



**BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE,  
BANGALORE**

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# THE HINDU



**SWR plans three pairs of trains to KIA**  
Bengaluru  
South Western Railways is exploring the feasibility of operating three pairs trains to and from Kempegowda International Airport for the benefit of passengers.

P1

## Indira Canteen contractors not paid for several months

Many say that it is becoming increasingly difficult to operate

CHITRA V. RAMANI  
BENGALURU

Contractors of Indira Canteens are finding it difficult to operate them owing to the failure of the government to pay their bills for months on end. The 198 Indira Canteens, including mobile canteens, which enjoy the patronage of thousands of citizens, are operated by Chef Talk Food and Hospitality Services Pvt. Ltd., Rewards and Adanya Chetana. Udaykumar of Rewards told *The Hindu* that the BBMP has not cleared their bills for more than seven



Contractors want water connection to the canteens to be changed from the commercial category to domestic. ■SUDHAKARA JAIN

months. He used to operate 88 canteens, but is now managing 50, as per the new tenders, which, sources in the civic body said, came into effect on August 1.

As per the new tender, the subsidy from the government has come down by nearly ₹7. The government subsidy (for three meals per day) was earlier ₹37, but is

now ₹30.3, he said. Citizens pay ₹25 for three meals a day.

"Though the cost of essential commodities has increased, the subsidy has

been reduced," he said. That apart, water and power connections to the canteens are under the commercial category. "We have submitted representations to the BBMP, BWSSB and Bescom seeking change in category to domestic, to no avail," he added.

A representative of Adanya Chetana, which started operating 44 canteens under the new tender, admitted that there were some issues with water and power connections. "We have recently taken over. There are many unresolved issues pertaining to unpaid power and water charges. As a result, water supply to a few canteens has been suspended," he said.

Admitting to a delay in clearing bills, BBMP Commissioner N. Manjunath Prasad said the State government had not released

### Chapatis not on menu

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

There were proposals to include ragi mudde and chapati in the menu of Indira Canteens. However, it will be some time before they find a place on the menu.

A representative of Adanya Chetana said that they were initially prepared to introduce chapatis.

However, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, they put off their decision since cha-

patis have to be rolled by hand. "In our kitchen in Jodhpur, a machine is used to make flat breads. They are thicker and tougher, and are called 'roti'. Those will not suit the south Indian palate," the representative added.

Udaykumar from Rewards, however, had other reasons. He said non-payment of pending bills and increase in cost of essential commodities were the main reasons for not including ragi mudde and chapati in the menu.

money for maintenance of the canteens. "This has affected payment to contrac-

tors. We have written several times to the government about the same," he said.

P2

# Garbage contractors threaten to go on strike

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**BENGALURU**

Garbage contractors have threatened to stop collection and transportation of municipal waste from the city over non-payment of pending bills.

The Bangalore Mahanagara Swachathe Matthu Lorry Malikara Hagoo Guthigedarara Sangh (regd.), in a letter submitted to Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Commissioner N. Manjunath Prasad, said it will go on a strike from November 30.

Sangh general secretary S.N. Balasubramaniam claimed that bills amounting to ₹400 crore were pending. In the South zone, pending bills date back to January this year. "Bills from April 2020 are pending in other zones," he said, adding that they had met senior officials, includ-

ing Mr. Prasad, earlier this month. "We were assured that the pending bills would be cleared before Deepavali. However, despite the Commissioner's instruction to clear bills, officials are refusing to do so," he alleged.

He claimed that contractors were not able to pay their employees and had borrowed heavily for day-to-day maintenance.

Mr. Prasad said he had spoken with the Sangh. "We have assured them that the bills will be cleared and we will release the pending amount partially. We will release the remaining amount in phases," he said.

However, Mr. Balasubramaniam said the Sangh will meet Mr. Prasad and senior officials on Saturday morning and take a call on the strike based on the outcome of the meeting.

# Bouncers prevent entry into BBMP office

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**  
**BENGALURU**

A group of men allegedly took over guard duties at the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) gate on Friday ahead of an event. Eyewitnesses claimed the men - acting as bouncers - prevented the entry of vehicles into the premises, even as the security guards and marshals remained mute spectators.

The bouncers were hired by BBMP Employees' Union Kannada Sangha that had organised a programme to unveil the bust of thespian Dr. Rajkumar in the civic body's head office as part of 65th Kannada Rajyotsava celebrations. Actors Shivaraj Kumar and Puneet Rajkumar were invited for the programme, along with former mayor M. Goutham Kumar.

A Group D employee was reportedly assaulted by one of the bouncers, but later retracted his statement.

Amruth Raj, president of the union, confirmed that the bouncers had been hired, but denied that they had assaulted an employee. "The employee has denied being assaulted. We had obtained the requisite permission from the Commissioner and Administrator for the programme," he said.

Special Commissioner (Administration) Manjunath claimed that they were not present within the civic body's premises.

Mr. Manjunath also claimed that no employee was assaulted. "I have not received any complaint from anyone. If the aggrieved employee comes forward to complain, we will look into it," he said.



# SWR plans 3 pairs of trains to KIA

Two trains will originate from KSR railway station and one from Yelahanka

SUCHITH KIDIYOOR  
BENGALURU

South Western Railways (SWR) is exploring the feasibility of operating three pairs trains to and from Kempegowda International Airport for the benefit of passengers. If all goes as planned, one train will leave Krantiveera Sangolli Rayanna Bengaluru Railway Station at 4.45 a.m. and another at 9 p.m. The third train will leave from Yelahanka at 7 a.m.

E. Vijaya, chief public relations officer of SWR, said the schedule is subject to approval from the Railway Board. "The schedule was prepared after consulting airport officials. The proposed timings will cater to peak hour traffic," she said.

For the return journey, the trains will depart from Devanahalli at 6.30 a.m., 7.45 a.m. and 10.30 p.m.

"Prior to the lockdown,



Ticket from KSR station is likely to cost ₹30. ■ K. MURALI KUMAR

eight trains were operational on this line. A stoppage will be given for these trains at the newly-built halt station on the boundary of the airport campus," she added.

Tickets are likely to be priced at ₹30 from Majestic and ₹10 from Yelahanka.

## Journey time

From KSR Bengaluru, the train will halt at major stations en route and the journey time could be as long as 1.15 hours.

"It is likely to come down when the final time table gets approval. We may skip some stations en route. Halts include Cantonment, Bengaluru East, Baiyappanahalli, Channasandra and Yelahanka. The service will help people living in the CBD and eastern part of the city, such as K.R. Puram and Whitefield," said Ms. Vijaya.

Ever since the relaxation of lockdown rules, there has been a growing demand to resume suburban train ser-

vices and introduce services to the airport. KIA has seen a gradual increase in passenger traffic.

"As a result, road traffic has increased. The halt station [near KIA] is ready but the authorities are yet to introduce services," said Rajkumar Duggar, convenor of Citizens for Citizens.

Citizens have highlighted the need for a good access road from the highway to the halt station.

"The authorities should develop Doddajala station so that local residents also get the benefit of the train services. Starting train services from multiple points in the city will help a large number of people," Mr. Duggar added.

Citizen activist Sanjeev Dyamannavar pointed out that if the service takes off, it will benefit not just air passengers but also people working at KIA.

P3

# 1,526 fresh COVID-19 cases, 12 deaths in the State

As many as 1,451 persons were discharged on Friday

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

The State on Friday reported 1,526 new cases of COVID-19, taking the total number of cases to 8,81,086.

With 12 deaths, the toll rose to 11,738. This is apart from 19 deaths of patients due to non-COVID-19 reasons.

## Total recoveries

As many as 1,451 persons were discharged on Friday,

## COVID-19 update

Number of positive cases reported in Bengaluru Urban on November 27

**808**

Total cases **3,67,885**

Active Case **19,083**

Discharged **3,44,687**

Deaths **4,114+1\***

\* One person died of other causes

Source: Department of Health and Family Welfare.

taking the total number of

recoveries to 8,43,950. Of the remaining 25,379 active patients, 401 were being monitored in the ICU.

