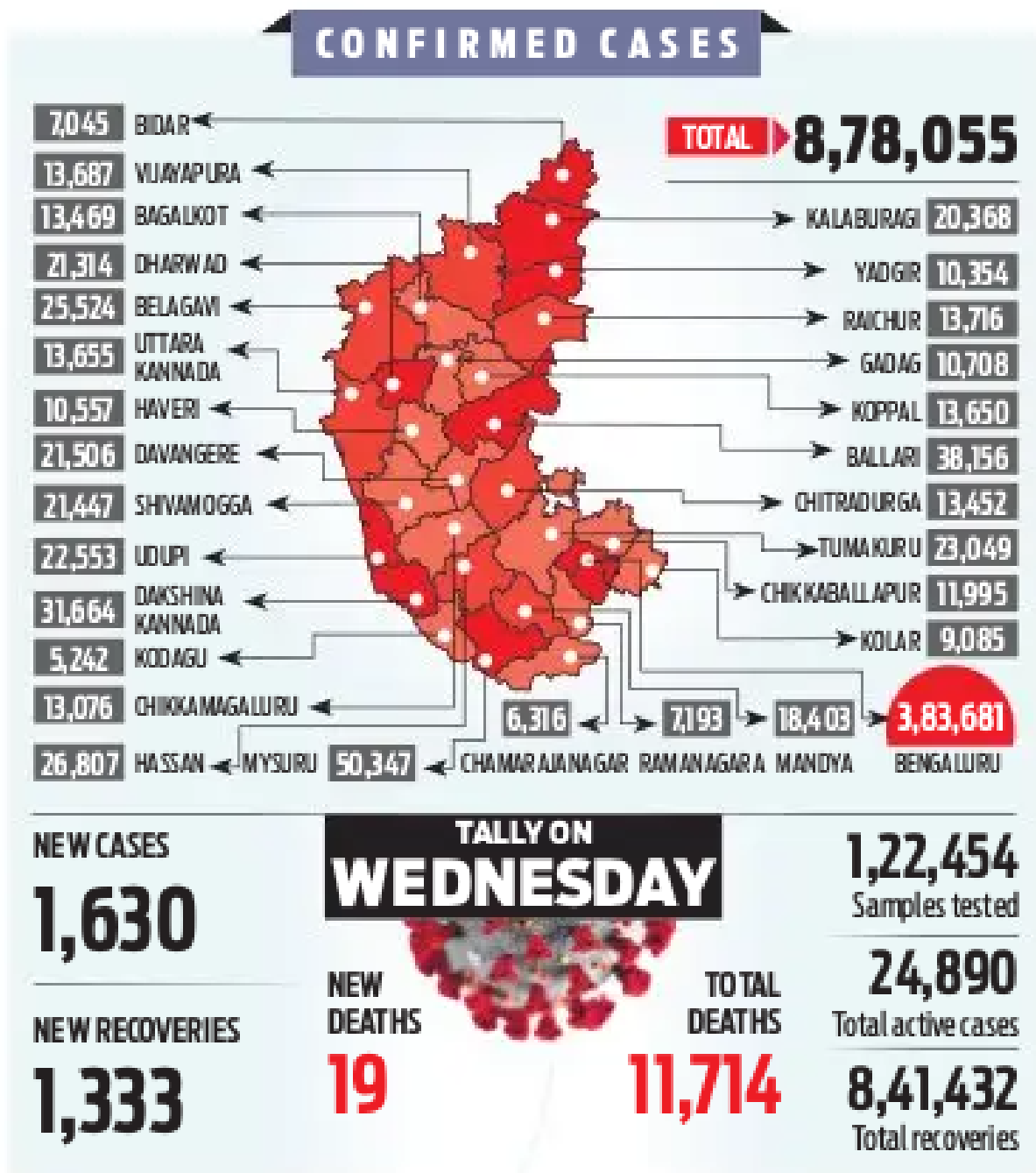
day, BBMP officials and experts accepted that the rag-pickers know the waste best and help the government save crores of rupees. Though the waster collectors are the lowest in financial hierarchy, they play a crucial role in saving this cost, they said.

BBMP Special Commissioner, SWM, D Randeep admitted that there are gaps in the system and linkages which are being filled. In the next 3-4 months, robust waste collection will be done where waste pickers and self-help groups will be aggressively

involved. The Netherlands had come forward to set up 10 dry waste centres and the plan is now to extend it to other places.

During the first three years, Samuhika Shakti will attain six key outcomes for waste pickers and their families—higher and more stable income, improved and safer working conditions, access to affordable and quality services from public and private sector, support systems for victims of violence and substance abuse, and more respect and recognition for their work.

P2



P3

BBMP pilot study on Covid patients under way

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

BRUHAT Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike officials are conducting a pilot study of Covid patients at select primary health centres, as the number of people with complications during Covid-19 and after they recover is growing.

The study, being done with experts, includes people associated with primary health centres (PHCs) located in Malleswaram, Siddaiah Road, Ulsoor, Srirampura, Hosahalli and Banshankari, BBMP spe-

cial commissioner for health, Rajendra Cholan said on Wednesday.

He was speaking during a virtual interaction with resident welfare associations and citizens titled 'Reboot Bengaluru: Agenda to learn what BBMP is doing to flatten the Covid-19 curve and discuss how Bengalureans can join hands with the BBMP to hasten the process'. It was organised by Namma Bengaluru Foundation.

The study is being undertaken to ensure the right treatment is given to people at home after they recover, Cholan said. The



results will be implemented after they are ready and approved by the government, he said.

The system of releasing test reports, especially ones where the result is negative, has been

decentralised. All labs and test centres have now been streamlined and reports are made available in 8-32 hours. The BBMP has decided to set up two stationary test centres in each ward - at the PHC, and ward office - so that people know where to get themselves tested and obtain results. The GPS locations of these centres are being uploaded on to the BBMP website.

Mobile test units will now shift focus to people with comorbidities, slum areas and others in need.

Cholan also said that while the number of cases is on the

decline, the resources available on the ground are huge. So, the whole system is now being streamlined with a focus on identifying and testing people with comorbidities and people aged above 60 as the winter months are crucial, he said.

BBMP is also improving the process of issuing home isolation certificates and ensuring that such people get adequate care. Talks are also on with colleges to set up test centres instead of deploying mobile test vehicles. So far, 480 mobile teams have tested 33,000 students in colleges.

P3

Night curfew not likely in K'taka

Situation doesn't warrant it as cases are on decline, says health commissioner



A BBMP squad on Avenue Road, in Bengaluru on Wednesday | VINOD KUMAR T

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

KARNATAKA is unlikely to impose lockdowns even though states can do so under guidelines released by the Ministry of Home Affairs on Wednesday.

The guidelines, effective for December, allow states and Union Territories to impose lockdowns and night curfews based on their assessment, but Karnataka is not likely to exercise such options, Health Commissioner Pankaj Kumar Pandey told *TNIE*. "It is an option, but the situation at present doesn't warrant it. As for new containment and surveillance guidelines, we are already implementing most of them," he said.

A local lockdown outside a containment zone can be imposed only after consultation with the Centre. After the nationwide lockdown was lifted, the state government had reimposed a lockdown between July 12-22. Cases spiked in July-September, but began to

a decline from October. From a peak of around 10,000 cases a day, the number has now come down to 1,000 cases each day.

The central guidelines say that the list of containment zones will be notified on websites run by the district administration.

"There shall be strict perimeter control to ensure that there is no movement of people in or out of these zones, except for medical emergencies and for maintaining supply of essential goods and services. There shall be intensive house-to-house surveillance. Testing shall be carried out as per protocol. Listing of contacts shall be carried out in respect of all persons found positive, along with their tracking, identification, quarantine and follow up of contacts for 14 days, with 80% of contacts to be traced in 72 hours," the guidelines said.

In the past week, Mandya, Gadag, Bidar, Dakshina Kannada and Chamarajanagar districts performed the best on contact tracing.

Staying safe with sanitiser

● **Roshne
Balasubramanian**

Wash your hands for a minimum of 30 seconds with soap and water after touching any surface', 'Do not touch your face, mouth and nose', 'Use a hand sanitiser to curb the spread of the virus'... Over the last eight months, people across the globe have, like never before, been mindful of their hand hygiene – washing and sanitising it at regular intervals. However, the growing paranoia of contracting the novel coronavirus through surface touch has effectively led to increased use of hand sanitisers, potentially increasing its effects on the skin. Dr Deepika Lunawat, consultant, Dermatology/Cosmetology, Fortis Malar Hospital, in Chennai, shares what the frequent use of sanitisers can do to the skin.

Rips off moisture

It's been advised to use sanitisers with at least 60 per cent alcohol to clean your hand. Although following the mandate is essential, excessively using sanitisers and constantly spraying it on the hands and palms, can lead the alcohol content in it to rip the skin off its natural moisturising factor. This will make the skin more prone to dermatitis.

KEEP IN MIND

To prevent any damage, use soap and water to clean the hands, instead of picking a hand sanitiser. Make it a mindful practice to use a sanitiser only if soap and water aren't immediately available. After every handwash and after using a sanitiser, ensure to apply a moisturiser to your hand. Hyaluronic acid in moisturising creams will provide a hydrating film to the skin, protecting it from dryness, cracks and blisters. The goodness of moisturiser can be furthered by covering the hands with cotton gloves (before going to bed). This will add on to the moisturising effect. For those who don't have access to moisturisers, oil and ghee can also be used.

Risk of eczema

Over usage of sanitisers can increase contact with irritants and allergens, increasing the risk of eczema. This often manifests in the form of dryness of the skin, redness, blisters, cracks and can also lead to itching. People who already suffer from the condition will become more prone to flareups.

Causes allergic reaction

Some sanitisers have the

presence of an antibacterial and antifungal agent called triclosan. Excessive use of this could be a possible health hazard, leading to allergic reactions, while also making one antibiotic-resistant. The now prevailing cold weather will only further burden the condition. Some studies also project that excessive use may cause hormonal issues/imbalance, affect the immune system, affect fertility and foetal health, among others.



MHA: Stagger office timings if city positivity rate crosses 10%

Says States Free To Impose Night Curfews

BhartiJain@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: Seeking to consolidate the gains achieved against the spread of Covid-19 and tackle the recent spike in cases in a few states and UTs, the home ministry on Wednesday updated guidelines that called for staggered timings in offices in cities clocking a positivity rate of more than 10%.

The Centre also gave states leeway to impose local restrictions like night curfews, depending on their assessment of the situation. Importantly, with crowded markets and weekly bazaars emerging as a

NO SEALING OF STATE BORDERS

► OK to impose night curfew, but MHA nod must for lockdown outside containment zones. **Inter-state borders can't be sealed**

► **Tracking, quarantine, 14-day follow-up of all contacts of +ve people must; 80% of contacts to be traced within 72 hours**

► **MHA for staggered office timings in cities with weekly case positivity rate of over 10%**

AVERAGE DAILY POSITIVITY RATE (%)

Delhi	11.2
Pune	11
Mumbai	6
Gurgaon	9.5
Faridabad	11.6
Ghaziabad	4.3
Bengaluru	1.8
Last one week figures	

top concern, the guidelines for December have asked the health ministry to issue standard operating procedures (SOP) to regulate visitors thronging marketplaces. The SOPs are to be "strictly enforced by states and UTs".

States and UTs have been advised to enforce social distancing in offices, both private

and government. "In cities where the weekly case positivity rate is more than 10%, states and UTs concerned shall consider implementing staggered office timings, with a view to reduce employees attending office at the same time," the guidelines said.