While the positivity rate for the day stood at 1.34%, the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) touched 0.78%.

Bengaluru Urban reported 808 cases, taking its tally to 3,67,885. With six deaths coming from Bengaluru, the toll in the district rose to 4,114.

Active cases in Bengaluru touched 19,093.

As many as 1,13,591 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, including 97,246 RT-PCR tests. With this, the total number of tests rose to 1,08,04,148.

P3

# Building plan details posted online

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

**BENGALURU**

The BBMP has put details of building plans approved, commencement certificates (CCs) and occupancy certificates (OCs) on its website for the perusal of the public.

According to BBMP Commissioner N. Manjunath Prasad, this is the first time that such details have been put in the public domain. He said that all plan approvals, CCs and OCs issued during 2019-20 and 2020-21 (till date) are now accessible on the BBMP's website.

As per data provided, as many as 10,311 building plans had been approved during 2019-20 till date, while 356 CCs and 329 OCs had been issued during the same period.

Of the total building plans approved, the maximum are from Rajarajeshwarinagar zone (2,394).

To view the plans approved and other details of the Town Planning Department, citizens may visit <https://bbmp.gov.in/townplanning.html>.



# Non-COVID-19 services will be resumed at BMCRI

They will be available from December 1

AFSHAN YASMEEN  
BENGALURU

Students of Bengaluru Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI), who had been missing out on their practical classes ever since hospitals affiliated to BMCRI were turned into dedicated COVID-19 facilities, now have a reason to cheer. The Medical Education Department is all set to resume non-COVID-19 services at the institute from December 1.

Non-COVID-19 services have been partially restarted in all other medical colleges. Hospitals affiliated to BMCRI, mainly Victoria hospital, continue to be dedicated COVID-19 facilities. When the pandemic hit Karnataka in March, the State govern-

ment had identified Victoria hospital as the first dedicated COVID-19 hospital.

Medical Education Director P.G. Girish told *The Hindu* that non-COVID-19 services would begin at the institute from December 1. "This will not only benefit non-COVID-19 patients, but also our students who have been missing out on practical classes," he said.

"Our students will risk qualifying with inadequate skills if we further delay resuming non-COVID-19 services. Now that COVID-19 cases are declining, we want to reserve only the Emergency and Trauma Care Centre for COVID-19. As medical students are evaluated based on their surgical skills and practical experience, we may have to postpone their examinations this year," Dr. Girish said.

He said an Operation

Theatre (OT) log book is maintained in the three years of the PG course to record the number of surgeries students individually performed, operations they assisted and witnessed, besides noting whether they were first assistants. "This is as per National Medical Commission's norms and have to be followed at any cost," he added.

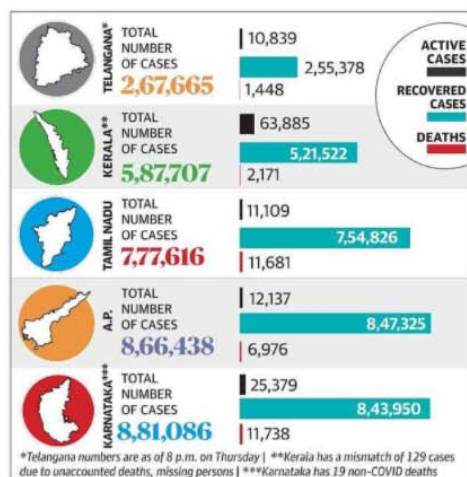
Dedicated COVID-19 hospitals under the Health and Family Welfare Department that have partially restarted non-COVID-19 services are awaiting the nod to further expand their services.

State Health Director Om Prakash R. Patil said the department will take a call in another two weeks. "We will have to be prepared for a possible second wave, but at the same time we will have to now ensure non-COVID-19 services are not hit."

P3

## Kerala's positivity over 10%, with no rise in testing

State adds 23 deaths to virus toll; low test positivity of 1.27% in A.P.; Tamil Nadu reports 1,442 new cases



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala on Friday reported testing 39,108 samples, despite claims by the State government that testing would be raised to at least 70,000 per day. New cases reported on Friday stood at 3,966,

**COVID-19**

with a test positivity rate of 10.14%.

The Health department added 23 deaths from COVID-19 on Friday. Five deaths were reported from Thrissur, four each from Kottayam and Malappuram, three from Alappuzha, two each from Pathanamthitta, Thiruv-

nanthapuram and Ernakulam and one from Kozhikode.

The case details by district were: Malappuram 612 cases, Thrissur 525, Ernakulam 397, Kozhikode 374, Palakkad 351, Kottayam 346, Thiruvananthapuram 262, Alappuzha 236, Kollam 229, Pathanamthitta 159, Idukki 143, Kannur 131, Wayanad 105 and Kasaragod 96.

Telangana added 761 cases on Thursday. With four more deaths, the number of fatalities in the State rose to 1,448.

Among new cases, 136 were from Greater Hyderabad area, 69 from Medchal-Malkajgiri and 55 from Rangareddy district.

Andhra Pradesh reported 733 new infections and six deaths on Friday. Samples tested in the State totalled 99,13,068, and in the past day, 57,752 were tested with a positivity rate of 1.27%.

Krishna district topped with two new deaths, while Anantapur, Chittoor, Visakhapatnam and Vizianagaram reported one death each.

In Tamil Nadu, 1,442 people tested positive on Friday for COVID-19, including six passengers who returned from other States, taking the total tally to 7,77,616.

Fatalities recorded in the day stood at 12.

(With inputs from Hyderabad, Vijayawada, and Chennai bureaus)

P8



# 26 private hospitals fleeced govt patients, says BBMP

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Bengaluru: More than two dozen (26) hospitals in BBMP south zone have been accused of overcharging patients referred by public authorities.

The hospitals in areas like Banashankari, Hosakerehalli, Girinagar and Vinayakanagar, were found to have collected nearly Rs 1.4 crore from patients who availed government quota beds and the civic agency has now asked these facilities to refund Rs 96.4 lakh. Officials said patients who were fleeced are complaining to the civic body.

In late June, the state government had ordered private hospitals to earmark 50% of their beds for patients referred by public authorities. The government had undertaken to foot the bill for these patients in accordance with tariffs agreed on: Rs 5,200 per patient per day for general ward, Rs 7,000 for high dependence unit, Rs 8,500 for ICU without ventilator and Rs 10,000 for ICU with ventilator.

"But many private hospitals are generating bills according to their whims and fancies," BBMP officials said. "Besides raising the bill with the government according to

## 'THEY REFUSED TO DISCHARGE ME'

Renuka (name changed), who was referred by BBMP to a private hospital in Girinagar, said she had to cough up Rs 1.4 lakh. "I was diagnosed with Covid-19 on November 2 and was admitted to the general ward. I had no comorbid conditions. When I was discharged six days later, I was made to pay Rs 1.4 lakh," she said. When Renuka asked staff why she was being charged although she was a patient referred by the government, she was told she was given multi-vitamin injections for which she had to pay. Another patient, Rathna Gowda, who was treated at a private hospital near Hosakerehalli said that she was charged Rs 2.5 lakh. "I had diabetes and was in the ICU for four days before I was shifted to the general ward. When we questioned authorities about the bill, they threatened my son saying I would be discharged only if we clear the bill," Rathna said.

P11



**WHAT'S THE TRUTH?** Private hospitals say the government is not taking into consideration treatment for comorbidities

the prescribed tariff, they are also collecting money from patients citing reasons like extra treatment expenditure and comorbidities."

Rajendra Cholan, special commissioner, health and IT,

BBMP, said every individual case is being vetted and calculated. "Many patients who are being treated under government category are being charged unnecessarily," Cholan said. "We are question-

ing only these cases and not those who visit on their own. Many people who were treated in general ward were charged Rs 1.5 lakh to Rs 2.5 lakh, citing various heads. This defies all explanations."

However, private hospitals say government agencies are crunching the wrong figures.