While the new norms retained the cap on attendees at

MBBS physical class may start from Dec 1

The National Medical Commission (NMC) has recommended medical colleges may resume physical classes for MBBS students on or before Dec 1 and start the 2020-21 academic and PG sessions from Feb 1 and July 1 respectively. The PG-NEET may take place in March-April. **P 16**

social, religious, entertainment, sports and cultural gatherings in closed spaces at 50% of hall capacity with a ceiling of 200, they also allowed states and UTs to reduce this ceiling further to 100 people or less, based on their assessment.

► **Need of the hour, P 16**

P1

Containment zones in B'luru fall from 40k to 2 in 3 months

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The Karnataka capital, which once reported the highest number of Covid-19 cases in the country for several days at a stretch, now has only two containment zones—down from 40,563 in August.

"Bengaluru was never prepared for a pandemic and we were only reacting (to it). All issues have now been streamlined," Rajendra Cholan, BBMP special commissioner (health and IT), said at a webinar organized on Wednesday by Namma Bengaluru Foundation in association with RWAs and BBMP health offi-

60% govt-referred patients opted for pvt hosps

While government hospitals had near monopoly over Covid-19 management in the first three months of the pandemic and private hospitals started treating the infections only in late June, the latter have treated three out of every five patients referred by public authorities, reports **Sunitha Rao R.** According to data till November 23, the government sent 73,511 patients (57.2%) to private hospitals, and got 54,925 (42.8%) treated at its institutions. The cost of treatment was envisaged at Rs 484 crore in private hospitals and Rs 114 crore at government hospitals. So far, private hospitals have been reimbursed Rs 146.6 crore for treating 35,187 people. **P 4**

cial to throw light on the pandemic management.

"We've reduced the testing target to 30,000 from the earlier 50,000. This is because the positivity rate has come down drastically," Cholan added.

According to data presented at the webinar, Mahadevapura zone has the highest positivity rate at 2.3% followed by RR Nagar 2%. South and west zones, considered hotspots earlier, has a positivity rate of 1.3%.

P1

B'LURU WATCH

Covid figures as on Nov 25

Cases	Active	Cured	Deaths
3,66,233	18,360	3,43,771	4,102

BBMP administrator seeks report on Avenue Rd upkeep

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Chethan Shivakumar

Bengaluru: Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) administrator Gaurav Gupta on Wednesday directed civic officials to come up with a time schedule pertaining to development of Avenue Road under the Smart City project.

The kilometre-long road, which connects KR Market with Majestic and is the nerve centre of the city's retail hub, is all set to get a facelift along with other important roads in the area. Gupta, who



CLOSE LOOK: BBMP administrator Gaurav Gupta inspects Avenue Road on Monday. He has sought a report within seven days

ONE-WEEK DEADLINE

inspected Chickpet and Cottonpet areas along with Bengaluru Central MP, PC Mohan, told the officials to submit a report on Avenue Road within a week's time after incorporating all the design-related changes. "Take steps to identify alternative routes to divert traffic and commence work at the earliest," he told the civic officials.

The administrator also took note of the complaints related to water-logging and broken pavements on SJP Road and directed his team to come up with a feasibility report on taking up works on the busy stretch that is dotted with hardware, metal and electrical stores.

Earlier, traders alleged civic apathy and maintained that roads in the area were riddled with potholes and the pavements were not fit for walking. "Even a small spell of rain leaves the roads water-logged for hours, making it difficult for people to move around," they alleged.

Hosp treats Covid with HIV drug, says results promising

Sumitha.Rao@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: Thymosin Alpha, a drug used to treat hepatitis, HIV and some forms of cancer, is being used to treat mild to severe Covid-19 infections at a private hospital in Bengaluru. Doctors say the drug restores immune T cells and reduces the possibility of a cytokine storm.

At Sagar Hospitals, Jayanagar, more than 200 patients in the 40-60 years age group have been administered the drug by a critical care team and the results have been encouraging, doctors say.

The hospital first began using the drug for Covid on July 15. Each vial costs Rs 1,300 and contains 1.6mg of the drug. Two doses are administered daily for seven days and patients have to sign a consent form.

Dr R Ravi Kumar, consultant intensivist and head ICU & critical care, Sagar Group of Hospitals, said the success rate is 85%. While 50% of the patients suffered mild to moderate infection, the rest were severe cases.

"There is no definite treatment for Covid," said Dr Kumar. "Covid reduces immunity of patients drastically and for any antiviral drug to work effectively we need an



KEEPING PRESSURE UP: BBMP health workers converted a bus shelter into a swab sample collection booth in Bengaluru on Wednesday

immuno modulator. That's where Thymosin comes in. However, a trial on 1,000 patients is still in progress. On the 200 patients on whom it has been used, it has shown encouraging results."

He said the drug has helped a majority of patients stay off a ventilator and it has no side effects. However, the hospital did not divulge the exact number of patients who survived after being administered the drug. "Once we complete treating 1,000 patients with this drug, we will submit a research paper to an international journal," Dr Kumar said.

At the moment, the drug is

being used only on patients who seek admission on their own, and not those referred by BBMP. It is not part of the clinical protocol set by the Technical Advisory Committee in the state. Not many hospitals use the drug.

Dr Anoop Amarnath, geriatrician and member of the government's Covid management Critical Care Support Team (CCST), said only a few studies have been published on this molecule. "Thymosin modulates innate immunity and has a beneficial effect on T cells, but more data is required before prescribing it as standard treatment. It is not part of CCST

protocol," said Dr Amarnath.

Dr Ravindra Mehta, pulmonologist and member of the expert committee, BBMP, says he is unconvinced about Thymosin's efficacy. "It was a challenge to keep trying these drugs with minimal data on its benefits," said Dr Mehta.

Dr Pradeep Rangappa, critical care specialist and CCST member, said all evidence on the efficacy of the drug is anecdotal, while Dr S Sachchidanand, vice-chancellor, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Chest Diseases, who spearheads the clinical team in the task force, said: "There are certain drugs mentioned in the protocol which clinicians can use on an experimental basis at their discretion. Thymosin is not one of them. We have not allowed for deviations. Clinicians should stick to protocol."

Dr Sachchidanand said it was fine if it is a clinical trial and necessary permissions have been obtained.

Dr Kumar said the Directorate General of Health Services' Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) has recommended Phase 3 clinical trial of Thymosin Alpha for Covid-19 patients. "Clinical studies are on and Sagar Hospitals is one of the centres," said Dr Kumar.

3 out of every 5 patients referred by govt went to private hospitals

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Bengaluru: Private hospitals, nowhere in the frame in the initial stages of the pandemic, have now treated nearly three out of every five infected patients referred to hospitals by the government and will have run up bills amounting to four times the sum raised by state-run hospitals.

As on Monday (Nov 23), data shows the government had issued pre-authorisation for a total 1,28,436 Covid cases to be treated in government and private hospitals. Pre-authorisation means the government pays for treatment.

Of them, 73,511 patients (57.2%) were treated in private hospitals at government cost, while 54,925 (42.8%) were treated in government institutions. This is remarkable considering most patients were being treated in government institutions till late June, when 50% of beds in private establishments were earmarked for Covid patients referred by public authorities.

The cost of treatment for pre-authorised patients in private hospitals was Rs 484 crore, as against Rs 114 crore for government hospitals. In Bengaluru alone, 52,967 patients were referred to hospitals and a majority of them were sent to private hospitals.

So far, private hospitals



SAFELY DRESSED: A professor (left) arrives with a student for a class at Maharani College for Women in Bengaluru

and medical colleges have been reimbursed Rs 146.6 crore for having treated 35,187 people, while government hospitals have got Rs 19.7 crore for treating 14,564 patients. The rest of the bills are in various stages of payment.

While officials say pre-authorisation was issued based on availability of beds, location of hospitals and the nature of emergency, they admit that in several cases patients' choice was accommodated.

"The first preference was government beds, but government hospitals have fewer beds than private hospitals," said BBMP commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad, who insisted that the pressure to allocate a bed in private hospitals was

seen only in 4-5% of cases.

Pankaj Kumar Pandey, commissioner, health and family welfare department, claimed the main reason why data is skewed in favour of private hospitals is because they have more number of beds.

"We also reserved beds in government hospitals for non-Covid patients too," Pandey said. "Bed availability in many taluk hospitals was limited and infected people were sent to private hospitals for treatment. When given a choice, patients may have preferred private hospitals based on their perception."

Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association (PHANA) said it does not have precise data on the num-

ber of patients referred to the private hospitals.

"Once private hospitals began admitting Covid-19 cases, patients needing ICU and critical care were sent to us," Dr HM Prasanna, president, PHANA, said. "Data suggests nearly 70% of healthcare nationally is delivered by the private healthcare sector. This could be true of Covid too. While 1/3rd of the cases are handled by the government, close to 2/3rd are taken care of by private players."

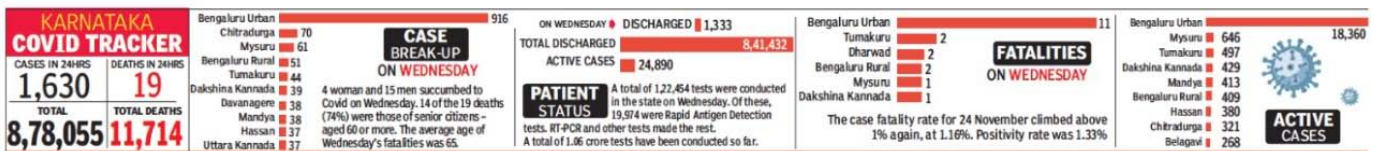
Dr Prasanna said many patients chose private hospitals largely because they needed better infrastructure and treatment. "Once private hospitals joined the fray, the mortality rate began declining," he said.

However, Pandey said treatment in private hospitals was often not up to the mark.

"We received several complaints about shoddy treatment in private hospitals and we intervened. Perception may have blotted out actual facts," Pandey said.

Now, with cases on the decline, the government has decided not to refer patients to the private sector unless 90% beds in government hospitals are filled. It only refers severe cases. "In case there is a second wave, we will resume 50% of bed sharing, as discussed with the government," PHANA members said.

P2



DISPARITY RULES Drug Not Part Of State Protocol: Authorities | Cost Of Care In Pvt Facilities 4 Times More Than Public Hospitals' Bill

P4

Jalahalli underpass work won't disrupt traffic: Palike

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Bengaluru: BBMP is making arrangements to ensure traffic movement is not restricted during construction of a grade separator at Jalahalli Cross, the intersection of Subroto Mukherjee Road and Tumakuru Road.

The civic agency has proposed constructing the underpass using the tunnelling and contiguous piling method for the first time to make sure vehicular movement can continue at the busy junction even as work goes on underground. According to officials, the underpass will be built by burrowing a tunnel and its retaining walls by using contiguous piles. The dry and cohesive soil at the spot is said to be apt to take up such work.

ALTERNATIVE METHOD

The proposal involves construction of a four-lane divided bi-directional underpass along Subroto Mukherjee Road and Peenya Industrial Ring Road, across NH-4. It will include a 7.5m-wide slip road and 3m-wide footpath along with a drain and utility pipes towards the Gangamma Circle side and 11m-wide slip road and 3m-wide sidewalk along with a drain and utility pipes towards Peenya Industrial Area side at grade level.

"Traffic volume at this junction is significant and there is no alternative route available to divert it," said BS Prahallad, chief engineer, BBMP (roads).