"Government agencies are harassing us," a hospital official said. "We regret having converted our hospitals into Covid facilities. Health officials do not know their math. We are expected to treat patients in ICU who have comorbidities. How can everything be accommodated in such a small amount?"

The owner of another private hospital said, "If officials are actually cracking down on us, then they need to hear our side of the story as well. Just issuing notices won't help."

However, Dr Prasanna HM, president, Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes Association (PHANA), said: "We issued an advisory to our members and specified the charges. If hospitals have violated it, we cannot stand by them. We support whoever is right."

Munish Moudgil, coordinator for BBMP south zone, said: "Hospitals are trying to hide their mistakes."



# Contact tracing goes haywire; no trail for 65% fresh cases in Ballari

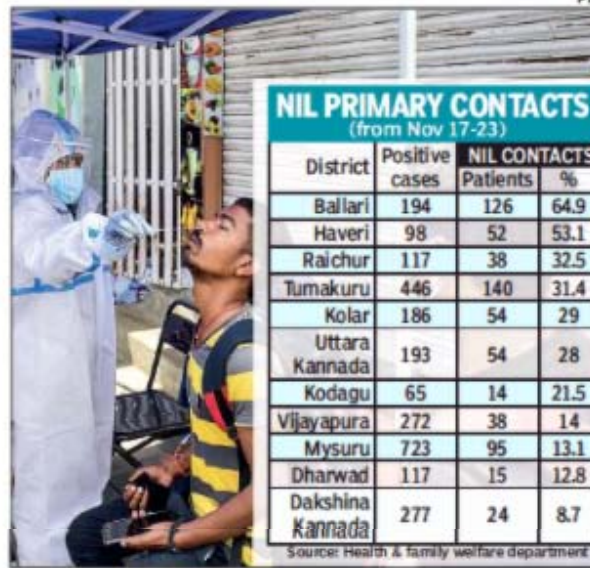
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**Bengaluru:** The state's Covid-19 management team is at its wit's end as primary contacts of patients infected over the past few weeks across several districts have not been traced and screened. For instance, in Ballari, 65% of those found positive between November 17 and 23 have no primary contacts.

Trace, test and treat are cornerstones of Covid management in Karnataka, but contact tracing has taken a beating, experts admit. From an epidemiological perspective, one positive case generally has at least 2-3 primary contacts.

Of 11 districts on the radar where the pandemic situation is worsening, Ballari reported the most nil contacts, according to data tabled before the chief secretary at a recent review meeting. It was followed by Haveri (53.1%), Raichur (32.5%), Tumakuru (31.4%), Kolar (29%) and Uttara Kannada (28%). Dakshina Kannada has the least cases of zero contacts with 8.7% nil primary contacts.

Dr Giridhara R Babu, epidemiologist and member of the state's technical advisory committee on Covid management, said in the early months of the pandemic, Karnataka was known for its con-



tact tracing with up to 42 contacts traced for every infected person.

"If 100 positive cases are detected, there must be a minimum 300 primary contacts," Dr Babu said. "Tracing primary contacts is an index of how active the surveillance and review system is in the district. Any district with more than 20% of patients with nil primary contacts is a problem."

Experts say it's possible for a few patients to have no primary contacts, but not a staggering 65% of them. Explaining

possible glitches, Dr Babu said: "First, when people are tested in random locations like bus stops and worksites, their addresses may not be recorded and this can hamper contact tracing. Second, workers may not have recorded addresses correctly due to laziness and third, infected people may not have given accurate details at the time of testing."

However, Pankaj Kumar Pandey, commissioner, health and family welfare department, put it down to timing. "Data shows the swiftness in contact tracing. Some districts

may trace late or may be entering the data late," he said.

But another expert said a delay can lead to a lag at every stage. "More test positive when contact tracing is done efficiently. A sense of lethargy has set in among workers," the public health expert said.

Nakul, Ballari district deputy commissioner, said a recent transition in the district's Covid management team may have led to the problem. "Earlier education department officials were doing contact tracing, but the health department was recently given the responsibility. I think the data has been obtained but has not been uploaded due to technical issues," he said.

The issue is also raising concerns about the quality of data in the state. For instance, Haveri district authorities say only 63 cases were reported between November 17 and 23 as against 98 cases reported by the health department. Data shows 53.1% of patients in the district had nil contacts.

"The figures are incorrect," said Dr Rajesh Dodamani, Haveri health officer. "This has been brought to the notice of senior authorities. Only in eight patients, primary contacts are still being traced. The number of patients with nil primary contacts is only about 5%."

P2

## Forum to do feasibility study on trolleybus network in city

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**Bengaluru:** Will a trolleybus similar to a tram be feasible for Bengaluru? A study by India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF), a public-private partnership initiative of the Union ministry of power for accelerated development of smart grids, will reveal that soon.

Sources in Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTTC) said ISGF has offered to conduct a feasibility study for implementation of a trolleybus network in the city. A trolleybus or trackless trolley is a combination of bus and tram, but it doesn't need a dedicated track to run as it can move on rubber tyres. It draws power from overhead cables and is cheaper than Metro.



**COMING TO BENGALURU?** A trolleybus operates in Bratislava, Slovakia

**A trolleybus or trackless trolley is a combination of bus and tram, but it doesn't need a dedicated track to run as it can move on rubber tyres. It draws power from overhead cables and is cheaper than Metro**

India and Bengaluru could take the lead in this. But funding for the project would be reduced as they will mostly draw power from overhead cables,



Sources say ISGF had a discussion with BMTC and is expected to submit a report in a few months. "Karnataka is now a power-surplus state. Trolleybuses are feasible on the city's arterial roads that could provide a dedicated lane for buses. They are better than regular electric buses and have more passenger-carrying capacity, which is useful during peak hours. For instance, a trolleybus could carry more than 120 passengers compared to 65 in a regular bus. Our ridership is mainly during peak hours, so, operating a few trolleybus services makes sense. This concept is not there in

ject is the main problem," said a BMTC official.

For regular electric buses, battery charging and disposal is an issue. "We need to set up charging infrastructure at depots. Another worry is charge running out en-route. An e-bus will run only around 200km once fully charged. Battery disposal is another concern," he said, adding these batteries mainly come from China.

"There are restrictions on importing Chinese products. For a regular electric bus, battery comprises more than 50% of the overall cost. With trolleybuses, this cost co-

except on flyovers and intersections, and will need small batteries to run," the official said.

"The feasible corridors could be identified based on the ISGF report," he added. In fact, trolleybuses are cheaper than rail systems. Trolleybus networks are operational in 43 countries, including Canada and Switzerland.

BMTC managing director C Shikha said: "We have not taken any decision so far." Shikha, who was the former MD of Bescom, has experience in the power sector, which could help BMTC in implementation of a trolleybus network.

P4

## @19 degrees, day temp touches lowest in 4 yrs

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**Bengaluru:** On Thursday, mercury dipped to its lowest during daytime in four years, even as Bengalureans scurried for woollens and grabbed piping hot cuppas. The minimum temperature during the day was 19 degrees Celsius, while the maximum was 20.4, Met officials said.

The last time the daytime minimum temperature fell to 19 degrees was on December 13, 2016, when the city was under the spell of cyclone Vardah.

While the sun did appear a few times, the weather was gloomy for most part of the day, and by evening, there were reports of drizzle from across the city.

### Rain fury: Many houses damaged in Kolar dist

Cyclone Nivar has left a trail of havoc in Kolar district, with heavy rain damaging houses in at least 21 places.

According to district control room sources, Mulbagal taluk in Kolar district received over 62mm of rain on Thursday and standing crops were damaged in several places.

In neighbouring Chikkaballapura district, many tanks overflowed owing to rain over the last two days. Kannampalli tank in Chintamani overflowed on Thursday.

mil Nadu and make a landfall over the coast of Puducherry on December 2,"

South-Interior Karnataka experienced scattered rain, while north-Interior parts saw isolated showers. In coastal districts, the weather remained dry. While Chintamani received 6cm of rain, Kolar got 5cm.

Met officials, meanwhile, said another cyclonic formation appeared to be in the offing off Tamil Nadu coast. "A low-pressure system is likely to form over southeast Bay of Bengal in the next 48 hours and is likely to move westwards towards Ta-

they said.