The junction is in the middle of a thickly populated area which teems



INFRA HURDLES: Traffic problems during the Kundalahalli underpass work prompted BBMP to look for an alternative technique

with industrial and commercial establishments and residential pockets and witnesses a large footfall. Given the volume of motorised traffic at the junction, pedestrians face grave risks.

"This project is the need of the hour. It will have four subways for easy movement of pedestrians," the chief engineer added. Acquisition of 10,432sqm of area has been completed. The total cost of the project is Rs 108 crore and it's expected to be completed within a year. Work will begin in a month.

BBMP officials said the Kundalahalli underpass method can't be used here and hence the new technique. "The open-cut method in Kundalahalli was a disaster as the work is still under way and there are only two service roads available for commuters, which are chock-a-block with vehicles. Delay in land acquisition also complicated problems," Prahallad said.

2 containment zones, 95% recovery rate in city: BBMP

Bengaluru: After having had 40,563 Covid-19 containment zones in August, Bengaluru now has only two. This captures the pandemic trajectory in the IT capital, senior BBMP officials said at a webinar on Wednesday.

The event was organised by Namma Bengaluru Foundation in association with RWAs and BBMP health officials to throw light on pandemic management. Bengaluru's recovery rate is over 95% and this is a positive thing, said Rajendra Cholan, BBMP special commissioner health and IT.

Till November 23, Bengaluru reported 3,65,317 positive cases and 3,43,169 of them have recovered. With 4,091 deaths, the mortality rate is 1.1 per cent. There have been complaints, though, about test reports not being sent in time, delaying people's plans to travel or return to work.

"We've resolved the issue now. Earlier data was given to the state agencies and they were to send the details, but now we have rerouted it to PHCs and the BBMP war room. We'll give these details to the people in less than 24 hours," Cholan said. TNN

4 yrs on, ORR Metro awaits Centre's nod

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Bengaluru: It's been a month since two firms emerged the lowest bidders for the Silk Board-KR Puram section on Outer Ring Road Metro corridor. However, Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited is yet to award tenders due to delay in getting the Centre's approval for the project.

In December 2019, BMRCL floated a tender for the 19-km elevated stretch (Light Blue Line) with 13 stations along ORR, but it was later put on hold due to delay in getting nod from the Centre.

Last month, BMRCL opened bids after chief minister BS Yediyurappa gave the green signal. Mumbai-based Afcons Infrastructure Limited emerged the lowest bidder with Rs 785 crore for the first package — 9.8km elevated section with six stations (Central Silk Board Junction, HSR Layout, Agara Junction, Iblur Junction, Bellandur, Kadubeesanahalli and construction of a 2.8m flyover at Central Silk Board).

Bengaluru-based Shankaranarayana Constructions Pvt Ltd was the lowest bidder with Rs 623 crore for the second package — 9.7km elevated section with seven stations (Kodibisanahalli, Marathahalli, ISRO Layout, Dooda-

BMRCL had prepared a project report for the ORR Metro in 2016 at a cost Rs 4,202 cr and the section was to be operational by 2021

nekkundi, DRDO Sports Complex, Saraswathi Nagar (Mahadevapura) and KR Puram and a 2km link line to Byappanahalli depot).

BMRCL had prepared a detailed project report for the ORR Metro in 2016 at a cost Rs 4,202 crore and the section was to be operational by 2021. It had planned to commence civil works in December 2020 and they were expected to be completed in 2024-25.

The line is crucial for the city as it passes through the IT corridor housing several multinational companies. However, the ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA) is turning a blind eye despite BJP being in power in both at the Centre and the state.

"We have been trying to get the Centre's approval for ORR Metro for the past three and a half years, but only now it is reaching the approval stage," said a senior BMRCL official.

Experts say BMRCL could have started construction without major traffic disruptions since most companies along

'Will protest if infra work not over before Metro line opens'

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: While Kanakapura Road (Yelachenahalli-Anjanapura) Metro section is all set to be inaugurated, residents from the locality have threatened to stage a protest over delay in completion of infrastructure work by BMRCL.

The commissioner of Metro rail safety on Monday gave the nod for extension of Green Line (Nagasandra-Yelachenahalli) operations up to Anaja-

RESIDENTS' THREAT

napura. However, residents say only about 40% of road and footpath work has been done so far. "We will protest if the Metro line is opened without completion of the work," said a founder-member of Changemakers of Kanakapura Road (CMKR).

Abdul Aleem, convener of CMKR, said: "We conducted a survey of Kanakapura Road from Sarakki Junction to NICE Road Junction on Wednesday.

ORR are working from home due to Covid-19. Vishwanath Seetharam, founder-secretary of Outer Ring Road Companies Association, said: "This is the right time to start work since



NEW ADDITION: The Kanakapura Road (Yelachenahalli-Anjanapura) section may open by December 15

We found only 40% of the civil work has been completed and asphaltting has just started."

A BMRCL official said work on developing non-motorised transport infrastructure along the section got delayed due to the pandemic. "It will be completed after commissioning of the line," he added.

70% of employees are working remotely. They should take up this corridor on priority and complete it before techies and other office-goers return to the city after a vaccine is ready."

Not paid for 6 months, say pourakarmikas

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Bengaluru: Pourakarmikas across the city have been complaining that they haven't received payments for six months, but the BBMP claims a minuscule number of employees are affected due to systemic issues.

"I've been working through the pandemic, but BBMP has not paid me a single paise for six months now. We're also not getting any health benefits," said a pourakarmika from Jayanagar.

Another worker from Kavalbyrasandra said her family has piled up debts as she is not getting salary. "My friends and I've been working regularly and we registered our attendance on the biometric system, but contractors vandalise these machines and claim we never worked. When we complain to senior health inspectors, they ask us to speak to the contractors. But they threaten to remove us from our jobs, which is worrisome," she added.

"There are stray cases of pourakarmikas not receiving salaries," Randeep D, special com-

Will look into issue



The biometric system will be updated soon. We'll then know how many pourakarmikas are actually working with BBMP and how many haven't got payment

Randeep D | SPECIAL
COMMISSIONER, SWM

missioner, SWM, said, adding such cases will be handled individually. According to Randeep, the number of pourakarmikas in the city has come down post the Covid-19 outbreak.

"We initially had 18,500 pourakarmikas, but now the number might be 11,000 or 13,000 as many have quit and some have not resumed work," he added. There could be others called by engineers for work but who are not registered in the biometric system. Their attendance could have been taken through a register, he said, adding the matter will be looked into and wages released.

HC reserves verdict on PILs on BBMP polls

Bengaluru: The high court on Wednesday reserved its verdict on a batch of petitions seeking directions for conducting BBMP elections.

This was after advocate general Prabhuling K Navadgi replied to the contentions raised by the petitioners, which included the State Election Commission (SEC) and several ex-corporators.

The AG claimed in the absence of a proper challenge, the recent amendment to Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act, 1976 through which BBMP wards were increased from 198 to 243 cannot be ignored as it has now become a valid law, enacted by the state legislature.

Asserting that the state government is not against holding timely elections, he said the court can monitor the process by stipulating timelines within which the new delimitation process and subsequent polls are to be held. The delay was only due to the pandemic, he added. **TNN**

MHA: Need of the hour is to follow containment strategy

► Continued from page 1

The MHA guidelines did not indicate the maximum number of guests or attendees allowed at gatherings in open spaces, only saying this may be fixed keeping in view the size of the ground.

The order allowed states and UTs to consider administrative actions, including imposition of appropriate fines, on those not wearing face masks in public places and work. The guidelines not only put the onus on local district, police and municipal authorities to ensure adherence to prescribed containment measures, but also required state and UT governments to ensure accountability of officers. While local restrictions can be imposed, local lockdowns need



For containment zones, the MHA norms prescribed intensive house-to-house surveillance by special teams

the Centre's permission.

The new norms allow all activities permitted earlier outside containment zones, with restrictions. These include international air travel as permitted by the MHA, cinema halls and theatres with up to 50% capacity, swimming pools only for training of

sportspersons and business-to-business exhibitions. Noting that the number of active cases in the country had fallen steadily from over 10 lakh cases on September 18 to less than 4.5 lakh, the ministry said cases were rising in some states and UTs in the last few weeks. It said the need of the

hour was to maintain caution and strictly follow the prescribed containment strategy focused on surveillance, containment and strict observation of guidelines.

For containment zones, the MHA norms prescribed intensive house-to-house surveillance by special teams, aggressive testing, listing of contacts, along with tracking, identification, quarantine and follow-up of contacts for 14 days, with 80% contacts to be traced in 72 hours followed by quick isolation of Covid-19 patients.

The guidelines seek to encourage organisations and business entities with 50 or more employees to avail of the Aarogya Setu OpenAPI service, saying this will facilitate them to return to work in a Covid-19 free environment.

No Lockdown, States to Decide on Local Curbs

Rules will be effective from Dec 1 to 31; states to consult Centre before imposing lockdown

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New Delhi: The Centre on Wednesday empowered the states and Union Territories to impose local restrictions including night curfew, but said they have to consult the Union government before imposing any lockdown outside containment zones.

The new guidelines will be effective from December 1 to 31 and have been drafted to prevent large gatherings at weddings and during Christmas and New Year celebrations. Home ministry officials said the directives were formulated after consulting health experts and law enforcement agencies.

"States and UTs, based on their assessment of the situation, may impose local restrictions with a view

to contain the spread of Covid-19 such as night curfew. However, state and UT governments shall not impose any local lockdown (state/district/sub-division/city level) outside the containment zones without prior consultation with the Central government," according to the guidelines.

Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab have already imposed night cur-

few, but asked the state governments to ensure accountability of the officials.

"Listing of contacts shall be carried out in respect of all persons found positive, along with their tracking, identification, quarantine and follow-up of contacts for 14 days. Quick isolation of Covid-19 patients shall be ensured in treatment facilities," it stated.

The home ministry said the focus of the directives is to consolidate the substantial gains that have been achieved in curbing the spread of Covid-19, which are visible in the steady decline in number of active cases in the country. According to the guidelines, keeping in view the recent spike in new cases in some states and UTs, the ongoing festival season and the onset of winter, it is emphasised that to fully overcome the pandemic there is a need to maintain caution and to strictly follow the prescribed containment strategy.

The containment strategy should be focussed on surveillance, containment and strict observance of the guidelines and SOPs issued by the home and health ministries, according to the order.

CONTAINING THE SPREAD



States and UTs may impose local restrictions, such as night curfew, with a view to contain the spread of Covid-19

few. In its order for "Surveillance, Containment and Caution" for December, the home ministry empowered local authorities including the police and district and municipal authorities in containment zones to strictly

Ambulance drivers have been slogging since the beginning of the pandemic. But they haven't been paid for four months now

THE EXPENDABLES



KASHIK JIN & ANANTHA SUBRAMANIAM

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A few months ago, people were crying out for ambulances. But now, as covid numbers are falling and the healthcare system seems to be in better control of the pandemic, the ambulance drivers are crying out for help. Most of them who risked their lives driving covid patients to the hospital, have not been paid salaries from July.

Some of these drivers were recruited under duress – stopped on the road and threatened to join covid duty in July – after the Chief Minister of Karnataka announced that 200 ambulances would be



added to its fleet. But now their condition is pitiable.

Death and debt

Ramakrishna, a 50-year-old covid ambulance driver worked for an agency in Doddaballapur



but would ferry patients for free in Pavagada, his hometown, on the weekends. Unfortunately, he succumbed to covid in August but his son, Tarun, 23, is still waiting for the agency to settle his salary, pending from July.