A circulation over south coastal Andhra Pradesh and west central Bay of Bengal extending up to 4.5km above mean sea level is likely to result in Karnataka receiving isolated rain from November 27 to December 1.

Bengaluru too is likely to receive scattered rain in some areas, while having a generally cloudy sky. Mornings are likely to see fog or mist, officials said.

P4

## Govt's latest stand on BBMP elections

**L**aw minister JC Madhuswamy said on Friday that the government had sought time from the Karnataka high court to carry out delimitation of BBMP wards and



increase the number of wards. "Our petition has already mentioned the need to have delimitation of BBMP wards based on the interim report submitted by the joint select committee. We have also told the court that there is going to be an increase in Bengaluru's population and this makes it impractical to

govern with the existing setup. But if the State Election Commission and the court want us to go ahead with the election, we are ready for it," he said.

P5



**Palike is now upgrading its Sahaaya app to ensure that officials don't close complaints without addressing them**

## FOR THE CRATER GOOD

**If a citizen's grievance is not addressed, it will be escalated to the BBMP official higher up in the food chain**



ANANTHA SUBRAMANIAM

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TWEETS @Naveen\_MIRROR

It's common knowledge that Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike's (BBMP) (Namma Bengaluru) Sahaaya app can leave you feeling helpless. Complaints get closed without the problem getting resolved.

**Henceforth, complaints will not be closed before getting a confirmation from the complainant on the status of his or her grievance. People can register complaints or suggestions on WhatsApp**

— Rajendra Cholan, Special Commissioner (IT) at BBMP

After many complaints about the app, the Palike is in the process of improving the back-end system where its employees from a separate call centre facility will call the complainant to check the status of the complaint

before closing it.

"We are coming up with new features to ensure a better response mechanism. Henceforth, the complaints will not be closed before getting a confirmation from the com-

plainant on the status of his or her grievance. We are also launching a unique system where people can register complaints or suggestions on WhatsApp," said Rajendra

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>**





# Day after, demolition begins

Road built on Srinivasapura Lake land ripped apart



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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

**A** road built through Srinivasapura Lake in Yelahanka 'by mistake' has been torn up and the lake is likely to be restored soon. Bangalore Mirror had on Friday reported about the blatant encroachments.

Sudhakar Reddy, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) Byatarayanapura Division Executive Engineer, who had told BM that the road was built by him due to a mistake, said: "I engaged two earth moving machines and 15 workers to demolish the drain on the lake land that was constructed by oversight."

Lake activists welcomed the demolition of the concrete drain constructed on Srinivasapura Lake. Ramprasad, co-founder of Friends of Lakes said that he was happy to note that a few encroachments had been removed and he hopes that the lake will be rejuvenated in due course of time.

"The understanding of the duty of state

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 »**

# BBMP up their tech game

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Cholan, Special Commissioner (IT) at BBMP. Another feature introduced in the 'Sahaaya 2.0' platform is that the complaints will automatically be escalated to the next level of the BBMP hierarchy, whenever they are not attended to on time.

During a recent review meeting chaired by BBMP Administrator Gaurav Gupta and Commissioner N Manjunath Prasad, the officials came up with a standard operating procedure (SOP) for addressing complaints. Calling the complainant before closing case is now mandatory.

Over the last seven months, the Sahaaya has received about 82,163 complaints from citizens. Officials say they have resolved about 91 per cent of

the complaints (74,970), while about 6,000 are pending. As many as 4,335 complaints have been escalated to higher officers. A majority of the complaints are related to solid waste, road maintenance and electrical (street lights). The BBMP also receives complaints on OFC cables, parks and playgrounds, lakes, health and sanitation.

Going by the zonal classification of the complaints, Bommanahalli and Mahadevapura zones have been actively using the web or mobile applications to lodge complaints. Zones such as Dasarahalli, Yelahanka and South have seen minimal complaints.

Murali Govindarajulu, a resident of Hagadur, said the escalation feature was already there but the complaint was getting closed before it was attended to. "It has happened to me several times. The response system by the solid waste management and the electrical division is quite good. The engineering department is the worst when it comes to filling potholes and repairing broken slabs," he said.

## Top complaints (since Feb)

Street lights not working	28,159
Garbage vehicle not arrived	7,823
Garbage dump	6,196
Potholes	5,077
Roadside drains	3,075
Animal birth control (stray dogs)	2,775

VK Srivatsa, a resident of Hemmigeppura, said, "Whenever the council gets dissolved and the election comes up, our complaints get addressed immediately. The response is poor after the elections are over."

Citizens, who regularly use the Sahaaya app to make complaints, also said that they are facing issues when it comes to providing the exact location. "Some engineers attend to the complaints. In some cases, they say the road or defunct streetlight does not come in their ward. Many cases are closed stating that they fall under long-term solution category. Earlier, there was a fea-

ture to re-open the case. Now, it is not available," Sandeep H.M, a resident of Hanu-manth Nagar said.

Anil Kumar Janardhana, from Jalahalli West, said he has registered over 200 cases. "I consider it a social service. About 50 per cent of the cases were attended to. I had raised problems such as no street lights and the filthy condition of abandoned toilet. These are still not resolved although my complaint has been closed," he said.



# Metro to go underground, with 211 trees

**Naveen Menezes**  
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TWEETS @BangaloreMIRROR

**A** total of 211 trees are coming in the way of Namma Metro's 13.89-km underground corridor, which runs between Jayanagara Fire station (South ramp) and Nagawara (North ramp). On the directions of Karnataka High Court, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) on Friday issued a public notice, seeking feedback including objections from citizens with regard to felling trees along the Metro corridor.

A majority of the trees are located in place where the 12 stations including MG Road and Dairy Circle, are coming up. The civic body has, however, not provided full details on places where the trees will be affected, description of the trees etc on its website, despite a clear direction from the court.



In June this year, the civic body had chopped off about 30 trees on Bannerghatta road, a day before the Court hearing was scheduled

As per the public notice, the BBMP has stated that: there are 276 trees standing in the project area between Jayanagara Fire Station and Nagawara except at Landford station and All Saints' Church station of Reach 6. "The BBMRCL has proposed to remove 212 trees," the notice stated. The civic body has requested peo-

ple to send their comments either by post or email (Dcfbbmp12@gmail.com) within ten days.

When asked about the tree details not being uploaded on the website, Ranganath Swamy, Deputy Conservator of Forests (Tree Officer), BBMP said he would look into it.

The matter had also come up for

hearing in the High Court on Friday. The counsel representing petitioner and senior environmentalist DT Devare requested for a face-to-face public consultation with regard to felling of trees instead of the public notice, where citizens can only voice their opinion through emails or posts. In response, the BBMP representatives asked more time to reply. The next hearing has been scheduled on December 9.

In June this year, the civic body had chopped off about 30 trees from the premises of Jayanagara Fire station and Karmikara Bavana on Bannerghatta road just a day before the Court hearing was scheduled. On its part, the BBMRCL is struggling to complete the construction of Metro on time due to delays in approvals for cutting trees. The corporation has already engaged three contractors for the construction of underground line at different stretches. Officials say the work has been slowed down as some trees are blocking the work.

P2

# Why Bengaluru has escaped Nivar fury

## Experts say change of path of the cyclone to be thanked for low intensity

**Sridhar Vivan**@timesgroup.com

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**A**lthough Cyclone Nivar brought the 'ideal' Bengaluru weather back, the intensity was not "as much as predicted". While the Met department had earlier issued a yellow alert to the city saying that many areas would be inundated, the cyclone failed to bring maximum rain or high-speed winds. Experts say the 'disorganised' cyclonic structure and change of path might have resulted in lesser rainfall.

Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) senior consultant GS Srinivasa Reddy said the change of path of the cyclone was the reason behind reduced rainfall. After crossing the Andhra Pradesh border, one expected it to head towards the north-west region, which would have brought more rain to the city. But the cyclone headed northwards. As it was around AP region, Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts received heavy rainfall and in fact, 15 weather stations in Kolar district have recorded heavy rainfall.

India Meteorological Department (IMD) Bengaluru director CS Patil told Bangalore Mirror that the weakening of the cyclone with lower intensity didn't allow heavy rainfall as the cyclone always weakens once it makes a landfall.

Meanwhile, Sridhar Balasubramanian, professor in the department of mechanical engineering at IIT Bombay and a weather analyst at Quest-Met said, "The impact of cyclones can be related to its structure. In case



Experts said that the 'disorganised' cyclonic structure could have changed the cyclone's path

of Nivar, the cyclone couldn't organise itself into a compact form and hence, was mostly disorganised. In fact, the structure of the cyclone is around its eye. The eyewall is where the strongest winds exist. As winds keep coming out of the eyewall, the speed reduces. If the cyclone is more compact, the speed will reduce at a much lower rate. However, when the cyclonic system is not well organised, the wind speed will reduce drastically, coming from the eyewall to the outside edge of the cyclone. This is what happened with Nivar, which couldn't sustain strong winds."

If we look at the rainfall pattern, Mahadevapura and East Zone received the maximum rainfall in the

**Cyclone Nivar couldn't organise itself into a compact form and hence, was disorganised**

—Sridhar Balasubramanian, IIT Bombay

city. Basavanapura recorded 32 mm, and 30 mm in Hagadur, followed by Varthur (30 mm), Kadugodi (29.5 mm) and KR Puram (28.5 mm).

Patil said the southern interior of Karnataka witnessed scattered rainfall on Friday while the northern interior of the State received isolated rainfall. Coastal Karnataka received dry rainfall. Now, a low-pressure system is likely to form over the south Bay of Bengal in the next

48 hours. It is likely to move westwards and reach Tamil Nadu and Puducherry coast on December 2. The well-marked low-pressure area now lies over south coastal AP and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal. The associated circulation extends up to 4.5 km above mean sea level. As a result, the southern interior of Karnataka is likely to experience isolated rainfall from November 27 to December 1.

For Bengaluru, it will be a generally cloudy sky with rainfall in a few areas and one can expect fog or mist in the early morning hours. Meanwhile, Reddy said the second cyclone of the month could hit Bengaluru by December 4, though it was too early for an exact prediction.

P3

## K'taka Logs 1,526 New Cases



Bengaluru: Karnataka reported 1,526 new cases of Covid-19 and 19 related fatalities, taking the number of total infections to 881,086 and the death toll to 11,738, the health department said on Friday.

The day also saw 1,451 patients getting discharged after recovery. Out of the new cases reported in the state, 808 were from Bengaluru urban alone. As of November 27, cumulatively 367,885 cases are reported in Bengaluru which includes 344,687 recoveries and 4,114 deaths. The number of patients in ICU has reduced drastically to 401.

## State Municipal Bodies Can't Engage with Tobacco Cos for Public Campaigns

Our Bureau



Recently, a city corporation in the state had collaborated with a tobacco firm to launch its green city campaign

Bengaluru: Karnataka has asked all municipal bodies to not accept any sponsorship from, or collaborate with, tobacco firms for public projects or campaigns.

The notification from the state's municipal administration department follows a direction from the Centre to all states to draw up a Code of Conduct for government bodies and officials with regard to their relationship with tobacco companies so that the latter do not influence policies.

Karnataka has been at the forefront in taking cognisance of the importance of Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA), a World Health Organization initiative to control public consumption of tobacco, said Dr US Vishal Rao, a cancer specialist who has been leading an anti-tobacco campaign.

The Ministry of Health has taken a big step towards advising tobacco control and also setting a precedent for other states to follow this step.

It is critical that government bodies and officials totally disengage themselves with the tobacco industry as they will use their funding for public projects and campaigns to build their brand and create a positive image in the minds of youth, Rao said.

Recently, a city corporation in the state had collaborated with a tobacco firm to launch its green city campaign, he added.



ET

IN THE  
CLASSROOM

Anglo-Swedish drugmaker AstraZeneca (AZ) had an eventful week during which it announced 63% efficacy rate for the vaccine it's developing against the Covid-19 virus in partnership with Oxford University. The company announced that in a small subgroup of the trial participants the vaccine showed better efficacy when administered a half dose first and a full dose after a month. This announcement triggered a series of questions on the company's trial protocol. However, on Thursday, the company started a new trial where it will administer a half and a full dose to a larger participant group. Divya Rajagopal explains the impact this will have on the approval timeline for the vaccine, which has implications for India too.

## Curious Case of AZ/Oxford Vaccine

### WHAT IS THE EFFICACY OF THE AZ/OXFORD VACCINE?

An interim analysis of 131 participants showed 70% efficacy when two different dosages were administered to two different groups of people. The larger group, which was given two full doses, showed 62% efficacy, while a smaller group of around 2,400 participants, which was given half and full doses, showed 90% efficacy.

### WHY DID THE VACCINE SHOW BETTER EFFICACY IN THE SUB-GROUP THAT RECEIVED HALF AND FULL DOSES?

Sarah Gilbert, professor of vaccinology at the University of Oxford, said the reason is still unknown. She said a possible explanation could be that the immune system was reacting to the smaller dose as if it was fighting a real infection, leading to better response.

### WHY IS AZ STARTING A NEW TRIAL?

AZ's discovery that the vaccine works better with a smaller first dose was accidental. This was not part of the original trial protocol. It was an error on part of one of the trial contractors of Oxford University. The company will be starting trials afresh with a smaller dose first to adhere to the best standards of critical trials.

### WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR SERUM INSTITUTE OF INDIA'S (SII) TRIAL?

SII told ET that it will continue with the trial with two full doses. The AZ-Oxford vaccine is safe and effective and even the lowest efficacy rate is 60-70%, making it a viable vaccine, said SII. Efficacy could vary slightly in different age groups when given in different dosages. Adar Poonawalla, CEO of SII, said the Indian trials are running smoothly with strict adherence to all the necessary processes and protocols and the company was studying the data.

### WILL THE VACCINE LAUNCH BE DELAYED?

AZ CEO Pascal Soriot said that the company does not expect the regulators to withhold emergency approval because of the new trial. The company can submit the efficacy data of 63% to get emergency approval as it is above the 50% that most regulators stipulate.



## Approved plan, OC details available on BBMP website

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** The BBMP on Friday uploaded to its website the details of all the building plans that were approved, and all the commencement and occupancy certificates issued between 2019-20 and 2020-21.

The publication of the details comes a week after the BBMP relaunched the website and promised to upload the details of all its projects online. BBMP Commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad said the details had been put up for the first time.

The BBMP has also developed the e-Aasthi software

that enables citizens to access property and khata details and do khata transfers and registrations. The project is currently running on a pilot basis, and the BBMP has currently uploaded the data from Shanthalanagar, Neelasandra and Shanthinagar wards. Following the successful trial, the e-Aasthi project has been extended to 100 wards in East, West and South zones, and other wards would be covered within the next six months, officials said.

Visit <https://bbmp.gov.in/townplanning.html> for details.

P3

## State adds 1,526 new Covid-19 cases to tally

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Karnataka recorded 1,526 fresh Covid-19 cases taking the total number of cases so far to 8,81,086.

The highest number of cases was reported from Bengaluru Urban (808) followed by Mysuru district (75), Dakshina Kannada (66), Tumakuru (63) and Haveri (50).

In addition, 1,451 people were also discharged from

Covid-19 hospitals of whom 549 were in Bengaluru Urban.

The youngest of the fatalities was a 48-year-old woman from Bengaluru Urban who died at a private hospital. She had symptoms of Influenza Like Illness. The oldest fatality is an 85-year-old man from Bidar.

The Mahadevapura zone under Bruhat Bengaluru Ma-

hanagara Palike has been reporting highest concentration of cases in Bengaluru over the

past 10 days. In all, Mahadevapura zone accounted for 17% of all cases registered in the city

over the last 10 days, followed by East and South Zones which account for 16% each.