Said Tarun, "It was very difficult to find ambulances in our town and my father stepped in to drive patients to the hospital without charging them money. We owned one vehicle.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4 >>

State records 1,630 C+ cases, 19 deaths

Bangalore Mirror Bureau
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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

Karnataka added 1,630 new cases of covid-19 and 19 deaths taking the total infection count to 8,78,055 and the death toll to 11,714, the health department said on Wednesday.

The day also saw 1,333 patients getting discharged after recovery, leaving 24,890 active cases. Bengaluru Urban district continued to account for a major share of the cases as it reported 916 infections on Wednesday.

Cumulatively, 8,78,055 covid cases have been confirmed and these include 11,714 deaths and 8,41,432 discharges, the health department said in its bulletin. Of the

active cases, 24,485 patients are stable in isolation at designated hospitals while 405 are in intensive care units, it said.

Eleven of the fresh deaths were from Bengaluru Urban. Other districts that reported fresh cases included Chitradurga (70), Mysuru (61), and Bengaluru Rural (51).

Bengaluru Urban district tops the list of positive cases, with a total of 3,66,233 infections, followed by Mysuru 50,347 and Ballari 38,156.

Among discharges, Bengaluru Urban again tops the list with a total of 3,43,771 discharges, followed by Mysuru at 48,708 and Ballari at 37,318.

A total of 1,05,70,159 samples have been tested so far, out of which 1,22,454 were tested on Wednesday alone.

P2

Though most of these roads are narrow, the locality with over 20,000 commercial establishments of all kinds, has been a go-to shopping destination for many due to the availability of a wide variety of items at cheaper rates.

During the inspection, Gupta directed officials to work with the police and prepare a traffic diversion plan in order to execute the project with minimal disruption. The stretch, which connects KR Market and KG Road, is being developed by the Bangalore Smart City Pvt Ltd. Traders had also requested the BBMP to develop BVK Iyengar Road at par with Church Street and Commercial Street.

Road restoration

Among the key demands raised by



traders was the restoration of roads dug up by the BWSSB for laying sewage pipelines. "After 15 years, the BWSSB has started replacing old pipelines. Many of the roads including Mamulpet, Sultanpet, OTC Road, Akkipet and Balepet are left unattended to after being dug up.

PC Mohan, Bengaluru Central MP, and Gaurav Gupta, BBMP administrator, visited Chickpet on Wednesday to take stock of the situation

“ Many roads such as Mamulpet, OTC Road, Sultanpet, Akkipet and Balepet are left unattended to. These roads are not getting enough attention from BBMP

—Sajjan Raj Mehta, trader

These roads are not getting as much attention as they deserve from the BBMP," Sajjan Raj Mehta, a trader from Chickpet said.

Gupta directed officials to prepare a master plan for the area with regard to improving drainage system and road so that the roads are

not dug up after they are restored. He also assured traders that the desilting of the drains along the roads would be taken up once the BWSSB completes its work.

As most of the roads in Chickpet are narrow and also attract huge crowds, the roads are always jammed with vehicles.

Some citizens want the BBMP to convert some of these roads only for pedestrians, an experiment introduced in Commercial Street on weekends.

Watch this story come alive on your device by scanning this QR code



P3

BBMP's grand plan: Give Avenue Rd more leg room

Chickpet road to get uniform carriageways, pavements a la Church Street

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A Chickpet with lots of space for vehicles and pedestrians? Don't pinch yourself, this may not be a dream. The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) plans to upgrade one of the three main roads in the thickly-packed Chickpet. The road will be developed along the TenderSURE model with uniform carriageways and a good pavement for pedestrians.

The BBMP has already developed the Cottonpete Main Road, much to the delight of traders and a 1-km stretch of BVK Iyengar Road is likely to be taken up next.

On Wednesday, Bengaluru Central MP PC Mohan and BBMP Administrator Gaurav Gupta took stock of the condition of roads and the drainage system in Chickpet along with officials from different departments.

Though most of these roads are narrow, the locality with over 20,000 commercial establishments of all kinds, has been a go-to shopping destination for many due to the availability of a wide variety of items at cheaper rates.

During the inspection, Gupta directed officials to work with the police and prepare a traffic diversion plan in order to execute the project with minimal disruption. The stretch, which connects KR Market and KG Road, is being



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Some citizens want the BBMP to convert some of these roads only for pedestrians, an experiment introduced in Commercial Street on weekends.

Ambulance drivers have not been paid for 4 months

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

He had been driving from March to July and then they asked him to pick up patients in Doddaballapur. He had a loan of Rs. 2 lakh loan, just for diesel expenses which has still not been paid by the agency. The agency has still not settled his salary. He was even awarded the Rajyostava Prashasti in Pavagada for his service to society. In August, he succumbed to covid after spending four days in a Tumkur Hospital ICU. We're struggling to pay off the loans."

Another ambulance driver, Keshav, a resident of Byrasandra sold his ambulance to pay for his mother's treatment. Keshav said that he has not been paid since September. "I didn't have money (Rs 2 lakh) to pay for my mother's knee surgery. So I sold my ambulance for Rs. 1 lakh. I'm still waiting for the agency to clear my dues of Rs 1,20,000. I have borrowed money to meet my daily needs," said Keshav.

Basavaraj, 28, a resident of Dasarahalli near Magadi Road, used to ferry covid patients to hospital since July. But after August, Basavaraj, has not be paid. "I have to look after my parents. I don't have money to fill diesel in my ambu-

“ I have been advised a surgery for kidney stones but I have delayed it as I don't have money. I drive the ambulance in pain. I have three school going children to look after

—Venkatesh

“ I have been advised a surgery for kidney stones but I have delayed it as I don't have money. I drive the ambulance in pain. I have three school going children to look after

—Venkatesh

lance. I have had to sell my mother's jewellery. I didn't even have money for regular vehicle maintenance. We were told that we would get paid on time. I believed the agency pledged my mother's gold jewelry for Rs. 1.5 lakh. Every time we ask for our salary, they stall and ask us to wait for a week."