P5



# The 'cost' of waste disposal

The fund-crunched BBMP has decided to levy a fee for collecting waste from doorsteps, hoping to get some help in streamlining waste management. However, people want Palike to improve the service before charging.

SHREE D N

In June, when the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) approved a user fee of Rs 200 per household for waste disposal services, not too many believed in its implementation. The BBMP has now decided to go ahead with the new fee-for-service model from January 2021. This has sparked a debate among citizens.

Municipal Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 introduced the concept of a user fee by local bodies officially. They specify that a local body, such as BBMP, has a duty to "prescribe from time to time user fee as deemed appropriate and collect the fee from the waste generators on its own or through an authorised agency". The BBMP is going for the user fee model under this rule.

However, this leads to a lot of questions. Suryaprakash BS, programme director at Daksh, a Bengaluru-based NGO, points out a key aspect. "BBMP is finding it difficult to collect the property tax, how are they going to collect this fee?" he asks. Maintenance of implementation is the challenge across the governments, he says.

"In my view, we should encourage such charges," he says. If garbage is not getting collected when the user fee is being paid, there is a stronger likelihood of people demanding better services, than people who just pay blanket property tax and crib about the city not managing waste properly, he feels.

However, since the efficiency of BBMP in enforcing rules has always been a problem, he suggests a model of competition between many service providers, who households can choose for waste disposal services, based on pricing and services. In this model, however, the BBMP has to make sure people don't throw garbage on

roads, and penalise violators, he says.

V Ravichandrar, an urban expert who was a part of BBMP Restructuring Committee, says that based on the polluter pays principle, charging a fee for garbage services is not unfair.

He talks of a different system where waste can be given to licensed waste disposal service providers which citizens can rely on for a fee, where the BBMP would play the role of enforcer of garbage disposal rules for citizens as well as service providers.



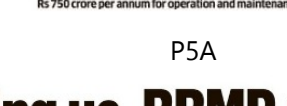
Nalini Shekar, the founder of Hasiru Dala, an NGO focused on waste management, says that the charges collected will help streamline payments for existing waste service providers.

"Every now and then we see good services and services getting disrupted because of lack of payment. Right now pourakarmikas are getting paid before 6th of every month, but auto drivers and dry waste collection centres are saying that they have not been paid. The charging of user fee will help make all such payments on time and help the BBMP manage its well, it will help streamline the city's waste management process," she says.

Pranay Kotathane, head of research at The Takshashila Institution, explains the downside in case people do not agree to pay. If people start dumping waste outside because they don't want to pay, the economic and health cost of this will fall on other people who pay the charges. Being the government, it is the BBMP's duty to provide the service, with a charge or not, he says.

There is an unofficial user fee already in place where people pay the pourakarmikas to take away the waste. The BBMP, determined to go ahead, is working out the modalities of the official plan. Whether this will be materialised or not remains to be seen.

## BBMP's Solid Waste Management (SWM) expense planned for 2020-21

		Payment of wages and allowances Rs 72.67 cr	Allowance for marshals Rs 10 crore
		DPR preparation Rs 2 cr	Infrastructure expenditure Rs 7.27 cr
		Work from central grants/ Swachh Bharat Rs 55 cr	Work from state grants Rs 113.5 cr
		Operations and maintenance of SWM Rs 757.3 cr	Scientific sanitary landfill maintenance Rs 25.68 cr
		Total planned SWM budget for 2020-21 <b>Rs 1058.87 cr</b>	

SOURCE: BBMP BUDGET 2020-21



A view of BBMP's solid waste processing plant at Subbarayanapalya, Bengaluru. The BBMP spends over Rs 750 crore per annum for operation and maintenance of waste disposal infrastructure. (PHOTO: PUSHPAK)

## Bescom to help BBMP collect the user fee

SHREE D N

Appropriate mechanism for the collection of the user fee is a challenge the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) will face when the user fee model comes into force. BBMP Special Commissioner for Solid Waste Management Randeep Dev says that the Palike will take the help of Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) to collect the user fee every month.

Bescom staff who visit households every month to give electricity bill will also bill for waste disposal services. If someone does not pay the amount, then Bescom will report it to the BBMP, and the BBMP will enforce it, says Randeep. The fee is nothing but a charge for the BBMP coming and picking up waste from houses, just like the water and electricity charges, he explains.

The service has been free of cost so far, now on it will have a fee. A minimal amount of Rs 200 will be charged per household.

However, Randeep says there will be slabs for various kinds of households, depending on income groups.

"We are also saying that in case you compost your waste, there will be some kind of rebate in the fee," he says.

Why is this necessary? The BBMP

P5A

## 'Before charging us, BBMP must fix collection'

SETHULEKSHMI M S

Waste management in Bengaluru has always been a difficult process. Depositing of waste near the roadside late in the nights inside the city is a common sight. Amid its failure to collect

the garbage, Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) is thinking of a plan as waste collection charge.

DHT takes a closer look at how citizens of Bengaluru react to this new development, and what concerns they have.

R Saranya, a resident of Mathikere and a dietician at Ramaiah memorial hospital, spoke about the failure in the existing waste collection system. She said: "Instead of charging extra from each household, fine should be collected from those who don't even bother to dispose of the waste

properly by segregating wet and dry waste and littering it around the corners of the road instead of handing it properly to BBMP van which collects garbage."

About the extra charges, she said, "My guess is a huge amount would be collected by the government through this new tax system. So first, the BBMP has to bring discipline to the already existing garbage collection system, after that they can plan on waste collection charges."

Manjunath, a resident of Mahalakshmi Layout who is working as Project management officer at Conduent, feels a new user fee system may not be affordable for everyone due to the prevailing economic conditions due to Covid-19 pandemic. He calls the extra fee as outrageous: "In this Covid-19 situation, many people are struggling for the basic needs and any extra charge is not pleasing for the public."

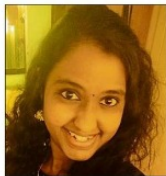
"I would request not to implement such kind of fee. And moreover, they lack in providing adequate services to the people. Most of the times, they never come to my area or road to collect the waste, and on top of this levying 200 rupees is burdensome," he added.

Awartha Jagadeeswar Reddy, a resident of Rajashree Layout, Munnikollal

feels that this tax system will add to the woes of the people. "As this expense is already included in property tax I feel this charge should not be imposed which would be a burden to the citizens as jobs have become unstable during these pandemic days and many have lost jobs as well. We would highly recommend avoiding the new tax system, as people find it difficult to meet their own personal expenses."

Vismaya VG, who stays at BTM layout says that first, the BBMP must keep waste bins at public places. "Most of the times, waste collecting vehicles come at different time slots and there are days when we miss these vehicles and will wait till next day for waste collectors," she says. She feels the Rs 200 fee will not solve this problem.

Bengaluru had huge cement bins long back in 2000s, before the city moved on to the door-to-door waste collection system, reminisces Ramachandra, a resident of Rajajinagar. He says that the bins became a health hazard and had to be removed, as people dumped everything into them. However, he feels the extra fee will make people feel responsible and pay attention to what BBMP is doing.



**R SARANYA**  
Resident of Mathikere  
First, BBMP has to bring discipline to already existing garbage collection system, after that government can plan on waste collection charges.



**MANJUNATH**  
Resident of Mahalakshmi Layout  
They (BBMP) lack in providing adequate services to the people. Most of the time, they never come to my area or road to collect waste.



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**VISMAYA VG**  
Resident of BTM Layout  
Waste collecting vehicles come at different time slots and there are days when we miss these vehicles... Waste bins will help people deposit waste whenever they need.

5A

# Bescom to help BBMP collect the user fee

SHREE D N

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"We are also saying that in case you compost your waste, there will be some kind of rebate in the fee," he says.

Why is this necessary? The BBMP estimates Rs 175 crore to be collected annually (see graphics) by way of solid waste management cess from property tax. The state has sanctioned Rs 900 crore over three years for infrastructure expenditures. There is no support from the central government either for the operations and maintenance, for which BBMP needs to generate its own funds.

Randeep estimates the fee to be collected at about Rs 300 crore per annum. BBMP annual expenditure for SWM is over 1000 crores, and this fee will help meet some of the expenditure incurred, and empower BBMP to give better services to the public, he says.





# Draw up list of manual scavengers, says BBMP

BENGALURU, DHNS

**T**he BBMP has asked the joint commissioners of all zones to redo a survey and identify people pushed into manual scavenging.

BBMP Commissioner N Manjunatha Prasad has issued directions to the joint commissioners to work on providing alternative livelihood to those engaged in manual scavenging.

Speaking at the meeting of a BBMP committee set up to oversee the end of manual scavenging, Prasad acknowledged that the deplorable practice still exists in several places despite a ban. The survey will cover areas within the BBMP limits and focus on the 110 villages recently added to the Palike. "There is no underground drainage in 110 villages," Prasad said. "There is a need to check if septic tanks in these areas are cleaned by manual scavengers. The sur-



**The BBMP has issued directions to officials to work on providing alternative livelihood to those engaged in manual scavenging.** DH ILLUSTRATION: PRAKASH S

vey will help them find alternative jobs."

Prasad pointed out that technology alternatives are now available to clean septic tanks and drains. "Those who clean manholes and septic tanks and who hire them are liable for punishment," he said.

Joint Commissioner So-

mappa Kadakola said a survey taken in 2013 identified 201 manual scavengers. "The Centre provides Rs 40,000 aid for them. Seventy-one scavengers have received the aide. Officials have submitted documents regarding the remaining scavengers to the Centre," he said.

## How effective are Covid-19 vaccines and when will India get them?

The news of the high efficacy of four Covid-19 vaccines in the last two weeks has generated hopes at a time when the pandemic has infected more than 93 lakh Indians and killed over 135,000 of them. But notwithstanding the promises, Covid-19 shots are unlikely to be available to the people immediately as there are multiple hurdles that need to be overcome. Here's what you need to know:

—KALYAN RAY

### How many Covid-19 vaccines are available now?

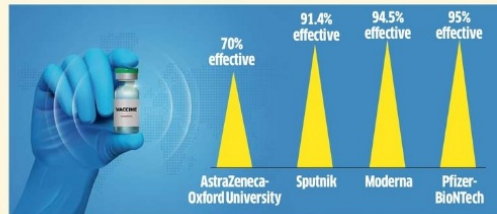
While vaccine development usually takes years, the global emergency caused by the coronavirus has greatly expedited the process in the last 12 months. Forty-eight vaccine candidates are in clinical trials, including 11 under phase III.

Early results from vaccines developed by BioNTech-Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca-Oxford University and Russia's Sputnik V have shown promises. An Indian vaccine developed by Bharat Biotech is in Phase III trial while a second one from Zydus Cadila is undergoing clinical evaluation.

Hyderabad-based Biological Evans will also launch the trial of a vaccine developed by Johnson & Johnson.

### How promising are the early results?

BioNTech-Pfizer, Moderna and Sputnik V vaccines claimed more than 90% efficacy while AstraZeneca claimed 70% efficacy. But even the AstraZeneca vaccine was seen to be 90% effective under a specific dose regimen, which the company has now admitted happened due to a mistake. The problem, however, is that these are based on interim data as technical details on the trial protocols and findings have not been published in any peer-reviewed journal. Since the devil always lies in the details, a clearer picture of the vaccine efficacy would emerge when the publications appear.



### When would the vaccine be available in India?

That's difficult to say even though Adar Poonawalla, the CEO of the Serum Institute of India, promised to make 100 million doses (of the AstraZeneca vaccine) available to India by late December 2020 or early January 2021. He also promised 400 million doses by July 2021. India is, however, yet to finalise the pathway to the emergency use authorisation. Once that is finalised, the SII will have to apply for EAU approval for its vaccine. While the timeline for public access to the vaccine remains unclear, researchers estimated that it may take up to two years to vaccinate nearly 800 million Indians in order to reach herd immunity.

### Which vaccine would be used in India?

The AstraZeneca is the best bet at the moment despite its somewhat lower efficacy because it is easier to transport using India's existing cold chain network, and the manufacturer has made a commitment to make 50% of its capacity available to India. The next best options are Sputnik-V and Bharat Biotech and Zydus Cadila products, subject to the trial outcomes. The Moderna and Pfizer shots are unlikely to come to India in the near future because of their: (a) high cost (b) ultra-low cooling requirement for storage and (c) pre-booking of their entire stock by the rich nations.

### How much would the vaccine cost in India?

For a two-dose regimen, the AstraZeneca vaccine would cost \$8. Poonawalla said he would sell the vaccine at Rs 1,000 while talks are on with the health ministry to fix a procurement rate for the government. Sputnik-V will cost less than \$20 for two doses while Moderna and Pfizer products will cost \$30 and \$39, respectively.

### Does India have adequate infrastructure to roll out an adult vaccine to such a large population?

The infrastructure at the moment is inadequate. Currently, there are 28,000 cold chain points and 700 plus refrigeration vans. The government is in talks with the private sector for additional cold chain facilities. Also, there are 70,000 plus trained vaccine-givers but efforts are underway to find out more people to administer the two-dose vaccine.



## GET READY TO PAY NEW CIVIC CESSES

Cash-strapped departments mull ways to raise funds; BBMP to collect land transport levy

**BOSKY KHANNA** @Bengaluru

IT is not just citizens who are yet to become financially stable and make ends meet during the pandemic. The state government too, appears to face the same situation.

Various government departments are coming up with ways to fund ongoing and future projects. One such scheme is the Bengaluru Urban Transport Fund proposed by the departments of urban development and urban land transport. The fund will be used not just to improve last-mile connectivity as proposed, but also to improve overall urban development work across the state.

"The proposal has been final-



Work in progress at Nrupatunga Road in Bengaluru (file photo) | **EXPRESS**

ised, but there are still some finer details which need to be ironed out before submitting it to the government for approval. The fund will be collected along with the layout plan and development charges while forming

layouts. We need not wait for the financial year to commence to levy it, it can be rolled out immediately after the government approves," sources in the UDD told **TNIE**.

BBMP has also proposed to collect land transport cess for the improvement of road conditions in the city, which is proposed to be 2%. However the UDD has proposed 1% charge of the layout plan as Bengaluru Urban Transport Fund.

Another senior government official seeking anonymity said that while other districts will pay for one fund, those in Bengaluru will pay for two. The official added that government funding is normally given for big projects like the suburban

rail and to city corporations like BBMP, and boards such as the BWSSB and others in the districts. Little funding is given to departments to take up developmental works. So through the BUTF not just transportation, but also other projects will be addressed, such as lake development and solid waste management.

The BBMP is already working on collecting garbage collection charges fee in the form of service charge from citizens from January to manage the waste generated in Bengaluru. The BBMP also already collects beggary cess, library cess, health and solid waste management cess, apart from property taxes.

P2

### EXPRESS READ

#### Palike uploads plans, and occupancy certificates on BBMP website

**BENGALURU:** Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike has begun to upload all plans approved, commencement and occupancy certificates issued in 2019-20, and to date this year, on its website—<https://bbmp.gov.in/townplanning.html>. According to BBMP records, a total of 10,311 plans approved (PA), 356 commencement certificates and 329 occupancy certificates were issued during this period. Most PAs are from RR Nagar (2,394), followed by Bommanahalli (1717) and east Bengaluru (1,385). The maximum commencement certificates were issued in Mahadevapura zone (81) and maximum occupancy certificates were also issued here (88).ENS

P2

# Carmelaram bridge gets nod, to bring relief to IT workers

S LALITHA @Bengaluru

THE much-dreaded spot for motorists heading from Whitefield, Gunjur and Panathur towards Sarjapur Road and Silk Board Junction is the Railway Level Crossing near the Carmelaram Railway Station. To help commuters, the Railway Board recently sanctioned a Road Over Bridge here.

Motorists get stuck here anywhere between 15 and 35 minutes when the gates are shut for trains to pass. There is absolute chaos when the boom barrier opens and vehicles race ahead in opposite directions.