Venkatesh, 38, a resident of Pavagada in Tumkur, drives ambulances in Doddaballapur and Yelahanka. He said, "I have been advised a surgery for kidney stones but I have delayed it because I don't have money. I drive the ambulance in pain. I have three school going children to look after. They have not paid us since July. I have pawned my wife's and my sister's jewellery."

Anand G who drives an ambulance that transports covid bodies in Doddaballapur said that he had taken loan against his ambulance about three months back hoping he could repay it with his salary. With his salary delayed, he received a notice that his vehicle will be seized. "I reside with my parents and grandmother. I have not been able to pay my house rent for five months. We have not been paid a salary since August. This will bring us to ruin."

When BBMP Commissioner, Manjunath Prasad was asked about this, he said, "There could be a little delay of a month or two and not more than that but I will find out why their salaries have not been cleared."

New Covid norms out for surge states

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Tracing and tracking 80% of contacts of a Covid-19 patient in 72 hours and allowing states to implement staggered office timings in cities with higher positivity rate besides imposing measures like night curfew are among the Centre's new guidelines to tackle the surging pandemic.

States are also allowed to restrict the number of people attending social, religious, sports, entertainment, educational, cultural and other gatherings to 100 in closed places from the existing ceiling of 200 based on the situation.

The 'Guidelines for Surveillance, Containment and Caution', issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Wednesday against the backdrop of rising Covid-19 cases following the festival season and onset of winter, will come into effect on December 1 and be in place till the month-end.

According to the guidelines, all activities, except a few, are allowed outside containment zones. International air traffic, barring those allowed by the MHA, will remain suspended while



CURBING SPREAD

- Track 80% contacts in 3 days
- Staggered office timings
- Night curfew
- Cap on gatherings
- International flights on hold
- Define containment zones

swimming pools will continue to be allowed only for training of sports persons. Exhibition halls will be allowed only for 'business to business' events.

The guidelines come a day after Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a video conference with Chief Ministers on tackling the Covid-19 situation.

Order reserved on BBMP polls

BENGALURU, DHNS: The high court has reserved its order on a batch of petitions for holding BBMP elections immediately.

The BBMP polls should have been held by now as the term of the last council ended on September 10, 2020. The government has delayed the elections citing the amendment to the Karnataka Municipal Corporations Act 1976, which increased the number of BBMP wards from 198 to 243.

On Wednesday, Advocate General (AG) Prabhuling K Navadgi responded to the contentions raised by the petitioners, including the State Election Commission.

He said a validly constituted legislation can be struck down only on three limited grounds: for lacking legislative competence, violating the fundamental rights and if found to be 'manifestly arbitrary'. In the absence of such a finding, the government cannot be directed to ignore a law validly enacted by the state legislature, he argued. He, however, clarified that the state had no objection to the prayer for holding timely elections but maintained that the delay was only due to Covid-19.

According to the petitioners, allowing a fresh delimitation process would further delay the elections as new ward-wise reservation and voter lists would have to be prepared. A senior counsel appearing for one of the petitioners stated that 2021 being a census year, the delimitation exercise would cause even more delay.

Desilt drains to avoid flooding in Chickpet, says BBMP chief

Comes amid complaints of poor infrastructure in the area

BENGALURU, DHNS

BBBMP administrator Gaurav Gupta on Wednesday visited several parts of Chickpet and inspected the functioning of civic amenities after mounting complaints of poor infrastructure and choked drains.

P C Mohan, MP, Bangalore Central, and representatives of the Chickpet trader's association accompanied the administrator during the inspection.

BBMP officials told the ad-

ministrator that the Cottonpet road has been developed under Tender SURE, while the other two roads—Avenue and BVK Iyengar Road—will soon be developed.

"We have planned to develop Avenue Road under the Smart City project and BWS-SB has already completed the underground drainage work," an official explained.

Gupta walked along Gundappa street, Mamulpet, Old Taragupet, Sultanpet, OTC Road Akkipet and Balepet and



BBMP Administrator Gaurav Gupta, MP P C Mohan and BBMP officials inspect civic works on Wednesday. DH PHOTO/S K DINESH

interacted with traders and local residents. He directed officials to level the dug-up roads and asphalt it using hot-mix or concrete to facilitate smooth traffic flow.

Traders complained about the flooding of bylanes along Mamulpet main road, which MP Mohan attributed to delay in desilting drains.

"None of the drains have

been desilted along the stretch and hence, flooding happens during the rain. If all drains are desilted, rainwater will flow out without flooding the stretch," Mohan clarified.

Gupta directed the engineers to immediately take up the desilting work and ensure water flows through without stagnation.

Alternate road

Gupta instructed the chief engineer, Smart City project, to submit a detailed plan to develop Avenue Road (1 km) within a week providing all timelines and notify alternate roads for motorists to commute until the work gets completed.

He also directed engineers to prepare a feasibility report on developing SJP Road under the Smart City project.



Offline classes haven't been received well by students.

DH FILE PHOTO/JANARDHAN B K

A week on, just 20% student attendance in colleges

BENGALURU, DHNS: Student attendance at most degree colleges and universities across the state has remained less than 20%, even a week after physical classes reopened for final-year undergraduate and postgraduate courses on November 17.

While postgraduate departments in some state-run universities saw a gradual increase in student numbers, the attendance hasn't crossed 20% in the majority of others.

The principal of an aided

college said that out of 200 students, only 14-15 were attending offline classes. Student numbers at Bangalore University haven't gone beyond 20% either, said an official.

'50%-60% attendance'

Prof T D Kemparaju, Vice-Chancellor, Bengaluru North University, said some affiliated colleges had reported 50%-60% attendance and hoped it would further improve over the next week.