The *New Indian Express* has a copy of the letter dated November 18 which has sanctioned the bridge at LC Gate no. 132 at a cost of Rs 40.3 crore. The Railways will put in Rs 11.26 crore, while the State government Rs 29.09 crore, it says.

A senior BBMP official said that they have completed the survey and identified properties that have to be acquired for the bridge. "Soon, we will issue a notification for the acquisition of these properties. We can compensate property owners in the form of the Transfer of Developmental Rights. If they need cash, then the approval has to be given by the government," he said. The land acquisition would take at least six months, he added.

But the Railways need not wait for acquisition to begin work. "The main carriage



way of the bridge comes in the portion of land belonging to the State Government. The work can progress in these areas. By the time they complete some work there, we can hand over other pieces of land," he said.

A top railway official confirmed that the approval has been received for the project. "No deadline has been fixed for the completion of the bridge now. It can be done after land acquisition is completed," he said.

Sanjeev Dyamannavar, urban transportation expert, said, "This will offer relief for both rail and road traffic. With the doubling work on between Baiyappanahalli and Hosur, double the number of trains that were run before Covid can run along the stretch. Trains need not slow down mindful of a level crossing ahead. The IT crowd heading towards Sarjapur and Silk Board Junction from Whitefield take this road as it the shortest route. It will really be a big relief if they do not have a gate here anymore."

## Baiyappanahalli 3rd terminal may open in Jan

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
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THE third coaching terminal for the City at Baiyappanahalli is likely to be ready in January next year. The work will not be completed even by early next year and could open with one or three platforms, highly-placed sources said.

General Manager of South Western Railway A K Singh inspected the terminal to see the progress of works.

A senior official present at the spot said, "The pandemic delayed the work enormously. It is now going on at a brisk pace with the existing labour force, but it will not be ready by December-end as we had planned. By January-end we hope to open it with either one platform or a maximum of three platforms." Another official said the delay "does not practically affect the daily operations as most trains are not operating now."

The Rs 192.59 crore terminal will have seven platforms, three pit lines and seven stabling lines. It has missed numerous deadlines over the last two years, the latest being December-end.

The terminal can decongest the saturated KSR Bengaluru and Yesvantpur railway stations.



# RURAL FOLK HESITANT TO UNDERGO COVID-19 VACCINE TRIALS, SAY EXPERTS

Factors such as education level, fear of outcome affects attitudes; there is time to educate people, officials say

AJITH M S @Mysuru

WHILE many are closely watching the progress of Covid-19 vaccines, experts have flagged a pattern where a section of people may hesitate to take the vaccine over fear and concerns, which is referred to as vaccine hesitancy.

In the case of Mysuru, where vaccine trials are underway at JSS Hospital, attitudes are starkly different between urban and rural people. While many people from urban areas are flocking to participate, those from villages are not keen and are hesitant to enrol themselves.

Vaccine hesitancy has been a matter of concern in the case of many vaccines in the past. The polio vaccine too faced such a hurdle.

Notably, a recent study by United States Pharmacopeia about Covid-19 vaccination in low and middle income coun-

tries revealed that 40% of those surveyed said they want to wait and watch before getting vaccinated.

According to pro-vice-chancellor of JSS Academy of Higher Education and Research Dr B Suresh, a well-known researcher himself, those from villages are hesitant about the tests since they are worried about the outcome and its effects. Some even say "they are in a village, so it is unnecessary", Dr Suresh said.

"It depends on the education level as well. Those from urban areas and ones who travel are more open to it," he said. He pointed out that it is natural to have a section of people being hesitant to receive the vaccine since Covid-19 is a new disease. In any case, he said, the distribution will take a long time. "By the time the vaccine production catches up and mass vaccination drives are undertaken, sufficient awareness



A technician at a Covid sample collection booth in Bengaluru takes off her PPE suit after her shift on Friday | MEGHANA SASTRY

can be created and by then it will become like a necessity eventually, like polio," he said.

Divisional joint director of the Health and Family Welfare Department Dr B S Pushpalatha, who is handling eight dis-

tricts, said that initial vaccine hesitancy is common.

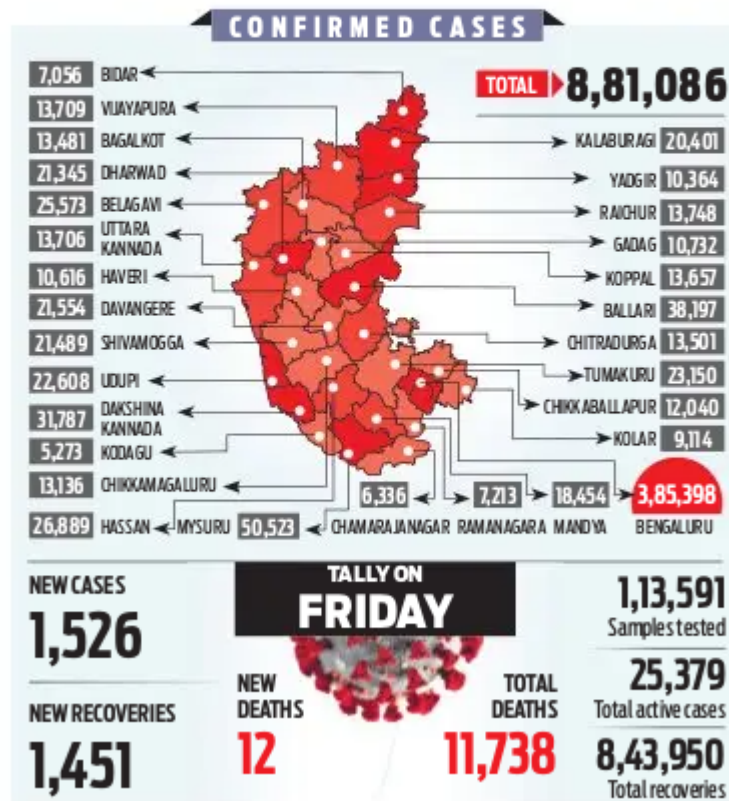
"We had extensively tackled misconceptions and doubts as well as worries among the public during Measles-Rubella immunisation as well as polio. We

will do it with Covid-19 as well," she said.

She said that since the plan is to deliver the vaccine to health workers first and the drive for the public comes only after that, it gives them sufficient time to work out strategies. Sources said that keeping in mind the concerns that emerge at the district and state level vaccine task force meetings, directions are being given to take into confidence religious and other influential leaders as well as private practitioners to aid the smooth delivery of the vaccine once it becomes a reality.

However, experts familiar with the matter pointed out that the Covid vaccine is that it is an adult vaccination drive unlike others. "With most of the recipients being adults, the strategy needs to be different," said an expert, adding that the Japanese Encephalitis vaccination in states such as Uttar Pradesh is a good example.

## Mortality among centenarians at 5%



EIGHT months into the pandemic the mortality rate among the oldest category of patients - centenarians - is low at 5%.

Out of 60 people aged 100 and above afflicted by Covid-19, there were three deaths so far in Karnataka. The figure is low compared to the 90-99 age group, which saw 11.5% of 1,292 patients passing away due to the disease. This is followed by 9.1% of 11,008 patients in the 80-89 age group, 6.2% of 39,818 patients in the 70-79 age group, and 4% of 88,055 patients in the 60-69 age group succumbing to the virus.

While the positivity rate has been declining and the mortality rate steady since November 14, the recovery rate marginally

dropped in the last two days. On November 25, the recovery rate was 95.85% and this fell to 95.78% in the next two days.

The active cases growth rate has been on the rise in the last three days, with a percentage increase of 1.12, 1.71 and 0.24, over November 25, 26, and 27 respectively. However, the daily rate of increase in new cases has been below 1% since October 16.

In terms of active cases, the top 5 districts are Bengaluru Urban with 19,083 cases, Mysuru with 593, Dakshina Kannada with 473, Tumakuru with 440 and Bengaluru Rural with 398.

It is taking that state 76 days to double Covid cases, a massive jump compared to October 1 when it was taking just 36 days for to double.